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Crises-related redirections of migration flows:
The case of the Eurasian migration system

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Shifts in migration vectors from the perspective of international migration systems concept

The view on the global migration picture through the paradigm of the international migration systems concept gives better understanding of the nature of migration flows, their dynamics, trends, and geographies.

The contemporary world appears consisting of a number of bigger and smaller migration systems where migration flows are stable, self-maintaining and playing crucial role for the economies of both sending and receiving countries. Some of the migration systems overlap; the others are more closed in their regional 'borders'; and all them are flexible: their internal structure and external ties alter along with economic, demographic, and political transformations in the participating countries.

For example, the European migration system that is centered mainly on the EU-15 countries shifted to more closeness in respect of the third countries' nationals since the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007 when it could benefit from better disposition of the labour resources of the new accession countries. Meanwhile, the former socialist Central European countries (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia) became not only emigration and transit states but also destination countries for migrants from the CIS states as well as from Vietnam, China and other less developed areas (Kaczmarczyk, Okolski 2005).

In the Asia-Pacific international migration system, the traditional immigration countries like Australia and New Zealand have become migrant workers importers as well, while the new regional migrant attracting centers like Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea appeared. As a result, the share of intra-system migration flows increases: in 1980s over 80% of migration flows were directed out of East and South-East Asia, primarily to the Gulf states while in 2000s about half of migrations happened inside the region (even three quarters, if estimates of illegal migrants are taken into consideration) (Hugo 2005). Rapid reshaping of migration flows is likely the most striking distinctive feature of the Asia-Pacific international migration system. One of the most recent examples is Thailand that was reputed a univocal sending country just several years ago but presently is the destination for 1.8 million migrant workers from less developed countries of the region: Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia (Martin 2007).

The impact of economic crises on redirection of migration flows and emergence of new destinations is more clearly seen on the examples of particular migration systems because

(1) crises usually affect particular regions (excluding the current crisis which is global by scale), (2) international migration systems operate with geographic entities that are interrelated by vectored migration flows, (3) recession modifies economic performance that can be already structured with the account of migration bridging, and (4) by affecting economic situation and labour market condition in both sending and receiving countries that are parts of a migration system economic crises simultaneously transform push and pull migration factors at both ends of migration vectors.

The emergence of some migration systems is closely related to global or regional economic crises. For example, the formation of the Gulf migration system started in mid-1970s as a result of the oil crisis and upsurge in oil prices. The inflow of petrodollars to the oil-rich Gulf monarchies contrasted to the lack of labour resources for realization of development projects and called for labour imports. Since then the Gulf states demonstrate the highest share of foreign workers, from 60-65% in Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia to 80-90% in Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (Shah 2006, 17).

In the South-American migration system, where about 70% international migrations are intra-continental, we have time and again watched redirection of the flows of labour migration resulting from political and economic crises in certain countries. For example, the deep economic crisis in Argentina in the early 2000 gave rise to numerous out-migration and redirection of labour migration to the neighbouring Chile where economic situation at the moment was more stable and employment opportunities for migrant workers were more likely (Dona, Levinson 2004).

The political and economic crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s related to the collapse of the socialist block and disintegration of the USSR greatly influenced the scale and directions of migration flows in Europe and the post-Soviet area. The East and Central European former socialist states and the CIS states became the new source countries of permanent migrants to the United States, Germany and Israel and temporary labour migrants to the EU area. At the same time Russia turned out to be a destination country for millions of migrants from former Soviet republics and was ranked second (after the USA) among the major immigrant receiving countries, with the total number of immigrants in 2005 amounting to 13.3 million (United Nations 2006). In fact, the communism-downfall crisis resulted in reshaping of the European migration system and gave birth to the new international migration system that includes the CIS countries and is centered on Russia. We entitled it the Eurasian migration system (Ivakhnyuk, Iontsev 2005; Ivakhnyuk 2007).

In the sequel, the 1998 financial and economic crisis in Russia influenced appearance of Kazakhstan as a new destination country in the post-Soviet space and the center of the Central-Asian sub-regional migration system (Sadovskaya 2007). Labour migration flows in the area formerly directed exclusively to Russia were partially redirected to Kazakhstan.

By analyzing the genesis and development of the Eurasian migration system during the two latest decades, shifts in its structure and ties with other migration systems, consequences of *migration interdependence* between the sending and receiving countries, we will assess the impact of the global crisis on flows of people and remittances and conclude on the future migration trends in the region as the current crisis is over.

Genesis of the Eurasian migration system

The peculiarity of the contemporary Eurasian migration system is rooted in the fact that in contrast to the other big migration systems, which were developing as a result of economic, political, cultural, and finally migration interactions *between the countries*, the factors for formation of the Eurasian migration system have grown up *within the frames of a single country* – the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union. That gives special emphasis to historical factors in explaining the present direction of migration flows in the region.

The former migrations within the USSR, internal by their nature and inter-republican by their form, were the foundation of the huge migration potential, which resulted in a sharp rise of international migrations after the USSR broken up into sovereign states.

During the centuries migration processes in the Russian Empire were of centrifugal colonial character. Resettlement of people from the center of the Empire to its margins was aimed at strengthening of the Russian State and pulling up the Central Asian provinces, Caucasus and other outlying districts. During the Soviet period centrifugal trends were still prevailing, first of all as a result of purposeful and rigidly planned administrative migration policy aimed at redistribution of population between labor-excessive and labor-deficit districts of the Soviet Union. Even within strict limitations of the freedom of movement provided by the *propiska* system¹, the gross migration exchange between the Soviet republics was up to 2 million

¹ *Propiska* is a compulsory territorial registration of the population applied in the USSR in 1932-1991. *Propiska* was certified by a stamp in a person's passport made by a territorial department of the Ministry of Interior. Every person was registered at a particular address, and in accordance with

persons a year (Ivakhnyuk 2009b). As a result, the nations and ethnic groups living in the territory of the USSR have got 'mixed', with a certain part of indigenous population of Soviet republics living in the other republics. This was especially true for Russians who were sent – half voluntarily, half forcedly – to work in other republics where there was a lack of local skilled workers. Totally, about 25 million ethnic Russians lived outside the Russian Federation territory by the late 1980s (*Narodonaselenie* 1994, 128)

This explains the surge of ethnic-related migrations in the post-Soviet territory in the initial years after the USSR disintegration when numerous flows of people motivated by search for ethnic security rushed to their own ethnic entities. These flows were characterized as a 'repatriation' trend² (IOM 2002). Russia alone received over 3 million ethnic Russians who resettled from other parts of the former USSR between 1991 and 1998 (Vishnevski 2002; 144).

