Exporting Unemployment:
Migration as Lens to Understand Relations between
Russia, China, and Central Asia

M.A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts
in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
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Abstract

The post-Soviet triangle of relations between Russia, China, and Central Asia is an important but underappreciated relationship, and is the focus of this paper. The formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001, comprising Russia, China, and Central Asia, was regarded by many in the West as a bloc similar to the Warsaw Pact. In reality, the creation of the group symbolizes a relationship more locally invested and more geared toward balancing conflicting national interests in the region than with competing against the West. The SCO, however, cannot alone explain the complexities of Russia, China, and Central Asia’s relationship. The triangle is a culmination of bilateral dealings over national and regional interests. The real work is not accomplished via multilateral forums like the SCO, but rather through bilateral interaction. Understanding the shared and conflicting interests of these nations can shed light on various factors influencing policy at the national and regional level. One key to understanding these influences is looking at Russia, China, and Central Asia’s relationship through the lens of migration. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia quickly became the second most popular destination for immigrants in the world behind the United States. Different from the situation in the United States, and at least more urgent than the situation in Europe, migration in the SCO region is driven by diverse, but pressing demographic and economic needs of
all the countries involved. Russia’s population is shrinking at an alarming rate and requires the aid of foreign labor to supplement the diminishing workforce. Central Asia deals with the opposite problem, requiring states to export unemployment to Russia and depend on remittances. China has both an expanding economy and an excess of domestic labor. Migration is an indication of economic and domestic pressures. Yet, it is also the product of conflicts over national and regional interests. This paper argues that conflicts of national and regional interests, together with economic and demographic realities are the driving forces of migration in the SCO region. It attempts to address the complexity of competing interests that influence migration and make stability in the region tentative. It argues that migration and migration policy are products of this competition, not necessarily the drivers of policy themselves. From this perspective, policy is a reaction to the competition of interests rather than a reaction to migration trends. In fact, migration of various ethnicities within the region is most often involuntary and unwelcomed, but nonetheless necessary for the survival of the individual and of the state. Therefore, states use migration as a means of meeting certain needs, whether that be fostering migration or averting it. Often, states have interests that urge them to do both. Thus, regimes deal with the task of appeasing conflicting interests. This paper addresses these conflicts of interest mostly from Russia’s point of view.
Dedication

Dedicated to Jared Brinkerhoff
Acknowledgements

I acknowledge and express gratitude for the detailed assistance of my advisor Dr. Morgan Liu and thesis committee member Dr. Goldie Shabad. I also acknowledge the technical assistance of Jacob Groves during final preparing of this document.
Vita

2000 ........................................... Governor John R. Rogers High School

2002 ........................................... Missionary work, St. Petersburg, Russia

2003 ........................................... Public Health Internship, Kiev, Ukraine

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Slavic and East European Studies
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Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union substantially changed foreign relations between the former Soviet republics and the world. More intimately, it changed foreign relations between these countries and their neighbors, and in some cases created foreign relations where there were none before. Several regional organizations sprang up to coordinate multilateral interaction and serve regional security and economic interests. Despite the ambitions of these organizations, many in the West have considered them ineffective due to lopsided power struggles and an inability to cooperate. Consequently, westerners often overlook unique relations that exist among states in this region and the driving forces that make these ties inevitable.

The triangle of relations between Russia, China, and Central Asia is one example of an important but underappreciated relationship in the area, and is the focus of this paper. In 2001 Russia and China, together with all Central Asian states, save Turkmenistan, established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and brought this relationship to the attention of the West. However, some western institutions regarded the SCO simply as an attempt to counterweight NATO and its monopoly on international legitimacy. They also regarded it as a group clearly
dominated by Russian and Chinese interests. It was easy to think of the SCO as a bloc similar to the Warsaw Pact and with similar ambitions. For example, the March 1996 crisis between China and Taiwan brought military resistance from the United States, while at the same time Russia was in conflict with the US over NATO expansion. At the Shanghai Five (predecessor to the SCO) summit one month later, both Russia and China won support for their respective disputes with the US, fueling western perceptions of the group as an anti-West bloc. However, neither conflict was a focus during the summit itself. Russia and China addressed these issues separately at the summit during bilateral talks. In practice, states in the region more often use bilateral relations rather than multilateral relations to interact. In addition, even after the 1996 summit, member states repeatedly stressed the group was not an alliance pitted against the West. Countries in this area deal with the US and other Western powers bilaterally and none hope to establish exclusive ties (especially in trade) with SCO member states. The formation of the group symbolizes a relationship more locally invested and more geared toward balancing conflicting national interests in the region, than with competing against the West.

The SCO was originally the Shanghai Five, created in 1996 (without Uzbekistan) for the purpose of settling border disputes. Today it acts as a forum for addressing specific regional security interests (terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism) and for mediating clashes over water resources, customs, and border regimes. It also addresses problems associated with migrant flows in the region,

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especially as they relate to regional security (drug trafficking, human trafficking, separatism, etc.). The SCO, however, cannot alone explain the complexities of Russia, China, and Central Asia’s relationship. The triangle is a culmination of bilateral dealings over national and regional interests. The real work is not accomplished via multilateral forums like the SCO, but rather through bilateral interaction. Understanding the shared and conflicting interests of these nations can shed light on various factors influencing policy at the national and regional level.

One key to understanding these influences is looking at Russia, China, and Central Asia’s relationship through the lens of migration. Globally, migration has increased dramatically over the last twenty years, due in large part to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emergence of newly independent states. The number of international migrants\(^2\) “rose from 82 million in 1970 to 175 million in 2000, more than doubling over the course of thirty years.”\(^3\) Without the breakup of the USSR, “the number of international migrants in 2000 would have been some 27 million lower.” The Russian Federation in the early 1990s suddenly went from dealing only with internal population movements to a completely new set of economic and social issues surrounding international migration. Russia quickly became the second most popular destination for immigrants in the world behind the

\(^2\) According to the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in New York, “evidence suggests that censuses generally include undocumented migrants in the counts they produce, thus providing a good basis for the estimation of all international migrants.” International Migration Data and Statistics. *World Migration Report 2005.*

United States. The United Nations estimates Russia, in the early 1990s, had nearly 12 million immigrants, while the United States had 23 million. Table 1, from the International Organization for Migration’s 2008 report, breaks down the number of immigrants according to nationality living in Russia at the time of Russia’s 2002 census. Table 2 in this same report gives numbers for immigrant flows into Russia according to nationality from 1997 to 2006. Both tables are included below, as well as two additional tables from the same report showing the amount of remittances flowing in and out of Russia. In 2006, the over 12 million immigrants in Russia made up 8.4 percent of the population. Though Russia’s population decline has increased the need for foreign labor over the last two decades, these tables indicate the number of immigrants has remained fairly constant, creating a growing labor deficiency in Russia.

