

## SCTMG 2020

### International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»

## MIGRATION AS A RISK FACTOR FOR REGIONAL STABILITY

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### *Abstract*

In recent years, migration processes have become a global problem that has exacerbated the political situation in many countries around the world. Migrant workers from the countries of the South Caucasus, Central Asia, Ukraine and Moldova arrive in Russia. Migration problems are topical for many Russian regions and in some of them have become a source of regional stability risks. One such region is the North Caucasus. Migration problems have moved from conflict-generating to risk-generating. The presence of specific migration flows, although not on a large scale, and their possible growth in the foreseeable future in the North Caucasus requires the identification and analysis of risks arising in the field of migration. Scientific and expert assessment of migration processes is an important condition for effective management decisions. The article analyzes the peculiarities of migration processes in the Stavropol Krai and the republics located in the North Caucasus Federal District and concludes that the risks caused by migration are due to changes in the "ethnic balance". This balance is not an absolute indicator, but a consequence of long processes of mutual adaptation. The work on adaptation insufficiently involves public organizations, national and cultural autonomy, which prefer to focus on ethnic identity rather than adaptation and integration. The basis of work on social and cultural adaptation of migrants is the strengthening of civic identity, the development of civil society and the involvement of migrants in social activity on a non-ethnic basis.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

**Keywords:** Migration, conflict factors, risks to regional stability, North Caucasus, adaptation of migrants.



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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, migration processes have become a global problem that has exacerbated the political situation in many countries around the world. Labour migrants from South Caucasus, Central Asia, Ukraine and Moldova arrive in Russia. Migration problems are topical for many Russian regions and in some of them have become a source of regional stability risks.

In the South of Russia, migration flows vary considerably from area to area. For example, the Stavropol Krai remains an attractive destination for labour and educational migrants due to its well-developed socio-economic, socio-cultural and recreational infrastructure. In the "national" republics of the Russian Federation located in the North Caucasus Federal District, the problems of migration have a different dimension: departure from them, as a rule, exceeds entry.

The North Caucasus Federal District still has a surplus of labour resources. Despite the positive dynamics in the sphere of employment, unemployment remains high, and therefore foreign labor migration to the North Caucasus is insignificant. But even under these conditions it exists and affects the socio-political processes. Stavropol Krai is characterized, first of all, by the arrival of migrants from the North Caucasus republics, i.e. Russian citizens.

Conflicts with migrants in Europe gave rise to fears caused by the flow of negative information. Increasing ethnic and religious differentiation, increasing pressure on the labor market and infrastructure create prerequisites for domestic and inter-ethnic conflicts, which create risks of emerging ethno-social and ethno-political stabilization in the North Caucasus. The low effectiveness of adaptation programmes for migrants hinders the optimization of their relations with the old-timers.

## 2. Problem Statement

Migration flows have a significant impact on many aspects of society. Migration has a significant impact on the age structure of the population and has a positive demographic effect in many regions. In economic terms, competition for jobs is often a negative consequence. The impact of migration on the economy is contradictory: on the one hand, immigrants occupy usually "non-prestigious" sectors of the economy, where local residents do not want to work; on the other hand, the departure of the most active part of local residents worsens the professional structure of the population. Negative attitudes towards migration are explained by the fact that in a number of cases it actually leads to increased social tension and dispersion of financial resources.

By the end of the second decade of the 21st century, migration flows in the North Caucasus ceased to be a direct destabilizing factor, so the analysis of migration problems as a threat to regional stability has exhausted itself. The North Caucasus can be characterized as a risk society. The problems of migration have moved from conflict-generating to risk-generating. The presence of specific migration flows, although not on a large scale, and their possible growth in the foreseeable future in the North Caucasus requires the identification and analysis of risks arising in the area of migration. Scientific and expert assessment of migration processes is an important condition for effective management decisions.

### **3. Research Questions**

Migration processes in Russia have significant regional differences. During the quarter-century after the collapse of the USSR, the south of Russia was characterized by intensive migration processes, and there were pronounced subregional differences: plain territories (Rostov region, Krasnodar and Stavropol territories) were recipients of migration flows, and mountainous territories (North Caucasus republics) were donors. At the end of the 20th century, migration processes in the North Caucasus became politically relevant due to the stressful migration from conflict zones, the growing migration balance, and changing forms of migration. These trends remained less acute in the first decade of the 21st century. The situation changed significantly in the second decade. It is necessary to identify the nature and direction of these changes in the migration component of regional stability, to identify the risks of regional stability that arise in the field of migration.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the study is to identify the specifics of the impact of migration on regional socio-political processes at the end of the second decade of the 21st century and to identify the problems and risks associated with this process, based on an analysis of migration processes in the North Caucasus, taking into account local specifics.