Later on, with the growing role of economically motivated migration, the hierarchy of factors driving migration flows in the post-Soviet territory has changed giving more importance to economic and demographic differentials between the countries in combination with specific factors that have determined dominance of intra-regional migration flows and the major migration vector directed at Russia: visa-free agreements (Table 1), knowledge of the Russian language, which has been the single official language in the USSR, existence of ethnic diasporas of titular CIS nations in Russia and informal migrant networks, geographic proximity, and the integrated transport network inherited from the former times. As a result, about 80% of cross-border migrations in the region take place between the CIS countries.

For population of all the post-Soviet countries participation in international migrations after the USSR disintegration was a novelty. Some republics had especially low-mobile population. According to the 1989 USSR Population Census, 88% of Kyrgyz people lived in the Kyrgyz Republic (and 98% - in the Central Asian area). For Uzbek people the same figures would be 85% and 97%, for Turkmen people – 93% and 98%, for Tajik people – 75% and 99% (The 1989 USSR Population Census).

registered residency he/she got access to employment, primary and secondary education, healthcare, and other social benefits.

² Strictly speaking, the term '*repatriation*' is not correct in the particular context of population movements in the post-Soviet area. Repatriation means return to the native country/fatherland (*patria*) from a country of residence, i.e. this phenomenon is related to *international* migration. Meanwhile, the native country of former Soviet citizens was the Soviet Union as a whole, so when moving across the territory of the USSR they were internal migrants. However, this term became popular in the Russian migration literature of the 1990s.

Table 1. Visa regimes in former USSR republics

Country of entry	Country of origin														
	RU	BY	MD	UA	AM	AZ	GE	KZ	KG	TJ	TK	UZ	LV	LT	EE
RU	—	—	—	—	—	—	V	—	—	—	V	—	V	V	V
BY	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	V	V	V
MD	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
UA	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	V	V	V
AM	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	V	—	V	V	V
AZ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	V	—	V	V	V
GE	V	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	V	—	—	—	—
KZ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	V	—	V	V	V
KG	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	V	—	V	V	V
TJ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	V	V	V	V	V
TK	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	—	V	V	V	V
UZ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	V	V	—	V	V	V
LV	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	—	—	—
LT	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	—	—	—
EE	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	—	—	—

Notes:

All information for regular passports

— = no visa required; V = visa required

So, when migration for economic reasons became a part of household strategy in the former Soviet republics people made their choice in favour of Russia rather than any country outside the post-Soviet territory (Table 2) because they still had the perception of the common territory inspired by their previous life in a single country. The fact that the outdated Soviet passports remained valid in the post-Soviet territory until early 2000s strengthened such a feeling of the post-Soviet citizens.

Table 2. CIS: Migrant workers abroad and migrant workers in Russia, national estimates of origin countries (thousands), early 2000s

CIS country	Migrant workers abroad	Migrant workers in Russia
Armenia	800-900	650
Azerbaijan	600-700	550-650
Georgia	250-300	200
Kyrgyzstan	400-450	350-400
Moldova	500	250
Tajikistan	600-700	600-700
Ukraine	2.000-2.500	1.000-1.500
Uzbekistan	600-700	550-600
Russian Federation	2.000-3.000	-

Note: Estimates include both regular and irregular migrant workers.

Source: *Overview of the CIS Migration Systems*. International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), Vienna, 2006.

That was one of the reasons of wide-spread unregistered migration in the area: after entering, for instance, Russia in the absence of visa requirements people found it needless to register their stay and work as they interpreted their movement as internal rather than international one. Later on, another reason came to the foreground, namely the unduly complicated and contradictory migration regulation in Russia that made migrants stay out of the legal field. As a result, Russia faced the challenge of multi-million irregular migration by the 2000s (for details please refer to Ivakhnyuk 2008; 2009b).

In course of time the Russia-directed vector of migration has strengthened encouraged by the increased economic growth rate, recovery of industries, implementation of nation-wide economic projects, particularly in housing construction. The general labour-demanding type of the Russian economy, booming construction and services industries in the 2000s, sizeable informal sector, combined with absolute decrease in national labour resources due to negative demographic trends, called for migrant workers, preferably the ex-USSR countries' citizens with minimal cultural distance and knowledge of Russian language.

The political impact on reconfiguration of migration flows

Political factors play an exclusively important though ambivalent role in the development of the Eurasian migration system. On the one hand, existence of regional unions in the post-soviet territory, like CIS and EurAsEC³, not only structures political and economic relations between the member states but they are also an arena for elaboration of common approaches to understanding pluses and minuses of contemporary migration flows, which connect these countries, and approval of mutually acceptable mechanisms to manage them. Elaboration of practical mechanisms of cooperation in the field of migration is one of principal focuses of the CIS and EurAsEC activities.

Under the existing contradictions in economic interests, maintenance of visa-free regime of population movements and the course for common labor market is likely to be the strongest chain that is cementing relations between the CIS states.

After the period of alienation among the 'new independent states' and the endeavour to dissociate from the 'colonial past', political relations between the majority of the CIS states have stabilized and softened in favour of economic and political pragmatism but even now

³ EurAsEC (the Eurasian Economic Community) is the regional inter-government organisation founded in 2000. The participating states are: Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

shifts in political conjuncture affect the scale and direction of migration movements. For example, worsening of relations between Russia and Georgia, mostly because of personal aversion between President Putin and President Saakashvili, resulted in introduction of the visa regime between the two countries in 2001 and rupture of diplomatic relations in 2008 because of the secession of South Ossetia and Abkhazia supported by the Russian Federation. Thus, the personal conflict between the two leaders influenced migration interrelations between the two countries more than all the other factors taken together. As a result, the vector of labour migration from Georgia shifted from Russia to Germany, Greece, Ukraine, and Turkey.