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5 Today, Russia has roughly the same number it had in the early 1990s. Immigrants from Central Asia continue to make up nearly half of these 12 million.
6 Today, the number of immigrants in the United States is nearly 43 million.
8 According to IOM, the World Bank (table 3) and the Central Bank of Russia (table 4) show different figures because they used different methodologies. Chindea, 43.
9 Chindea, 17.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>846</td>
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<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>481</td>
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<tr>
<td>Byelorussia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>629</td>
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<td>Kazakhstan</td>
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<td>Kirghizia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>278</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tadzhikistan</td>
<td>383</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkmenia</td>
<td>175</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>918</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>3,560</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,977</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Population born outside of the Russian Federation (in thousands; as of 9 October 2002)\(^{10}\)

*Original Source: The 2002 Census in the Russia, Rosstat, 2005*

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\(^{10}\) Chindea, 18.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Arrivals to the</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Russian Federation, Total</strong></td>
<td>597,651</td>
<td>359,330</td>
<td>193,450</td>
<td>184,612</td>
<td>129,144</td>
<td>119,157</td>
<td>177,230</td>
<td>186,380</td>
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<td><strong>of which from:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIS countries:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>29,878</td>
<td>14,906</td>
<td>5,587</td>
<td>5,635</td>
<td>4,277</td>
<td>2,584</td>
<td>4,600</td>
<td>8,900</td>
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<td>Armenia</td>
<td>19,123</td>
<td>15,951</td>
<td>5,814</td>
<td>6,802</td>
<td>5,124</td>
<td>3,057</td>
<td>7,581</td>
<td>12,949</td>
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<td>Belarus</td>
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<td>10,274</td>
<td>6,520</td>
<td>6,841</td>
<td>5,309</td>
<td>5,650</td>
<td>6,797</td>
<td>5,619</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
<td>24,517</td>
<td>20,213</td>
<td>9,674</td>
<td>7,128</td>
<td>5,540</td>
<td>4,886</td>
<td>5,497</td>
<td>6,806</td>
</tr>
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<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>235,903</td>
<td>124,903</td>
<td>65,226</td>
<td>55,706</td>
<td>29,552</td>
<td>40,150</td>
<td>51,094</td>
<td>38,606</td>
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<td>10,740</td>
<td>13,139</td>
<td>6,948</td>
<td>9,511</td>
<td>15,592</td>
<td>15,669</td>
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<td>6,742</td>
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<td>5,346</td>
<td>3,339</td>
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<td>6,523</td>
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<td>6,738</td>
<td>4,402</td>
<td>4,531</td>
<td>6,299</td>
<td>3,734</td>
<td>4,104</td>
<td>4,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>39,179</td>
<td>40,810</td>
<td>24,873</td>
<td>24,951</td>
<td>21,457</td>
<td>14,948</td>
<td>30,436</td>
<td>37,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>138,231</td>
<td>74,748</td>
<td>36,503</td>
<td>36,806</td>
<td>23,418</td>
<td>17,699</td>
<td>30,760</td>
<td>32,721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>from non-CIS countries:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
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<td>245</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>109</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>1,753</td>
<td>1,627</td>
<td>1,962</td>
<td>2,692</td>
<td>3,117</td>
<td>3,025</td>
<td>2,900</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
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<td>182</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>176</td>
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<td>1,373</td>
<td>1,670</td>
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<td>103</td>
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<td>346</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>499</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5,658</td>
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<td>1,263</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>766</td>
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<td>360</td>
<td>371</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>358</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>411</td>
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<td>184</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>172</td>
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<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>535</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>446</td>
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<td>347</td>
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<td>1,794</td>
<td>1,305</td>
<td>1,372</td>
<td>1,432</td>
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</table>

Table 2. Immigration flows to the Russian Federation by country of departure, 1997-2006.\(^\text{11}\)


\(^{11}\) Chindea, 29.
Table 3. Remittances to and from the Russian Federation, 2000-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remittances (million USD)</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inward remittance flows</td>
<td>1,275</td>
<td>1,403</td>
<td>1,359</td>
<td>1,453</td>
<td>2,668</td>
<td>3,117</td>
<td>3,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which Workers' remittances</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1,098</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation of employees</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,714</td>
<td>1,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrants' transfer</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outward remittance flows</td>
<td>1,101</td>
<td>1,823</td>
<td>2,226</td>
<td>3,233</td>
<td>5,188</td>
<td>6,989</td>
<td>11,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which Workers' remittances</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>1,306</td>
<td>2,672</td>
<td>3,051</td>
<td>4,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation of employees</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>1,464</td>
<td>2,921</td>
<td>6,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrants' transfers</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>1,052</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>813</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Remittances sent via money transfer systems in 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination country</th>
<th>Remittances from Russia (million USD)</th>
<th>Share (%)</th>
<th>Source country</th>
<th>Remittances to Russia (million USD)</th>
<th>Share (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,005</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,304</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadzhikistan</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Armenia</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>6.8</td>
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<td>525</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
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<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Remittances to and from the Russian Federation, 2000-2006