### **5. Research Methods**

Modern risk concepts were used to identify regional stability risks (Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1990; Luhmann, 1993; Yanitsky, 2003). According to Luhmann (1993), modern society is a risk society in which there is no risk-free behaviour. Yanitsky (2003) argues that "risk is an inevitable product of the machine called decision making" (p. 10). Bauman (2000) believes that modern society is a society of duality. The duality of any decision taken and the interfacing of any good with the greatest possible damage comes to the fore: the social project of modern society acquires a distinctly negative and protective character – not the achievement of the "good", but the prevention of the "worst" (Beck, 1992). The use of the basic provisions of modern riskology is constructive for revealing the riskogenic content of migration processes in the North Caucasus.

When studying migration risks in the context of regional stability, the provisions of Beck's risk concept are important, which can lead to the emergence of new socio-political forces. These forces are able to swing the political pendulum from general danger to unpredictable political actions and distrust of existing political institutions. In a situation of political instability, Beck (1992) asserts that the search for a fulcrum is inevitable – a "firm hand", authoritarian or even totalitarian. These constructs make it possible to identify the role of migration as a political resource.

Giddens' position on expert knowledge is also productive for the problem under analysis. Acknowledging that the modern world is structured by risk, Giddens identified "new" risk-generating elements of society: the saturation of modern society with knowledge of risk is risk. According to Giddens (1990), expert knowledge, its limitations or "gaps" can become a tool for actualizing risks in societal systems.

To determine the place and role of migration processes in the territory of the North Caucasus Federal District, a conflict-based approach was used, complemented by the theory of social disorganization (Park, 2011). According to Darendorf (1994), Coser (1956) and Boulding (1962), the research focus is on the changing nature of social reality. There is always a certain level of tension in society, the so-called "background tension". Social conflicts, according to Park (2011), can manifest themselves in various forms of deviant behavior. They arise when cultural values, norms and social ties are destroyed, weakened or become contradictory. Under conditions of growing geopolitical competition and incomplete socio-cultural integration of the North Caucasian community, conditions are created for increasing risks of migration processes. The main points of the theory of social disorganization make it possible to identify, describe and systematize factors and conditions for the politicization of ethnicity in the North Caucasus.

The theory of political identity is also used (Brubaker, 2006; Eisenstadt, 1978; Parsons, Bales, & Shils, 1953; Tilly, 1985). It is built around perceptions of the centrality of belonging to a group, which is important for identifying ethnic entrepreneurs in the North Caucasus.

## **6. Findings**

Intensive inflow of migrants from abroad, primarily from the CIS countries, from near and far abroad to the North Caucasus began to decrease from 2010-2014. External migration does not have a significant impact on inter-ethnic relations in the region. Internal inter-regional migration persists, but its intensity and impact on the ethno-political situation has also decreased.

However, understanding the North Caucasus as a region of risk requires analysis not only of the obvious conflict-generating factors, but also of the less obvious risks that are constantly produced by political decisions and actions of political actors. From this point of view, more important for inter-ethnic relations and the socio-political situation as a whole is intra-regional migration, which mainly consists in the relocation of Russian citizens from the North Caucasus republics to Stavropol.

Migration during the two post-Soviet decades was one of the most acute social and political problems of the Stavropol Territory. There was a tendency to outflow of the Russian population. The reasons for this are not only the complicated situation in interethnic relations, but also the lack of career prospects for educated young people. The outflow and even displacement of the Russian population was one of the main topics in the political discussions in the region, and many politicians tried to make the name of this problem. Typical publications were those in which Stavropol was predicted as an evacuation migration of Russians and an ethnic catastrophe. The comparison of Stavropol Krai with Kosovo was particularly popular (Stavropol Territory – Russian Kosovo, 2010). However, a noticeable decrease in the percentage of Russians can be traced only when comparing the current figures with the results of the 1959 census. (from 91.3 % of the population to 80.9 %), with the absolute number of Russians increasing from census to census. By the middle of the second decade of the XXI century such publications stopped. Studies conducted in the second half of the 2010s show that the problems caused by migration have steadily moved from the top of the rating of problems of concern to the residents of the Stavropol Territory to the last places (Avksentiev & Shulga, 2016).