The political course of the current leaders of Ukraine towards possible membership in the EU influences attractiveness of the country for immigrants from other CIS states. Thus, while Ukraine had a stable negative migration balance with other CIS states during the 1990s and in the early 2000s and over 0.5 million persons left Ukraine for Russia only, since 2005 migration balance changed for positive (+4,583 net migration in 2005; +14,245 net migration in 2006) (Pribytkova 2007, 154). Political factor of immigration goes hand in hand with demographic factor: between 2005 and 2025 Ukraine is expected to face the 25% decrease in the population size due to extremely low fertility and the highest percent of aged population in the post-Soviet territory (World Bank 2007, 61). At the same time poor economic situation in Ukraine makes it one of the major suppliers of the Russian labour market with migrant workers. Despite the share of Ukrainian workers in Russia among CIS source countries decreased from 40% in 1995-2005 to 15% in 2007-2008, their absolute numbers in Russia continue to grow – up to 250,000 legal migrant workers in 2008 (Federal Migration Service 2009) and not less than 1 million illegal workers (Riazantsev 2007, 277). New vectors of labour migration from Ukraine are the EU states, Israel, Turkey.

The intolerance against migrants and xenophobia in the Russian society stirred up by nationalistic parties and political movements and poorly suppressed by the Russian law and law-enforcement bodies makes stay of labour migrants in Russia, especially those from the Central Asia and Transcaucasia, unsafe and risky. That stimulates migrants to seek for alternative destinations. For example, workers from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan make their way towards Kazakhstan that goes through investments inflow and upsurge in economic activity; they also open up labour markets of Asian states like South Korea, Turkey, Vietnam, Pakistan and others. Armenian migrants, as far as possible, make choice in favour of the United States or France where they can rely on the support of numerous diaspora rather than Russia where they often face the threat of ethnic-related violence. For

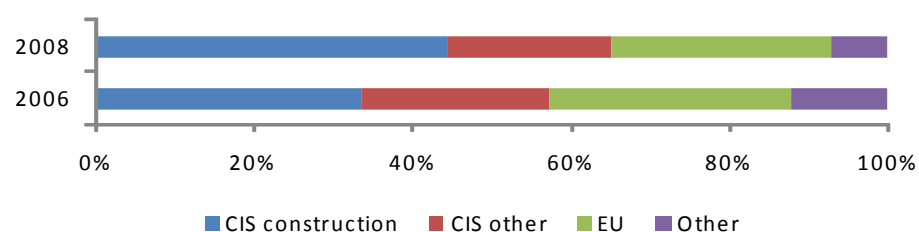
Azerbaijani workers, additional barrier to come to Russia was the 2007 Russian Government Decree that put a ban on employment of foreigners in the retail sale of alcoholic beverages, pharmaceuticals, or in the markets within the Russian Federation and consequently parted Azerbaijanis from their traditional employment niche.

The 2007 migration policy reform in Russia

With the purpose to encourage legal labour migration from the CIS states Russia has revised its migration legislation in terms of simplification the procedure for recruiting a CIS citizen, issuing permits for temporary residence/stay and for registration. The core of the reform was related to a new procedure of issuance of the Russian work permit personally to the CIS citizen rather than to the employer while the employer can hire any CIS migrant with a work permit. The new rules were put in force in January 2007 and applied to migrants from the CIS countries who come to Russia under a visa-free regime. The regulating function is to be realized by annual foreign labour quotas.

In fact, entry without a visa, a notification-based registration and a simplified work permit procedures, as well as the right to choose an employer ‘opened’ the Russian labour market for citizens of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine⁴ and became an important step towards the common labour market within the CIS area. Figure 1 demonstrates the obvious redistribution of migrant flows from Moldova in favour of the CIS (Russia) as a response to the new Russian legislation and rapid wage growth in Russia since 2006.

Figure 1. Geographic distribution of labour migrants from Moldova, 2006 to 2008

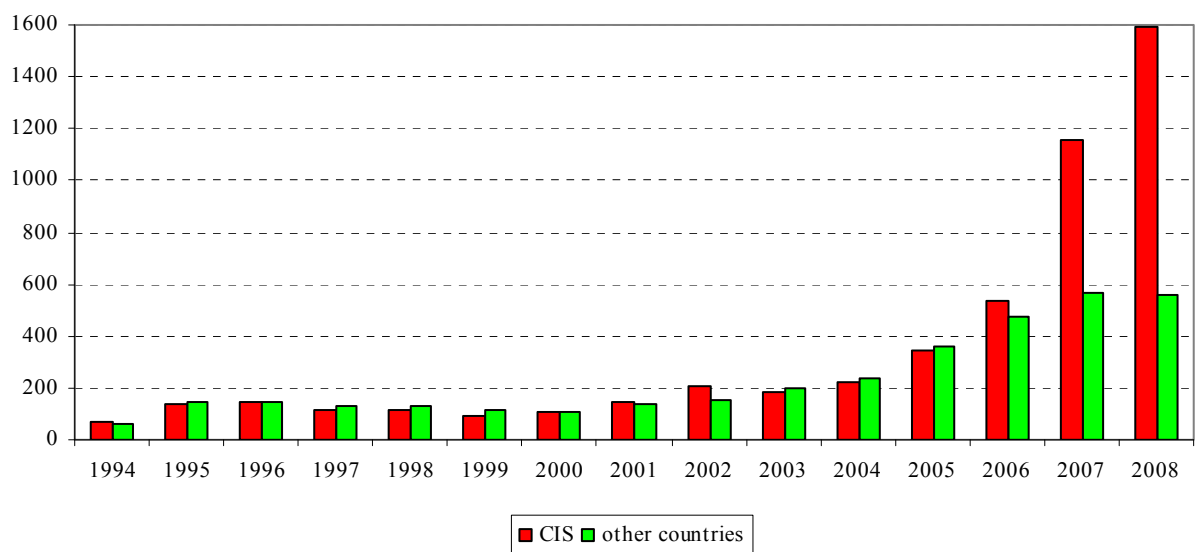


Source: IOM – CBSAXA Panel Household Survey 2006-2008

⁴ Belarus is not included in this list because under the Belarus-Russia Agreement on a Union, citizens of the two countries are fully equalled in rights including the right of employment in the territory of both countries of the Union. Belarus workers who come for a job in Russia do not need a work permit and can be employed in Russia just as easily as Russian citizens.

During 2007, the first year after the new rules were introduced, over 1.2 million work permits were issued to migrant workers from the CIS countries which was twice as much as in 2006 and three times as much as in 2005. In 2008, the upward trend continued, though impeded by the reduced quota. Figure 2 illustrates the dynamics of foreign labour inflow to Russia (in accordance with the annual numbers of issued work permits).