Original Sources: World Bank, Development Prospects Group

Table 4. Remittances sent via money transfer systems in 2006

Original Source: Central Bank of Russia

Though some factors influencing migration worldwide also influence migration in the SCO region (e.g. poverty, oppression), dealing with migration in this...
area is fundamentally different from dealing with migration in the United States. Besides the much lower cultural cost of immigration to Russia, due to the high percentage of immigrants from FSU (former Soviet Union) republics who already know the Russian language and culture, Russia’s population is in steep decline and needs foreign labor more urgently than the United States or even EU countries.\textsuperscript{14} Despite government pro-natal campaigns, “Russia’s population is estimated to shrink by 20% to 112-119 million people by 2050.”\textsuperscript{15} This is a serious concern not only because the population is not reproducing itself, and is not expected to do so until at least half way through the 21st century,\textsuperscript{16} but also because in 2007, “retirements and premature deaths were—for the first time ever—not compensated for by people entering the WAP [working-age population]—a delayed effect of the consistently low birth rate.” In 2007, while the net decrease of working-age Russians totaled just 300,000, this number doubled in 2008. From 2011 to 2017, the decline in Russia’s working-age population is expected to exceed 1 million per year.\textsuperscript{17} To counteract this, “Russia needs an annual inflow of 1 million immigrants—3 times as many as the average official annual flow over the last 15 years [1990-2005], and 5 times as many as in the [years leading up 2005] after tightening the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{15} Andrienko, 2.
\textsuperscript{16} Ioffe, G., and Zayonchkovskaya, Z. “Immigration to Russia: Why it is inevitable, and how large it may have to be to provide the workforce Russia needs.” \textit{The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research}, The University of Washington: 21 January 2010, 2.
\textsuperscript{17} Ioffe, G., and Zayonchkovskaya, Z., 2
\end{flushright}
migration legislation.” Meanwhile, nearby Central Asia and China have growing populations. Poor economic conditions in much of Central Asia (except Kazakhstan\textsuperscript{19}) and China’s global economic strategy, whereby it uses emigrants to exploit foreign markets, create incentives to export domestic labor power to Russia.

Different from the situation in the United States, and at least more urgent than the situation in Europe, migration in the SCO region is driven by diverse, but pressing demographic and economic needs of all the countries involved. Migration is an indication of economic and domestic pressures. Yet, it is also the product of conflicts over national and regional interests. This paper argues that conflicts of national and regional interests, together with economic and demographic realities are the driving forces of migration in the SCO region. It attempts to address the complexity of competing interests in Russia, Central Asia and China that influence migration and make stability in the region tentative. It argues that migration and migration policy in the region are products of this competition, not necessarily the drivers of policy themselves. From this perspective, policy is a reaction to the competition of interests rather than a reaction to migration trends. In fact, migration of various ethnicities within the region is most often involuntary and unwelcomed, but nonetheless necessary for the survival of the individual and of the state. Therefore, states use migration as a means of meeting certain needs, whether that

\textsuperscript{18} Andrienko, 2.
\textsuperscript{19} Kazakhstan has the strongest economy in Central Asia and is the only SCO country besides Russia that attracts a net increase of migrant labor.
be fostering migration or averting it. Often, states have interests that urge them to do both. Thus, regimes deal with the task of appeasing conflicting interests.

This paper addresses these conflicts of interest mostly from Russia’s point of view. First, Russia deals with a conflict between labor needs and nationalism. This stems from a need for economic growth, which competes with a need for defining and maintaining cultural identity. This situation produces another conflict: incentives for both legal and illegal immigration. In an effort to avoid the above conflicts altogether, Russia deals with the conflict of funding national pro-natal policy amidst economic crisis and general declining interest among Russians to raise families. Pro-natal policy and anti-immigration laws, promoted by nationalist groups, also conflicts with incentives for developing “selective immigration” policy instead of anti-immigration laws. One of the major conflicts within selective immigration is the preference for Central Asian migrants over Chinese migrants, despite a need for both. The main difficulty in attracting migrants from Central Asia is Russia’s interest in permanent migration, which conflicts with the interest of most Central Asians to migrate on a temporary basis.

This paper also deals with past and present conflicts in Central Asia that influence migration today. Many of these conflicts can be traced back to conflicts in Soviet policy regarding internal migration and ethnic diversity. Soviet policy fostered both assimilation and segregation. Today this conflict takes the form of integration versus interdependency. This paper uses the term “integration” to mean the cooperation of Central Asian states to act cohesively in economic and political
realms. Given the Soviet legacy of segregating ethnicities in the region and the subsequent power struggles permeating state interaction today, these countries integrate minimally. However, the Soviet system made it difficult for Central Asian states to exist economically on their own after the Union collapsed and some integration was necessary. Migration is the means they use to fill this economic imperative to integrate. In other words, Central Asian states integrate only as much as they have to. Weaker economies depend on healthier economies to need and accept migrant laborers and allow a flow of remittances from wealthier states to poorer states. This study refers to this system as “interdependency” and argues the present system conflicts with incentives for better integration. Integration could potentially allow greater stability for Central Asia as a region and make it less vulnerable to unwanted western involvement. Maintaining the status quo continues to draw western assistance along with western agency setting—something neither Russia, China or Central Asia are fond of.

Conflicts for Russia

One of Russia’s interests following the collapse of the Soviet Union was building nationalism. It did so in an effort to rebound from so much dissolution during collapse and to bolster the authoritarian state thereafter. Nationalist sentiments fostered xenophobia as immigrants began flooding into the country from former Soviet republics. Despite calls from ultranationalist groups to expel non-Russian migrants, the authoritarian regime, often the benefactor of such nationalist groups, found it difficult to comply because of Russia’s growing need for foreign
labor. The demographics crisis plaguing Russia since the Brezhnev era continued to demand the addition of non-Russian labor to meet the needs of a growing economy and declining workforce. Russian authorities continue to deal with this conflict of interests, often creating immigration policies worded vaguely enough to appear in support of nationalist groups, while allowing continued immigration from neighboring republics. Consequently, discrimination, resentment, and even violent aggression await immigrants to the Russian Federation. When this is met with government resistance, anti-state hostility rises.

Trying to serve both the interests of nationalist groups and the interests of a growing economy makes millions of immigrants in Russia illegal. Keeping immigrants illegal takes some of the blame off the government for negative repercussions of immigration and pins this on the migrants themselves. For instance, the lack of jobs during economic recession or criminal activity arising from the development of illegal trafficking can be blamed on illegal immigration instead of on a government seeking to attract foreign labor. Thus, the government can appear to support the anti-immigration efforts of nationalist groups, while reaping some of the benefits of foreign labor. Yet, this also makes it difficult to collect taxes from migrant labor and aggravates the above problems by making illegal immigrants, who will work for less than ethnic Russians, more attractive to employers than those with legal status. Though an emphasis in policy on legalizing and registering migrant laborers would satisfy one interest, it would sacrifice the other and lose for Russian leadership vital nationalist support.
A strong pro-natal campaign seems a viable answer, in theory, to satisfying both the nationalist and demographic needs of Russia. It certainly appeals to Russia’s desire for self-sufficiency and the assertion from many in the Kremlin that Russia can solve its demographics problem internally. However, pro-natal policy has been unsuccessful in altering demographic trends for several reasons. First, due to the recent economic crisis, the government has been unable to guarantee subsidized housing and other incentives it promised to give childbearing mothers. Second, the number of woman in prime childbearing age groups is declining. And third, Russians are becoming less inclined to bear and raise children in poor economic conditions. These factors contribute to a further drop in births and require leaders to consider external sources for labor.