The problems caused by migration have moved from the category of conflict-generating to the category of risk-generating. As a result of migration processes, there is a tendency for the formation of territories with compact ethnic groups, separate mono-ethnic settlements and urban quarters in the Stavropol Territory, primarily in its eastern regions. Insufficient integration of migrants, especially some young people from the North Caucasus republics, into the social and cultural environment of the Stavropol Krai is one of the reasons for the existing tension in relations between the old-timers and migrants.

The greatest increase in the post-Soviet period is characteristic of the Roma community in the Stavropol region – from 12617 people in the 1989 census to 30879 people in 2010 and 40,000 in 2019. This is the largest increase in one ethnic group in the province, with the exception of Meskhetian Turks who arrived in the province after the deadly 1989 conflict in Uzbekistan. The specifics of the Roma population are their almost complete lack of integration into the social life of the Stavropol Krai, which creates tension in the regions of compact settlement of Roma. The issue of Roma adaptation has been repeatedly discussed by the regional authorities, but no strategy has been developed. The Orthodox Church had become involved in the solution of the problem, and a project on the socio-cultural adaptation of the Roma by means of their vocalization was being implemented jointly with the "Cultural Centre for the Roma". The slow migration of labour migrants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan is relevant for Stavropol.

Dagestan is one of the most labor-abundant republics in the North Caucasus. Migration loss of population in Dagestan is 11-13 thousand people annually and Stavropol Krai is one of the most important directions. During the first 15 years of the current century, the Republic of Dagestan lost 160,900 people as a result of migration exchange (Gazieva, 2016).

Despite the constant outflow of people from Dagestan to other regions of Russia, there are migrants from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Vietnam in the country. The vast majority of migrants are unskilled laborers. In 2018, the Republic's enterprises submitted applications for the recruitment of 294 foreign workers. According to the republican government, the need to attract foreign workers is caused by the implementation of new investment projects. At the same time, there are difficulties in filling existing vacancies due to internal migration: the imbalance between real wages and the cost of settling in a new place, administrative difficulties and infrastructure deficiency (schools, kindergartens, medical institutions, financial services, etc.).

However, the main risk factor in Dagestan is intra-republican migration, migration from mountainous areas to flat areas. This process in itself is natural and typical for all countries with mountainous territories. The risks created by this type of migration in Dagestan are that those who come to the cities of the republic do not adapt, and often do not have the opportunity to adapt to urban life: low wages that do not allow them to buy or rent high-quality housing, difficulties in obtaining mortgages, lack of urban profession, and tension in the labor market.

Migration from the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia can be predicted to remain inertial, while migration from some countries, such as China, may increase. The situation is complicated by the fact that the majority of the North Caucasus republics are characterized by outflow of population, both Russian and Russian-speaking, and titular. With high unemployment rates, the republic receives

quotas for foreign labor. For example, in 2018, Ingushetia had such a quota, where unemployment is the worst in the North Caucasus Federal District. In Ingushetia, there even were protests against illegal migration.

Plans to develop a tourist complex in the North Caucasus may attract migrant workers with experience in building such facilities in other regions of Russia. These migrants will compete with local residents, and there is a high risk of new ethnic tensions. At the same time, there are facts when members of extremist organizations entered under the guise of migrants and then joined the ranks of armed formations (Suleymanov, 2017).

Risks of aggravation of relations with migrants are conditioned by insufficient integration of migrants into the host community and insufficient adaptation of the old-timers to the changing social and cultural environment. Inter-ethnic competition and contradictions in the sphere of property, employment, politics and management, as well as in the socio-cultural sphere are seldom a direct source of ethnic conflicts, but they contain the risks of such conflicts in the conditions of protracted economic crisis, deterioration of the economic situation of the population, aggravation of the land problem.