Figure 2. Foreign labour force in Russia, 1994-2008, thousands (as to numbers of issued work permits)



Sources: Population and migration in the Russian Federation. Statistical Yearbook. Moscow: Rosstat; Monitoring of regular international labor migration in Russia in 2005-2006. Moscow: Federal Migration Service, 2007; Monitoring of regular international labor migration in Russia in 2007-2008. Moscow: Federal Migration Service, 2009. [all sources in Russian]

Table 3 shows information about migrant workers by source countries for the 2000s. Ukraine, Moldova and China that were the main labour suppliers in the early 2000s are presently displaced by Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. ‘Demographically young’, Central Asian states became the principal migration donors for Russia both in terms of temporary and permanent migration. In 2008, half of 2 million work permits issued by the Russian migration services were obtained by migrant workers from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In addition, immigrants from the same three countries to Russia numbered totally over 300,000 persons, or 33% of the total inflow of migrants for permanent residence in 2005-2008⁵.

⁵ Data of the Russian National Statistics Committee (Rosstat).

Table 3. The structure of foreign labour inflow to Russia by source countries, 2000-2008 (numbers of issued work permits)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008*
Total	213.3	283.7	359.5	377.9	460.4	702.5	1,014.0	1,717.1	2,157.0
including:									
from CIS states:	106.4	148.6	204.6	186.5	221.2	343.7	537.7	1,152.8	1,596.0
Azerbaijan	3.3	4.4	15.0	6.0	9.8	17.3	28.3	57.6	69.6
Armenia	5.5	8.5	12.6	10.0	17.0	26.2	39.8	73.4	95.8
Georgia	5.2	4.9	6.8	3.2	3.8	4.3	4.9	4.7	3.8
Kazakhstan	2.9	3.6	7.6	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.9	7.6	8.6
Kyrgyzstan	0.9	1.7	6.4	4.8	8.0	16.2	33.0	109.6	160.2
Moldova	11.9	13.3	40.7	21.5	22.7	30.6	51.0	93.7	117.3
Tajikistan	6.2	10.0	16.8	13.6	23.3	52.6	98.7	250.2	347.5
Turkmenistan	0.2	0.1	7.0	0.2	0.3	1.5	0.7	2.1	2.8
Uzbekistan	6.1	10.1	15.5	14.6	24.1	49.0	105.1	344.6	563.2
Ukraine	64.1	91.9	61.0	102.6	108.6	141.8	171.3	209.3	227.1
from non-CIS states:	106.9	135.1	154.9	197.4	238.5	358.8	476.3	563.8	560.4
China	26.2	38.6	38.7	72.8	94.1	160.6	210.8	228.8	241.0
North Korea	8.7	9.9	12.7	13.2	14.7	20.1	27.7	32.6	31.7
Vietnam	13.3	20.1	26.7	35.2	41.8	55.6	69.1	79.8	76.1
Turkey	17.8	20.9	15.4	37.9	48.0	73.7	101.4	131.2	121.1

* Data for January-September 2008

Sources: Population and migration in the Russian Federation. Statistical Yearbook. Moscow: Rosstat; Monitoring of regular international labor migration in Russia in 2005-2006. Moscow: Federal Migration Service, 2007; Monitoring of regular international labor migration in Russia in 2007-2008. Moscow: Federal Migration Service, 2009. [all sources in Russian].

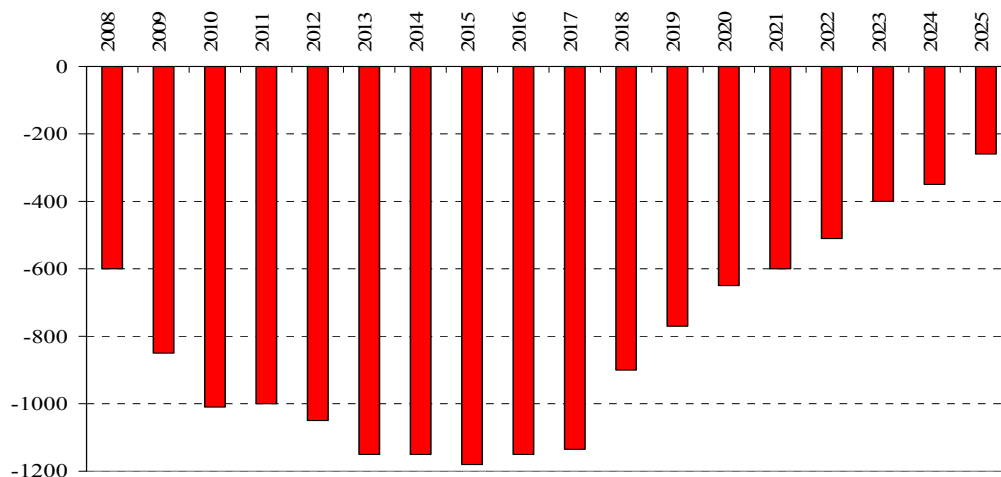
Demographic outlook of Russia

The major cause of liberalisation of the Russian migration policy is related to its demographic situation and forecast. Since mid-1990s Russia is facing a stable natural decrease of population due to imbalance between low fertility and high mortality rates. Between 1995 and 2007 it lost over 10 million of its population for vital reasons. Demographers are unanimous in forecasting an even sharper population decline in the nearest decades.

The shrinking and aging population calls for immigrants to meet demographic needs, economic demands and geopolitical interests. Since 2006, Russia is losing its labour-age population at an increasing rate, expected to reach after 2010 over 1 million per year, amounting to a total of about 18 million between 2006 and 2026. (The total labour force in Russia is 68 million in 2008.) (Vishnevsky 2008) At the same time the share of population of 65+ age will increase 20% (World Bank 2007). The decline of the working age population is

forecasted towards the middle of the century. Russia will need more than 25 million of immigrants to compensate the labour force decline within the next 20 years.

Figure 3. Decrease of labour-age population in Russia, 2008-2025, thousands



Source: The forecast of the Russian National Statistics Committee (Rosstat), medium scenario.

With that negative demographic background Russia is likely to shift towards ever more open immigration regulations – the trend that can be interfered only with national security concerns. Within the growing competition for labour resources among the receiving countries, Russia is to take considered and farseeing steps to increase its attractiveness for migrants and inspire the inflow of skilled workers.

Migration interdependence

Migration interdependence is not the unique characteristic of the Eurasian migration system. It is the feature of the contemporary stage of globalization typical for all the countries that are active participants of international migration flows and it can be most clearly seen through the international migration systems concept. The essence of migration interdependence consists in mutual stable involvement of both countries of origin and countries of destination in labour migration flows that are related to structural shifts in national labour markets and economic patterns. For source countries, it is associated with the access of their migrants to external labour markets, which improves employment rates and provides return financial flows. For destination countries, attraction of foreign workers eliminates labour shortages and becomes the built-in element of economic structure. Thus,

participation in migration flows turns into migration interdependence when migration turns into the essential, vital, and often having no alternative resource of development that fuels economic growth of both sending and receiving countries.