Due to the limitations of pro-natal policy to replenish Russia’s workforce internally, some leaders in government have moved towards modeling immigration policy after European “selective immigration” policies instead of simply restricting immigration in favor of a pro-natal fix. This suggests there is a tendency among Russian policy makers towards accepting immigration as the answer to demographic woes and lack of labor, despite xenophobia and ultranationalist movements among the population. It implies that among leaders pro-natal policy is less considered an outright answer and more something to appease nationalist sentiments (even among leaders themselves). Answering the demographics crisis internally may be a preference, but is not considered plausible. However, among
ultranationalist groups and political parties campaigning for power, fixing the demographics crisis internally is still the pervasive view.

Within Russia’s need for foreign labor lies another conflict. Russia has more interest in attracting immigrants from FSU republics than from other neighbors. Language and cultural hurdles are much fewer for these migrants due to a process of Russification during the Soviet century. However, the workforce in Russia is declining at such a rate that neither the return of Russia’s diasporas, nor the immigration of workers from FSU republics can make up the difference. Therefore, against its preference and against its fear of China’s exploitative global economic strategy, Russia needs Chinese immigrants.

Russia benefits more from immigrants who seek permanent residency than from seasonal workers. Yet, its preference for migrants from FSU republics conflicts with the tendency of Central Asian migrants to return home. Whereas ideally the immigrant to Russia would remain and help build the economy and infrastructure, migrants from Central Asia come with the intent of making enough money to return home and build the economy and infrastructure there. Incidentally, Chinese immigrants have a growing tendency to seek permanent residency in Russia. Russia’s preference also conflicts with the lack of skilled labor coming out of Central Asia. Though Russia could benefit from encouraging the immigration of students from Central Asia to study in Russian institutions and apply that education in Russian markets, this conflicts with the probable tendency of these students to gain
education in Russia only with the intention of returning home and using their skills to become permanent contributors to society there.

*Conflicts for Central Asia*

Another conflict between Russian and Central Asian interests is found in the system of interdependency influencing current migration trends in the region. Russia is able to attract migrants from Central Asia mainly because it offers the greatest potential for economic prosperity for migrant workers, not because Central Asians want to leave their homeland. Whereas Central Asia would rather be stable and economically independent from Moscow, Moscow depends on these workers and, therefore, the poverty and dependence of Central Asian states on remittances earned in Russia. This poverty also leads to a lack of integration in Central Asia and thwarts the efforts of Kazakhstan—one Central Asian state actually succeeding in becoming economically independent from Moscow—to promote integration in the region. Russia and Kazakhstan’s interests in this regard conflict. However, it is difficult to determine whether Kazakhstan is more interested in the regional independence from Russia that integration would allow, or the dominant role Kazakhstan would play in the region with Russia further out of the picture. Regardless, Kazakhstan has implemented a more open immigration policy than Russia, it emphasizes the legalization of immigrants, and it enforces non-discrimination laws, partly in an effort to encourage migration within Central Asia over immigration to Russia. Even if this does not lead to greater integration, it is at least safe to say that every state in Central Asia seeks greater economic
independence, but will not achieve this while migration trends serve the interests of Russia.

The Soviet system, which was centered on maximizing productivity, left Central Asian republics independently inept in industry and infrastructure. The breakup of the Union was also the breakup of production lines that depended on the bulk production of various goods all over the Union to survive. At the same time the Soviet collapse solidified ethnic and national lines. Consequently, this process solidified national borders, while simultaneously creating a need to use migration as a necessary form of integration. Though nationalisms that formed under Soviet rule helped build a sense of territorial belonging in Central Asia that might have seen ethnic groups in the region readily cling to their new nations, the aftermath caused these groups to turn again toward Moscow for economic assistance through migration and remittances.

Though the hardened ethnic divisions in Central Asia today are partly due to the Soviet Union’s promotion of both integration and segregation, ethnic division is not the primary conflict with integration, nor the primary factor influencing migration. Identifying with national borders, especially for poor countries, is the main conflict. The scarcity of jobs ignites otherwise passive ethnic discrimination and creates a need for tighter borders. Conversely, it also creates a dependency on healthier states to keep their borders open so impoverished states can export their unemployment. At least among remittance seeking states, this is a conflict that etches deeper racial and national lines, the opposite of what integration requires.
and the reverse of the healthier social and political infrastructure that integration would produce.

Within Central Asia, disparities between economic capabilities of different states cause a chain reaction of migration from worse economies to better. This is not adequately countered by the creation of jobs at home, but instead is perpetuated by remittance-addicted regimes, afraid of civil and political unrest if émigrés are forced to return home unemployed. Policies that perpetuate this process conflict with polices that would create jobs at home, enable economic independence from Moscow and satisfy the desire of populations to remain at home where deep seeded loyalties have drawn them for centuries.

Economic differences and power struggles between states in the region contribute to a lack of cooperation and prevent greater integration than what migration offers. But it is not only the impoverished Central Asian states that have interest in greater economic and political stability. All the players in this region have interest in the political and economic stability of other countries in the region, if at least because of concerns over regional security and unwelcomed criticisms from the West. The system of interdependency dictating migration patterns in the region is a weak structure vulnerable to economic crisis. With many Central Asian economies dependent on the continued growth of Russian and Kazakh economies, setbacks at the top can be disastrous at the bottom. And when countries teetering on destitution have nowhere to send their unemployment, civil and political unrest
can result. This disrupts trade routes and often leads to heightened involvement from the West with its western agenda.
Xenophobia vs. Demographics

Xenophobia has grown along side the rise of migrant workers in Russia and Central Asia over the last two decades. Since the break up of the Soviet Union, Russia in particular has struggled to balance the need to encourage nationalism among its people, while simultaneously protecting the safety of immigrants. If it were only a matter of protecting immigrants from racial aggression, Putin’s initiative in 2008 to significantly reduce the migrant quota would seem reasonable. But the conflict does not lie in an excess of unwanted foreign laborers. It lies in the fact that despite Russia’s need for nationalism, it also needs migrant workers. One undermines the other. Due to the economic boom preceding the current recession, as well as a drop in fertility rates in the 1990s, the lowest levels of Russia’s economy rely on the labor of foreign workers performing tasks unwanted by locals.