Risks caused by migration are conditioned by changes in the so-called "ethnic balance", which can be understood as the quantitative proportions of ethnic groups in a certain territory, when a stable non-conflict coexistence of ethnic groups is achieved. This balance is not an absolute indicator, but a consequence of long processes of mutual adaptation. Migration processes often change this balance, aggravate competition in the sphere of property, distribution of social benefits and other resources. Such risks often persist even in the case of quite successful adaptation of migrants. This is especially noticeable when new ethnic groups appear in a certain territory. A member of the Public Chamber of Kabardino-Balkaria, Kalmykov (2018) believes that the growth of the Turkish-Meskhetian community in the republic has led to an increase in tensions and conflicts at the domestic level between youth groups of migrants and local residents. Experts note that the Turkish-Meskhetian community is quite integrated into the life of Kabardino-Balkaria (Akkieva, 2016).

The majority of large higher education institutions in the North Caucasus are attended by foreign citizens, primarily from the states of the South Caucasus, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Student migration will increase, which is a positive trend and a sign of stabilization of the socio-political situation in the region, but requires additional adaptation measures for both migrants themselves and the host community.

In some areas of the North Caucasus, the problem of migration, socio-cultural adaptation and economic rehabilitation of foreign citizens is due to the repatriation of compatriots from abroad (the arrival of Adygs to Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachai-Cherkessia from Syria, Turkey and other countries). This migration process has both positive and risky aspects. The concept of a "compatriot" turned out to be undeveloped, and Adyg activists have repeatedly stated a "Slavic priority" in interpreting the concept of a "compatriot". In addition, foreign Adygs, who have lived for several generations in a completely different socio-cultural environment, often find it difficult to adapt to life, even in a related ethnic environment in the North Caucasus. In Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia, state and municipal authorities and NGOs have done a great deal of work on employment and adaptation of Adyg repatriates.

For North Ossetia, the pendular migration of Ossetians from South Ossetia, which has intensified since the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict in 2008 and Russia's recognition of South Ossetia's

independence, is relevant. Residents of South Ossetia come to North Ossetia systematically to solve their problems. Migration processes in North Ossetia can be characterized as unfavourable to its socio-economic development. People of working age and with good education continue to leave the republic: the four most productive age groups account for almost 60 % of the total number of migrants, and together with their children 71 % (North Ossetia, February 2018). At the same time, the number of migrants from economically less developed CIS countries coming to North Ossetia in the hope of earning money is increasing. In addition, the republic is characterized by intensive transit migration. One of the most difficult social and economic problems remains the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons who arrived in the republic in the 1990s from conflict zones (Kuchmasova, 2018).

The current migration risks require adjustment of regional programs to stabilize interethnic relations, adaptation of migrants, work with compatriots. It is the adaptation of migrants that is the least developed and formal part of the programs. Migrants often do not seek to integrate themselves into the host community, and in everyday life and culture these groups lead a separate way of life. Public organizations and national-cultural autonomies, which prefer to focus on ethnic identity rather than adaptation and integration, are not sufficiently involved in the work on adaptation.

Another weakness of this work is the stable idea that adaptation policy should be aimed only at migrants. This policy implies changes in the ethnic attitudes of the old-timers, overcoming ethnic stereotypes and prejudices. An integrated society emerges when this process is multifaceted. The basis of the work on the social and cultural adaptation of migrants is the strengthening of civic identity, the development of civil society and the involvement of migrants in social activity on the basis of non-ethnicity.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, migration risks in the North Caucasus by the end of the second decade of the XXI century have changed significantly. Although each of the territories in the region has its own specifics, the following general trends can be identified.

Firstly, the conflict-generating impact of migration on interethnic relations in the North Caucasus has been reduced, which has moved from being a direct conflict-generating factor to being a risk-generating factor.

Secondly, migration has become predominantly economic, with people leaving the North Caucasus for economic reasons as well as coming to the region.

Thirdly, migration processes are negative for socio-economic development. Most often people of the most active age and having education leave the region, and low-skilled labor force arrives.

Fourthly, there are infrastructural problems to replace labour migrants from abroad with local surplus population.

Fifthly, the implementation of new investment projects for the development of the tourism and recreation complex will attract new labor migrants to the region, which may disturb the "ethnic balance" in some areas.

Sixthly, insufficient adaptation of migrants may increase tension in interethnic relations, and non-integrated migrant communities may become the object of ethnic manipulation and ethnic entrepreneurship.

Seventhly, migration processes carry the risk of expanding the influence of radical beliefs and extremist ideas.

## Acknowledgments

The publication was prepared within the framework of the State Assignment of the RAS RC RAS, No. 1 AAAA-A-19-119011190170-5.

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