Migration interdependence is the backbone of contemporary migration systems. It can be affected but hardly ruined by economic crises in receiving states because of internal inertia of migration processes. As any other type of dependence migration dependence increases vulnerability of participating countries, however as an *interdependence* it gives incentives to interstate collaboration in the field of migration and increases survival and development capability of the region in the whole.

In the Eurasian migration system, migration interdependency is grounded in the demographic disparities, over-regional labour imbalance, segmentation of the Russian labour market, increased role of migrant remittances for source countries' economies, transnational economic activities of diasporas, and growing interest towards regional collaboration for the coordinated migration management.

In Russia, registered foreign migrant workers make up 3% of the total labour force. However, in particular sectors and regions actual percentage is much higher. For example, in the construction industry regular migrant workers are about 18% and, if unofficially employed migrants are taken into consideration, they totally make up 40-50%, i.e. 2-2.5 million workers. According to the Rosstat monitoring, in 2008, every fourth Russian construction company indicated lack of personnel as the factor that restrained its activities⁶. Over 40% of the totality of labour migrants in Russia is concentrated in the city of Moscow and the Moscow Province (*oblast*). Here, some sectors like public transport, construction, communal services, street cleaning, or care-giving services fully depend on migrant workers' labour. The total input of the CIS labour migrants to the Russian economy is estimated by the Russian Federal Migration Service as 6-8% GDP.⁷ Experts give even higher estimate – 8-9% GDP.⁸ Even under the economic recession in the first half of the 2009 the number of work permits issued to labour migrants from the CIS states to Russia was about half a

⁶ http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b08_11/IssWWW.exe/Stg/d02/17-07.htm

⁷ Interview of the Director of the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation K. Romodanovski: http://www.fms.gov.ru/press/publications/news_detail.php?ID=26698

⁸ Estimate of the Russian expert Y. Tiuriukanova: Russia Today, July 11, 2007, <http://www.russiatoday.ru/guests/detail/239>

million.⁹ That is the evidence of reduced but still significant demand of Russian employers for migrant labour because of lack of national workers, especially for manual and menial jobs.

In the sending CIS countries, numerous labour migration flows to Russia have seriously influenced national labour markets: they reduced unemployment, increased internal mobility of population, shifted the employment structure in favour of private sector, and enlarged the class of entrepreneurs. In the smaller countries of the region – Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan – 20% to 40% households have at least one member working in another country. In 8 cases of 10 this country is Russia. During the recent decade earnings in Russia contributed to growing incomes of households at micro-level and improvement of national balances of payment at macro-level. The scale and dynamics of migrant remittances in the post-Soviet states is shown in table 4.

Table 4. Remittances inflow and outflow in the post-Soviet states, 2000-2007, million USD

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Inflow to:								
Azerbaijan	57	104	181	171	227	693	812	1287
Armenia	87	94	131	686	813	940	1175	1273
Belarus	139	149	141	222	256	370	334	363
Georgia	274	181	231	235	303	346	485	705
Kazakhstan	122	171	205	147	165	178	188	223
Kyrgyzstan	9	11	37	78	189	322	739	715
Moldova	179	243	324	487	705	920	1182	1498
Russia	1275	1403	1359	1453	2495	2918	3091	4100
Tajikistan	...	...	79	146	252	466	1019	1250
Turkmenistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Uzbekistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1400*
Ukraine	33	141	209	330	411	595	829	1170
Outflow from:								
Russia	1409	1101	1823	2226	3233	5188	6989	11438
Kazakhstan	356	440	487	594	802	1354	2000	3037

* Estimate of experts of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC): *The EurAsEC Economic Review*, 2007, N:3, p. 50.

Sources: IMF Balance of Payments Statistics, August 2007; World Bank, World Development Indicators Database, October 2008.

In many post-Soviet countries the migrant remittances exceed in volume foreign direct investments (FDA) and official development aid (ODA). In Tajikistan and Moldova remittances account for 36.2% GDP; in Kyrgyzstan they are 27.6% GDP.¹⁰

⁹ From an interview of Deputy-Director of the Federal Migration Service Y. Yegorova to the author on 30.07.2009.

In this situation, labour migration is acknowledged as an element of development strategy by both sending and receiving countries of the CIS region. Understanding of the benefits of international labour migration stimulates national governments to elaborate encouraging migration policies while migration interdependence pushes them towards closer regional cooperation. Since mid-2000s this trend has been proved by practices of the CIS countries. *From the side of the receiving countries*, as it was already mentioned, Russia revised its migration legislation in 2007 and shifted to more liberal migration policy in respect of labour migrants from the CIS states; Kazakhstan legalized over 150,000 illegal labour migrants from the CIS countries in 2006 within the frames of the migrant amnesty campaign. *From the part of the origin countries*, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan included labour export issues in their national economic strategies; Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan signed bilateral agreements on labour migration with the Russian Federation; Armenia developed its bilateral agreement with Russia of 1994 towards its wider practical implementation; Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan signed direct agreements with big Russian enterprises on labour force supplies and vocational training. *In the field of interstate cooperation*, the CIS Convention on Legal Status of Migrant Workers and the EurAsEC Concept of Concerted Social Policy are the latest examples of active position of the countries in optimizing labour migration in the region. Besides, initiatives on organization of 'migration bridges', 'international migrant labour exchange', regional employment agencies were realized in the collaboration of the States and private businesses.

The impact of the 1998 financial crisis in Russia

By 1998 was Russia already taking an active part in international migration flows as a source and receiving country of both permanent and temporary labour migrants. The peak of immigration to Russia was in 1994 when it received over 1 million immigrants from former Soviet republics, and since that time the inflow of immigrants was going down. In 1997, the year before the crisis, Russia received 583,000 immigrants. Emigration from Russia was also reducing after the post-disintegration surge; in 1997 there were 150,000 émigrés from Russia, of them 84,400 persons emigrated to the non-CIS states.¹¹ In the context of temporary labour migration, Russia was issuing about 250,000 work permits to foreign workers per year.