In 2008, the Russian Federal Migration Service (FMS) announced Putin’s decision to reduce its quota of labor migrants by two-thirds. Official figures from 2007 reported six million migrants living in Russia. The new quota cut this figure to 2 million. In part, this was a response to claims that migrant workers were stealing jobs from local Russians. These claims increased as the country fell victim to the global economic crisis. It also appeared to answer complaints that immigration spawned criminal activity. This reduction, however, has so far been unrealized.
Migrants were not forced or kept out of the country as expected. Nor did many employers feel it was in their best interest to lose their migrant labor force. Some migrants report “that their Russian employers requested them to remain on construction sites despite lower salaries until the economy rebounds.” This is because migrants have a niche in the job market, require less pay than Russians, and occupy jobs that local Russians don’t want. Some of these jobs include “public transport drivers, construction workers, retailers, and street sweepers.” The economic boom during the years preceding the crisis helped produce distaste among Russians for menial labor. In turn, this gave Russian employers the chance to become accustomed to obtaining cheap labor from migrants. Without enforcing the new policy on illegal migrants, as well as on Russian employers who disregard it, the quota reduction does little more than acknowledge the validity of concerns over migration issues.

It appears the new policy was constructed to do just that—address growing concerns, but avoid forcing specific changes. The wording of the legislation seems to purposefully leave room for interpretation. According to Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (CACI) analyst Erica Marat, the policy does not ensure a reduction in immigration for two reasons. “First, Putin referred to the official number of immigrants, which is significantly lower than unofficial data. And, second, the

21 Marat.
number of immigrants can be cut anywhere between zero and 50 percent.”

Because the “official number of immigrants” is below four million, the legislation requires only that at most 1.9 million of its unofficial twelve million migrant workers be sent back. Even that number can be lowered if those in charge of implementing the policy deem it prudent. Putin has delegated that task to the Ministry of Health. This ministry will define how the policy should be implemented across all cities and regions of Russia. Undoubtedly, varying interests across the country will call for different measures based on local needs. This became evident when in 2009 Moscow announced a decrease in the quota for guest workers, while other regions called for an increase. Marat argues that Putin’s legislation thus seems to recognize “the importance of the foreign workforce in Russia, while realizing the local population’s frustration with the economic slowdown and the need to take action.”

Another reason for the loosely worded policy and, therefore, the inaction in carrying out the policy’s supposed measures, is the lack of ethnic Russian workers. Russia is losing its working-age class at an alarming rate, due to a fall in births among Russians during the 1990s. According to Sarah Schafer of the Washington Post, “the country’s native workforce of about 90 million is expected to shrink by as many as a million people a year between 2010 and 2016.” This could mean a loss

22 Marat.
23 Marat.
of ten million workers by 2025. Without immigration, “in order to maintain the same ratio of workers to pensioners, it would be necessary to raise the retirement age to 73—a politically unpopular proposition in a country where the current life expectancy for both sexes combined is now just 65.”²⁵ In this light, Russia’s reliance on foreign laborers is a certain reality. As evidence that the government is aware of this, in 2007 it initiated a program that expedited Russian citizenship for migrant workers. The government “hoped to recruit about 25,000 immigrant workers to a fast-track program for citizenship, but only 300 people applied.”²⁶ Though Russia is second only to the United States in the number of immigrants living on its soil, it appears a majority of those immigrants are not enticed by the prospect of obtaining permanent residency. They are there not because they necessarily want Russian citizenship, but because they can make up to fifteen times as much as they can in their poverty-stricken homelands.

Certainly the increase in violence against ethnic minorities in Russia does nothing to lure immigrants. In fact, in recent years Kazakhstan, instead of Russia, has become the destination of choice for an increasing number of migrant laborers from other Central Asian states. Kazakhstan, becoming a net importer of migrant workers only this decade, is reported to have over half a million immigrants. Though less lucrative than Russia in terms of migrant salaries, Kazakhstan has the largest


economy in Central Asia and is ethnically less hostile towards foreign laborers. This is emphasized by the fact that in recent months, Russia has seen racist violence increase dramatically against Central Asians. The Moscow Bureau for Human Rights states “a record 122 foreigners were killed in Russia last year in hate crimes, up from 25 in 2005.” While there is evidence of Russia taking measures in recent years to curb ethnic violence, which seemed to produce results, the zeal and determination of ultranationalists have not diminished, but rather taken different forms. As groups adapt to state resistance, reports continue to show an increase in racial violence.

Alexander Brod, the head of the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights, and the Sova Center—a “human rights NGO and think tank that conducts sociological research on development of nationalism and racism in modern Russia”—gave credit to “last year’s police crackdown on radical neo-Nazi groups in Russia, particularly in Moscow,” for the decreases in some categories of racist violence. According to Brod, “the prosecutor’s office too has recently opened up more criminal cases against far-right extremists, and courts have increasingly passed

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27 Schafer.
29 While most figures for the number of racial murders in 2009 show an increase from previous years, the figures vary significantly. In one case, the figures even show a decrease in ethnic murders from the previous year. Many reports, including the figure showing a decrease, cite the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights and the Sova reports. This shows perhaps the difficulty monitoring groups have gathering and interpreting data over such a vast and socially diverse space, as well as possibly the conflict of agendas and the corruption that inhibits strict reporting.
30 RIA Novosti Russian Profile. “Catch me if you can,” LexisNexis Academic. 10 January 2010.
guilty verdicts, both of which have had a positive impact.” However, monitoring organizations are skeptical that this apparent decrease in racial hostility reflects an overall decline in ethnic violence. Some authorities assume ultranationalist groups are only adjusting to the government crackdowns. In other words, violence is evolving into perhaps something more dangerous. Similar situations in other countries have sprouted terrorist groups, answering government crackdowns with anti-state terrorism. The deputy head of the Sova Center, Galina Kozhevnikova, claims that nationalists groups have stopped killing as much, but now “they are carrying out bombings, arson and other vandalism.” According to her report, “racially motivated vandalism grew unprecedentedly in 2009.”