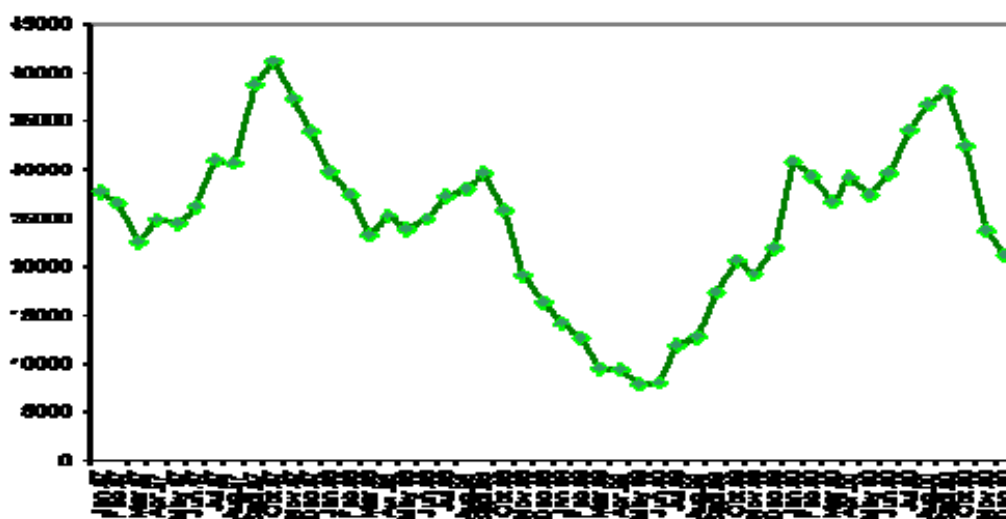
¹⁰ World Bank, World Development Indicators Database, October 2008.

¹¹ Data of the Russian National Statistics Committee (Rosstat).

Definitely, the financial and economic crisis that started in August 1998 affected migration flows to and from Russia, however, to a minor extent and for a short while. Figure 4 shows that in summer 1999 net migration to Russia was about twice less than in summer 1998. However, in 2000 net migration was already 30% higher than in 1999: 213,600 persons against 154,600 persons correspondingly (Vishnevski 2004). Emigration to Israel is the most sensitive flow towards political and economic shocks: the 1998 crisis in Russia echoed in two-fold rise in numbers of emigrants to Israel while the 2001 outburst of conflict with Palestinians resulted in three-fold decrease in number of emigrants to Israel from Russia. In 2002, only 5,800 persons left Russia for Israel.

The temporary labour migration to Russia, at least its registered segment, reacted with less than 13% decline in numbers of migrant workers (211,400 work permits issued in 1999 and 213,300 in 2000 in comparison to 241,500 work permits issued in 1997 and 242,300 in 1998). After rapid recovery, already in 2001 the number of foreign workers in Russia was 283,700.¹² (See also Figure 2.)

Figure 4. Net migration to Russia in 1997-2000 by months, persons



Source: The Russian National Statistics Committee (Rosstat).

Meanwhile, migration for unregistered employment in the CIS area that was estimated in late 1990s as 4-5 million experienced more serious impact of the 1998 crisis in Russia. Irregular migrants are usually low-skilled workers (or skilled workers that are forced for low-skilled works out of desperation) who are ready to accept lower wages than regular ones. But

¹² Data of the Russian National Statistics Committee (Rosstat).

when wage levels in Russia fell down within the crisis, traveling to this country, often rather costly, for extremely low paid jobs lost its reasonability for some part of migrants. Thus, migrants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan made their path to the informal labour market of Kazakhstan where the economic recovery started at that time. Geographical proximity, lower transport costs and possibility to visit a family in the homeland worked for their choice in favour of the neighbouring Kazakhstan where they found jobs in agricultural enterprises or in seasonal construction in Kazakhstan's booming cities of Almaty, Astana and Atyrau (Sadovskaya 2007, 168). This situation gave birth to the Central-Asian sub-regional migration system centered on Kazakhstan.

Recovery and rapid economic growth in Russia rooted in favourable oil prices conjuncture, re-encouraged the inflow of labour migrants that was primarily irregular in 2000s mainly because of over-complicated and ineffective Russian migration policy regarding legal labour migration management.

The Eurasian migration system in a wider global context

Despite the overwhelming prevalence of intra-regional migration flows the Eurasian migration system is open, i.e. it is connected with other migration systems. The 'external' migration partners are both destination and source ones. Israel was already mentioned as a destination country for the CIS migrants. The United States accepted over 400,000 immigrants from the post Soviet states during the 1990s including 120,000 intellectuals that are associated with brain drain (Malakha 2002). Besides, the USA receives temporary labour migrants from the CIS states: according to the IOM estimate about 130,000 Russian skilled migrants are working in the USA (IOM 2002). On the other hand, Russia and Kazakhstan are destination countries for labour migrants, primarily from China, Vietnam, Turkey, and North Korea.

The Eurasian system is closely interrelated with the European migration system. Geographical nearness and cultural proximity are important additional factors to differences in income and social security levels that generate migration flows from the former Soviet states to the EU countries. However, the strict selective immigration policy in the European countries withstands migrant inflow from outside the EU. As an exception, Germany encourages inflow of migrants with ethnic German roots from the post-Soviet territory where a numerous German diaspora has emerged due to historical reasons. According to the German sources over 2.2 million immigrants arrived to Germany between 1990 and

1998 from the ex-USSR countries (Denisenko 2001). For the moment migration between Russia and Germany is bidirectional: it accounts 6,000-7,000 persons a year towards Germany and 3,000-4,000 persons a year towards Russia (Rosstat 2008). Immigrants to Russia are mainly former emigrants who by some reasons failed to integrate in Germany and preferred to return.

The former socialist central European countries, in particular Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, were in an intermediate position between the EU and the ex-USSR during the 1990s. In terms of migration, they were likely closer to the European post-Soviet countries, i.e. Baltic states, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and Russia. Facilitated cross-border regime inspired numerous short-term circular migrations for seasonal employment and shuttle petty-trade to more prosperous central European states. Immigration for permanent and long-term residence was also widespread. For example, in the Czech Republic out of 211,000 foreigners with residence permit in 2001, 25% (52,000 persons) were Ukrainians and 6% (12,400 persons) were Russians. Among temporary labour migrants in the Czech Republic (the total of 168,000 in 2001), over one third was from the post-Soviet countries (Drbohlav, Janska 2004). With the accession of central European countries to the European Union and introducing stricter visa regime, these flows became more difficult but more attractive at the same time.