Part of this turn toward anti-state violence is a rise in aggression against government personnel, especially against outspoken advocates of racial equality or judges who rule in favor of victims of racial crimes. One Moscow city judge, Eduard Chuvashov, after “sentencing nine members of an ultranationalist group” in February “to prison terms ranging from 6 ½ to 23 years” for committing “six ethnically motivated murders,” was later shot and killed near his apartment. Authorities investigating his murder claimed “the circumstances of Chuvashov’s killing resembled that of human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov, who was gunned down on a central Moscow street in January 2009 and who had also defended

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31 RIA Novosti
victims of hate crimes.” Kozhevnikova suggests groups are turning to anti-state terrorism because “the state has begun to position itself as the enemy of the extremist right.” Ironically, the state is fighting a problem it helped create more than a decade ago, and still encourages today.

Every major political party in Russia campaigns with anti-immigrant sentiments, vowing to protect natives against criminally prone immigrants and promising to secure jobs for Russians over immigrants. In 2007, President Putin implemented a law limiting the number of foreign laborers in bazaars and other retail commerce. This seemed to correspond with comments he made a year earlier addressing xenophobic fears about Central Asians and Caucasians controlling Russia’s business sector. The new law pleased almost all nationalist political parties (though these groups were also quick to criticize any concessions they saw Putin taking toward immigration). It also pleased skinhead groups, who claim these migrants in particular steal jobs from Russians. United Russia, the party of Putin and Medvedev, also encourages nationalism from youth organizations such as “Nashi” or “the Young Guard.” In one instance last year, a group of over one hundred members of Young Guard gathered at a train station in Moscow and met a train full of

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33 Laruelle, M. “Russia’s Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism.” Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program Singapore: Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2008, 70.
immigrants from Uzbekistan with anti-immigration slogans. However, United Russia is far from the most extreme among nationalist parties.

Fair Russia, a bloc of political figures previously referred to as the Rodina bloc, considers any legalization of immigrants an endorsement of terrorism and illegal immigration. In 2005, the party campaigned with images depicting “Caucasians throwing the skins of watermelons they had just eaten under the wheels of a baby carriage being pushed by a young blond woman with the slogan ‘clean the city of garbage.’” The court “prohibited the party from participating in elections at the Duma of the city of Moscow on grounds of ‘inciting racial hatred.’”

The LDPR is another party adhering to anti-immigrant sentiment. However, LDPR is paradoxical. On one hand it makes statements calling for the government to force illegals into camps and cut railroad links between Russia and countries sending illegal immigrants, while on the other it advocates for Central Asians to fill vacancies in Russia’s workforce. The radical means by which they propose to stop illegals would, in practice, undermine their proposal to supplement the flagging workforce with Central Asians. According to Mariene Laruelle, “This distinction

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35 Laruelle, 71


37 Laruelle, 72

between the rejection of illegal migrants and the acceptance of legal migrants is quite ambiguous, since it enables the nationalists to play many hands at once and to present themselves as the most radical and as the most pragmatic.”

The party in power, however, beyond merely adding rhetoric to public anti-immigrant sentiment, must also deal with the reality of Russia’s growing dependence on foreign labor. The 2008 policy to cut immigration quotas was seen as an effort to appease public nationalism. Yet the government, meanwhile, sought to attract immigrants through less obvious mechanisms. In one act of good faith, it discontinued the requirement for migrants to receive written invitations from Russian employers before entering the country. Yet, it simultaneously restricted more applicants from obtaining work permits. With fewer restrictions at entryways and more restrictions in obtaining work, the government created a “vast, unregulated labor market.”

Elena Tyuryukanova “blamed the contradiction on the government’s reluctance to openly encourage immigration in the face of a growing nativist backlash—one it helped foster by appealing to nationalist sentiment to bolster support for the authoritarian state.” Indeed the state seems forced to contradict itself if it is to appease conflicting interests.

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39 Laruelle, 73.
40 Schafer.
41 Schafer.
While migrant workers from Central Asia make up much of the foreign workforce in Russia today, they cannot answer Russia’s deficiency on their own. Russia’s falling fertility and rising mortality continue to aggravate its need for foreign labor, and the country’s first choice of immigrants (ethnic Russians living abroad) and second choice (non-Russian ethnic groups from FSU states) are not meeting this need. In the 1990s, of the 25.3 million ethnic Russians living in former Soviet republics, 3.1 million migrated to Russia. According to Dr. Zhanna Zayonchkovskaya, head of the Russian Department of Migration Analysis and Forecasting, “The remaining potential for repatriation in post-Soviet nations [after the 1990s] can be estimated at about 4 million people.” Zayonchkovskaya claims Russia can expect about the same number of non-Russian immigrants from CIS countries as ethnic Russians. Yet, this combined number is still half of what Russia needs to fill its void in the workforce. Zayonchkovskaya suggests the Chinese as the only real viable option to fill the gap.

43 Zayonchkovskaya, 2.
Chinese immigrants, including Han Chinese as well as Uighur, began immigrating to Russia with a flurry after the Soviet Union dissolved. Many come to Moscow and other urban centers, but many also remain in the Far East just across the border from China. One of the reasons for this is proximity. But a more important reason, and one which concerns Russia, is the internal migration of ethnic Russians in recent years away from the Far East. Chinese immigrants are replacing a fleeing Russian population. During the Soviet period, the government populated this area and the northern regions of Russia with groups from other parts of the Union.

“The Soviet leadership and elites were very preoccupied with the problem of inducing labor to migrate to the east and settle there.”

From 1961 to 1990, this area grew by 976,000 people. However, it took only one third of that time period (one decade) for the population to shrink by nearly the same amount. Since 1989, some parts of the Far East have decreased by half, while the entire region is at least ten percent less populated. The sudden surge in out-migration from the Far East to the center, according to Zayonchkovskaya, is the result of the sudden change to a market economy, which “immediately exposed the relative overpopulation” of this region. Not only is Moscow no longer able to populate this area on its own, but legal and illegal Chinese immigrants are steadily increasing in these borderlands, prompting many to ask how much a part of Russia this territory will be in the future if the outflow of Russians and inflow of Chinese continues.

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45 Zayonchkovskaya, 4.
For their part, Chinese migrants have many incentives for choosing to come to Russia. Some of these incentives are no different from those that motivate migrants from Central Asia, namely high unemployment and a domestic economy that cannot handle the country’s population growth. The sheer difference in population density on either side of the Russian-Chinese border (15-30 times higher on the Chinese side),\(^{46}\) and a Russian population that is leaving vacancies for potential immigrants, attract the unemployed from China. The amount of arable land per capita is ten times higher in the former Soviet Union than in China and hidden unemployment in China at the turn of the century was 15-20 percent, a number far greater than the entire population of Russia. China’s northeast alone has seven to eight million unemployed.\(^{47}\) In a survey conducted by Vilya Gelbras between 1998 and 2003, Gelbras found the number of Chinese desiring to settle permanently in Russia increasing over time. In contrast to earlier surveys that showed 7.8 percent desiring to settle in Russia, in 2003 Gelbras recorded 35 percent planning to stay and added “Less than half of the respondents said they would return home.” The author suggests “This change in Chinese migrants’ sentiments was caused not so much by the living standards in Russia as by the aggravation of the social and economic situation in China.”\(^{48}\) Though Chinese migrants have grown


\(^{47}\) Demko, 138.

\(^{48}\) Vilya Gelbras, Doctor of Science (History), is a professor at Moscow State University’s Institute of Asian and African Countries, and senior research fellow at the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences. This article was originally published in Russian in the *Otechestvenniye
in number all over the world, Russia’s proximity to China, its retreating Far East and the ability of northern Chinese to adapt easily to the harsh Russian climate make migration into Russia particularly attractive.

The influx of Chinese laborers, however, conflicts with other Russian interests. Though Russia’s economy needs more than the country can produce by way of a workforce, and the Chinese have no real competition for filling this gap, xenophobia in Russia is not reserved for Central Asian ethnicities. Chinese immigrants endure a fair share of hostility from ultranationalist groups as well. But there is another reason that makes Russia reluctant to embrace Chinese labor, different from xenophobia and different from the stubborn assertion of many Russian authorities that Russia can replenish its workforce internally. This is the fear of China’s economic ambitions and, more importantly, its methods for realizing these ambitions.

The fear is that China is orienting itself toward a “cross-border economy” and is doing more damage than good to the economies receiving Chinese migrants. Some suggest migration is a link between China’s “trade and industrial system.” Thus, “Russia is already included in China’s division of labor through the business activities of Chinese migrants.” Many Chinese companies work closely with shady Russian companies, allowing revenue from Russia’s natural resources to elude the Russian market. One example of this is the looting of Russia’s forestry. “About 1.5

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49 Gelbras.
million cubic meters of wood is cut down illegally in the Maritime Territory every year.” The Reuters news agency in February 2002 reported that the World Wildlife Fund was concerned for the future of “Russian forests in the Far East,” predicting these forests could disappear within five years due to illegal deforestation.\(^{50}\) The effectiveness of this system, whereby Russia becomes an appendage to China’s raw-material market, hurts Russian economic growth and encourages Russia to restrict Chinese immigration. Restricting immigration would hurt Russia further, however, as the country does not have sufficient manpower to develop its economy on its own. Instead, improving controls and molding immigration laws to fit specific regional needs, especially with Chinese migrants in the Far East, would allow Russia to take advantage of China’s demographic need to expand and guard against Chinese exploitation.

Some scholars, while advocating for a more liberal stance toward Chinese migration, refer to the beginning of the 1990s, when borders were suddenly opened between the two countries and migration was allowed unabated. During that time the economy saw real growth as trade soared. Conversely, the economy suffered when a few years later borders were closed and migration restricted. However, other analysts cite the exploitation of Russia’s raw material by Chinese businessmen as obvious reason to restrict these borders. They also suggest the Chinese government, because of its exploitative global foreign-economic strategy, will never allow its migrant workers to fill Russia’s need for a labor force in a way that truly

\(^{50}\) Gelbras.
benefits Russia.\textsuperscript{51} This latter more cynical perspective cannot be ignored, as those advocating for no restrictions are wont to do. Yet, the demographics crises on both sides of the border, creating a definite need in China to export labor and in Russia to import labor, must also be considered. As a result, Russian policy makers are finding it necessary to take precautions against Chinese exploitation by implementing policy that attracts immigrants with specific skill sets and regulates foreign businesses in the Far East more closely. Unmistakably, an increase in migrant labor in the Far East has not created less, but far more jobs for local Russians than were previously available. It is important the government ensure this economic development is Russian growth, not only growth for China.

\textsuperscript{51} Gelbras.
Selective Immigration vs. Anti-Immigration Laws

Constructing immigration laws that are selective regarding the skills and quality of foreign workers is not the brainchild of Russian policy makers. Most net importers of foreign labor in the world make this one of their pillars in immigration policy. These countries not only see the importance of attracting migrant laborers, but of attracting specialists and certain skills most effective in boosting domestic economies. The United States, for example, gives special priority to immigrants who are nurses because of a consistent shortage of personnel in this field. And often certain areas of the country, especially near the borders, are in even greater need of nurses due to high concentrations of immigrants. Thus, immigration policy must regulate the effective integration of immigrants into society. In fact, from its earliest days the United States approached immigration policy this way, constantly assessing the potential for integration and assimilation. National stability depends on the ability of nations to maintain cultural and political identity while assimilating foreign elements.\textsuperscript{52} It is also important not to overburden infrastructure, such as health and educational facilities. One of the reasons the United States seeks nurses is to assist hospitals overburdened with immigrants. Ideally, immigration policy would

\textsuperscript{52} Delap, D., Arizona Border Patrol Officer. Personal interview. 17 April 2010.
allow the health industry to grow as it allows the demand (flow of immigrants) to grow.

Regulation, of course, creates the problem of illegal immigration, which in turn creates an even greater need to attract specific skills (as in the case of illegal immigrants increasing the need for health professionals). Until recently, Russia, by implementing stricter immigration quotas in the name of preserving jobs for Russians, but not focusing on restructuring policy to attract necessary skills, may have been handicapping itself. However, within the last year, members of the Ministry of Economic Development have “lined up behind liberal immigration reform” that may draw more skilled foreign workers to Russia. According to ministry officials, the new approach centers around the desire to “entice highly-qualified foreign scientists as well as investors, who are turned off by the country’s immigration policy, to partake in the government’s modernization program.” President Medvedev has signed on to these measures, ordering his cabinet on February 2nd of this year “to prepare a bill that would ease immigration restrictions in the country, and to consider the cancellation of immigration quotas for highly qualified foreign specialists.” According to Oleg Artamonov, the head of Russia’s Federal Migration Service, Russia has already signed an agreement with France to give “preferential treatment for highly qualified specialists, directors, members of

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54 Adelaja, 2010.
their families and accompanying colleagues.”55 The government is now proposing a re-vamp of immigration laws to entice skilled foreigners from other countries as well. As European migration into Russia is not nearly as likely as Chinese immigration, it is perhaps even more important to entice skilled labor from China.