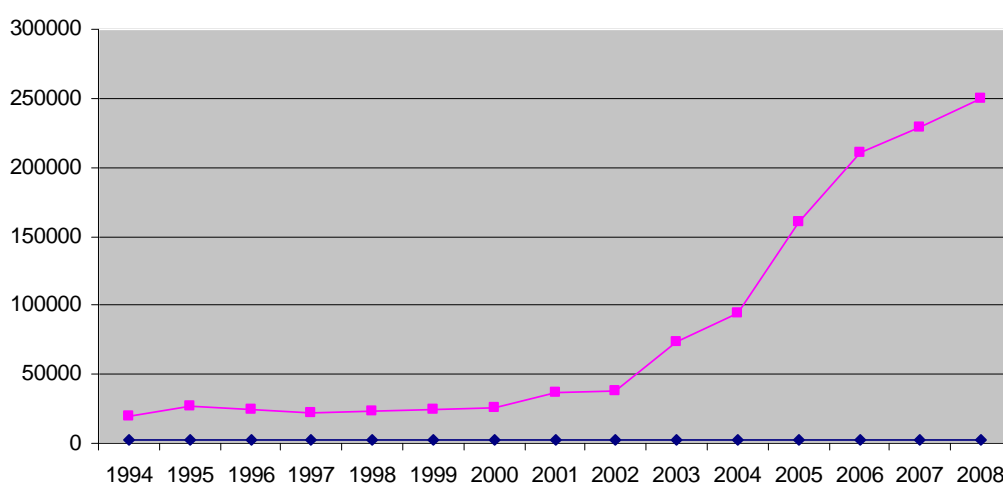
So, geographies of migration between the CIS region and the EU are strongly related to political issues. The migration vectors from Moldova and Ukraine to Italy and Spain are shaped not only by favourable climate and high demand for low-skilled labour but also by migration policy of these countries that practice repeating regularization campaigns. These campaigns allow Moldavian and Ukrainian migrants, who are mostly employed irregularly, to get legal status there.

Russia has active migration exchange with China. A part of the Pacific migration system, China has also close migration ties with many countries outside the region, namely the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, Peru, Russia, etc. The Chinese diaspora is considered to be the largest in the world: it is estimated 35 to 80 million persons with 1 billion total annual income and it has close contacts with the origin country.

Russia with its scarcely populated but rich with lands and natural resources Siberia and Far East Region seems a magnet for Chinese migrants who come as agricultural and construction workers' teams, tenant farmers, loggers, retailers, or commercial interests. The Central

European Russia where economic and financial activities concentrate, also attracts Chinese migrants. The estimated number of Chinese migrants in Russia is around 0.5 million. In 2008, over 250,000 Chinese citizens got work permits for employment in Russia; that is half of the total number of migrant workers from the non-CIS states in Russia (Federal Migration Service 2009) (Refer also to Figure 5). Experts agree that the scale of irregular Chinese migration is miserable (Gelbras 2001; Wishnick 2005; Larin 2003), however, large scale of the 'grey' Chinese business poses a serious problem for Russia.

Figure 5. Numbers of Chinese regular migrant workers in Russia



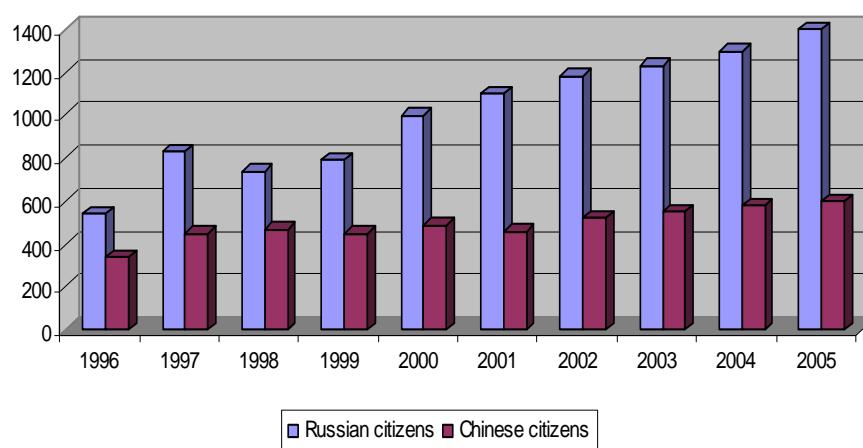
Source: The Russian National Statistics Committee (Rosstat)

Curiously, the cross-border statistics register stable excess of Russian visitors to China over Chinese visitors to Russia (Figure 6). Putting aside Russian 'pure' tourists and holiday-makers that are more predisposed to travelling abroad than Chinese ones¹³ that imbalance can be explained by (1) involvement of Russian citizens into Chinese cross-border commercial business when the Russians are used as commodities' delivery-persons who can easier arrange with the Russian customs and (2) formation of the Russia-to-China migration flow of skilled workers (engineers, researchers, professors, geologists, Russian and English teachers, etc.). The Russian communities in Beijing and Shanghai account tens of thousands persons and make the social capital for further migration of Russians to China (Wishnick 2005). The latter trend contrasts with the structure of China-to-Russia migration flow that consists mainly of unskilled and low-skilled workers while skilled Chinese migrants prefer other destinations where wage level is higher. The surveys conducted in the mid-2000s in the

¹³ UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, 2007, vol. 5, issue 3, p. 20

eastern provinces of Russia and the north-eastern provinces of China prove that the average income of Chinese urban residents is already 1.6 – 1.9 times higher than that of Russian citizens (Bajenova, Ostrovski 2007, 353). So, the major factor of international labour migration according to the neoclassical theory, i.e. differences in wage levels, seems losing its importance in fueling migration flows from China to Russia. Meanwhile, other factors related to importation of Russia's natural resources, mainly timber and minerals, and promotion of Chinese goods to the Russian market, gain value (Akaha 2006).

Figure 6. Numbers of visits of Russian citizens to China and Chinese citizens to Russia



Source: The Russian Federal Border Service

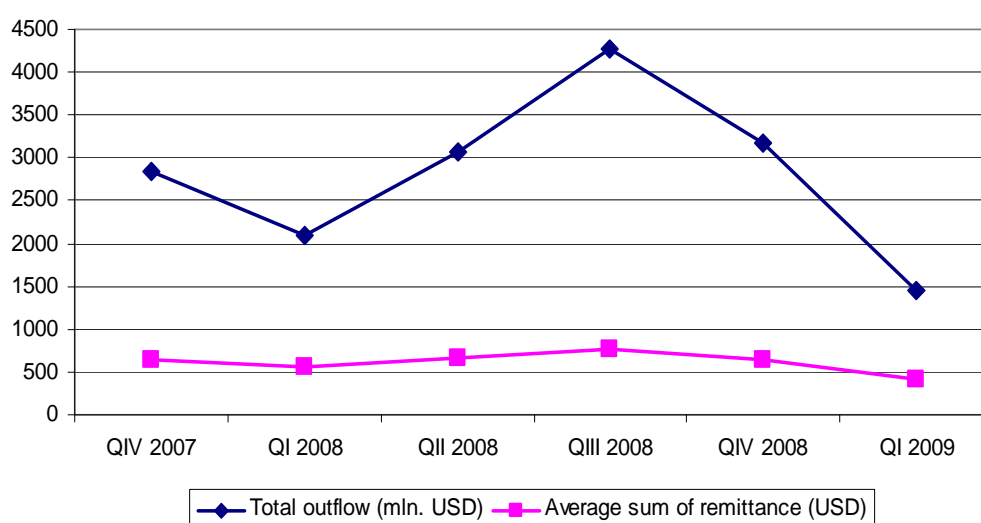
The further development of migration exchange between China and Russia will strongly depend of the above well-shaped trends while during the current global economic crisis they can be influenced by the situation in national economies of the both countries. Russia is likely to keep its attractiveness for Chinese agricultural migrants as agriculture is less affected by the crisis in comparison to other industries. Lay-offs in declining export sector in China where internal migrants from rural areas were employed can even more encourage this flow to Russia. Realization of the scale infrastructure projects in the Russian Far East Region planned for 2010-2020 will call for construction workers, including those from China. At the same time, revision of the Chinese economic strategy with more emphasis on domestic sector inspired by the global crisis can reduce the number of commercial migrants who implement the idea of the “people’s trade”.

How did and how will the current crisis influence the existing migration trends?

The global economic crisis that became apparent in Russia in early autumn 2008 by cutback in economic activity and growing unemployment resulted in the aggravation of the public debate on labour migration and growth of xenophobia in the Russian society. The populist decision on two-fold cut of the 2009 quota for foreign workers was the emergency response to upsurge of anti-immigrant perceptions.

At the same time the CIS source countries are concerned with return of migrant workers and remittances decline. In fact, while the World Bank experts predicted moderate decrease of migrant remittances 1 to 6% during the crisis (Ratha et al. 2008) the CIS countries experienced more sizeable drop off. According to the Central Bank of Russia the outflow of remittances to the CIS countries in the QI 2009 was 1,447 million USD, i.e. the 50% decline in comparison with the QIV 2008 and 30% less than in the QI 2008 (Figure 5). The average sum of a remittance also reduced from 761 USD in QIII 2008 to 649 UDS in QIV 2008 and to 418 USD in QI 2009.

Figure 5. Remittances from Russia to the CIS countries



Source: Central Bank of Russia

That substantial remittances decline from Russia can be explained by a number of reasons: (1) decrease in number of the CIS migrant workers in Russia because of both the crisis and the seasonal reasons; (2) wage cuts; (3) 25% Russian currency devaluation; (4) lowering of migrants' trust in banks and other official money transfer channels and shift to the former personal and informal channels.

Regardless of the reasons, that dramatic decline in remittances threatens social stability in the sending countries. In case of economic collapse that is quite possible in the poorest countries of the region like Tajikistan or Moldova it can be followed by outflows of refugees that will destabilize the situation in the region as a whole. Experts already give evidence for growing poverty and social tension in Central Asian states.¹⁴

Many labour migrants prefer to stay in Russia at any cost rather than return home because situation in their countries gives even less hope for employment. They choose to wait until the recession is over in Russia, even if they are to lower their wage expectations to the extreme '*any work for daily bread*'. The crisis is likely to reverse the trend towards legalization of labour migrants that has been started by the Russian migration reform in 2007. When making choice between forced returning home and employment in the informal sector with no contracted commitments and securities, laid-off migrant workers often opt for the latter.

Very likely the estimated 1 million outflow of migrants from Russia in the late 2008 was mainly the result of the usual seasonal decrease in labour demand. Since early spring 2009 the inflow of labour migrants renewed: during the first half of the 2009 about 0.5 million work permits were issued by the Federal Migration Service to labour migrants from the CIS states, including 180,000 work permits issued in the city of Moscow.¹⁵ This is nearly twice less than in the first half of 2008 but the absolute amount reflects the Russian labour market continuing demand for imported labour. Some Russia provinces that have declared the decline in the 2009 quotas in late 2008, have revised their decision in favour of increasing labour imports in summer 2009.

The demographic and geopolitical concerns make Russia maintain its close migration interrelations with the CIS states and keep up the 'open door' policy towards labour migrants from these countries. The fact that introduction of visa regime with the CIS countries in order to protect national labour market and counteract irregular migration *have not been even discussed* at the government level under the crisis indicates not only the long-term need of Russia for migrants but also understanding of the role of labour migration to Russia for the CIS source countries and its importance for regional integration (Ivakhnyuk

¹⁴ See for example: <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav073109a.shtml> ; <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav071009b.shtml> ; <http://eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav111008ru.shtml>

¹⁵ From an interview of Deputy-Director of the Federal Migration Service Y. Yegorova to the author on 30.07.2009; From an interview of the Head of the Moscow Department of the Federal Migration Service F. Karpovets on 22.07.2009 : <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1188995.html> .

2009a). Therefore, Russia is most likely to keep its position of the major destination for migrants in the Eurasian migration system during the crisis and afterwards.

The current crisis is global by character because of the globalized nature of the contemporary economy. For this reason, the possibilities for inter-regional redistribution of labour, at least at the initial stage of the current crisis, are limited, in contrast to the former crises that affected separate countries or regions. Later on, at the stage of recovery, the countries that will restore their economies quicker will benefit from an opportunity of wider selection within the international labour force. The backside of uneven recovery process can be related to flows of irregular migrants from everywhere who will rush to the moving ahead countries in search for employment.

The 2009 economic trends show that Russia is less likely to restore the pre-crisis economic growth rate as soon as the other emerging regional locomotives – Brazil, India and China that are known as BRIC countries together with Russia. The dependency of Russian economy on oil & gas export sector, structural imbalance of its economy and deficient high technologies sector reduce competitiveness of Russia at the global labour market. Keeping its role of the regional migration centre able to define the CIS regional migration order Russia will hardly compete for labour resources in a wider geographical context.

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