The new immigration laws, which should go into effect 1 January 2011,56 are not the first of their kind, but are improvements on previous laws implemented in the last few years. This indicates there has been a tendency already, despite xenophobic pressures in the country, to accept immigration as part of the answer to Russia's demographics woes and learn from the methods of Russia's European counterparts in dealing with their falling fertility. One of the improvements of this year’s immigration reform concerns the amount of time and paperwork required for recruiting and hiring foreign workers. In 2007, the government was already requiring employers to apply for approval before hiring foreign workers and to indicate “the education and profession of the foreigner on the application form.”57 The government planned to use this data to create migrant labor quotas. These applications were due nearly a year before the foreigners could begin work. Not only did this put a burden on employers to know a year in advance how many and what kind of workers they would need, but it also deterred many educated and skilled workers from immigrating to Russia. Sergei Guriev, Rector of the New

Economic School in Russia, recalls that “for some, this was an insurmountable problem and they subsequently chose to seek work in Latin America or Europe instead of Russia.” For others, it encouraged finding ways to work around the system. Many Russian employers put false information on reports concerning the education and skill-set of certain employees, while some didn’t register them at all.

Yevgeny Reyzman, a partner at the Baker & McKenzie law firm, notes that compared to immigration laws of EU countries, Russia’s are “certainly more inconvenient to enforce.” Of these inconveniences, he lists the large number of formal documents “that cannot be replaced by electronic versions or processed electronically,” the difficulty of submitting “medical certificates received elsewhere but in Russia,” and the length of the entire procedure, which involves “the submission of extensive documentation as part of a series of applications to various government agencies at a number of stages.”

The new laws Medvedev and the Economic Ministry are promoting modernize and simplify many of these inconveniences, including the current 12-23 months it takes for processing, which could be reduced to 30 days.

Despite these new efforts to entice foreign skilled labor, Russia faces unique difficulties that stem from its source of migrants. Central Asians make up a large portion of Russia’s migrant labor force and, due to their tendency to return home, do not become permanent contributors to Russian society. Even during the Soviet era when Moscow had more coercive methods at its disposal, Central Asians “would not

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58 Alinga, 2010.
60 Adelaja, 2010.
move because of profound cultural attachments to their traditional environment,” despite the region’s labor surpluses. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), understanding the “economic benefits of migration of labor resources from Central Asia to the RSFSR and other regions in need of population,” attempted to induce this migration, but achieved meager results. Today, without economic support and infrastructure from the Soviet Union Center, migration from this region to Russia is more prevalent. However, these migrants are for the most part still unwilling to settle in Russia on a permanent basis.

In Western countries “migrants often live in the same location for a number of years and can be almost considered citizens,” whereas most immigrants coming to Russia from Central Asia “have no intention of long-term residency in the country. The goal is to make as much as possible as quickly as possible and then to move back to their families in their home countries to build businesses and homes there.” Unfortunately, it remains difficult to build businesses in their home countries and they are often forced to return to Russia again and again, hoping eventually conditions at home will have improved enough and their personal coffers become deep enough to allow this. Social infrastructure worsens with the lack of able-bodied men in these traditionally male-dominated societies. And because regimes have difficulty seeing past a dependency on foreign remittances to the

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61 Lewin, 205.
64 Women in these countries are often scorned for trying to educate or provide for their children.
possibilities of creating stronger domestic markets from local and foreign
ingvestments, the cycle of seasonal migration continues.

Another problem is the lack of skilled labor coming out of Central Asia. Some suggest the answer to this is in drawing Central Asians to Russia first as students. Many foreign students already choose Russia to continue their education. Attracting foreign students not only bolsters the education industry, but also provides immigrants with skills vital for Russian infrastructure. However, Central Asia’s economic dependence on Russia not only makes educational opportunities scarce in these countries, but also makes it difficult to afford a Russian education. And, as mentioned before, Central Asians fortunate enough to obtain this education would likely do so with the objective of returning home to employ these skills. The Chinese, on the other hand, already send many students to Russia. Reforming immigration policy toward the Chinese in order to take advantage of the Chinese specialists it is helping create is very important. As it stands now, this process is instead creating more intelligent and aggressive Chinese businessmen in the Far East, who, because of their illegal status, are more susceptible to being lured into shady business practices capable of looting Russia’s economy. The Chinese government, like Europe, already has a policy favoring Russian specialists. Meanwhile, notwithstanding the inclination from some political and economic authorities to reform rather than cut immigration, Moscow is sending a strong message to ethnic

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Gelbras
Russians that promotes a view of self-sufficient—that Russia can rebound on her own and find the answer internally.
Pro-Natal Campaign vs. Economic Crisis

One of Russia’s alternatives to attracting a foreign labor force is to expand the native labor force. In addition to appeasing the nationalists, supplanting migrant labor with native labor would prevent more money from leaving the country, thereby bolstering the economy. Instead of millions of immigrants sending billions of dollars home in remittances each year, this money would remain in the country. Though it is highly unlikely this scenario will be realized any time soon, the Russian government has launched a pro-natal campaign in recent years that clearly demonstrates its intent to reverse falling fertility.

Moscow’s efforts to promote Russian fertility, however, date back to at least 1936 when, due to backlash from the 1918 Family Code and its deconstruction of the traditional family, Moscow enacted a new law that abandoned some of its anti-family efforts, made it more difficult to obtain a divorce, and created incentives for childbearing. The vast number of male casualties sustained in World War II

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inspired additional programs and incentives for replenishing Russia’s population, including the Hero Mother award created in 1944. This program awarded various medals according to the number of children a woman bore.\textsuperscript{68} During the Brezhnev era, the population began to fail to reproduce itself and pro-natal policy became even more important to the government.\textsuperscript{69} Meanwhile, the non-Russian populations in Central Asia were growing. In 1980, while “the Russian Republic had an estimated fertility rate of 1.9 births/woman, . . . in the Central Asian republics the rates ranged up to 5.8.”\textsuperscript{70} Moscow poured billions of dollars into increasing fertility among the dominant Slavic groups of the Soviet Union in the 1980s, but failed to bridge the gap between Russian and Central Asian fertility rates.

In 2007, Moscow started a three-year project promoting family, beginning with “Year of the Child.” Advertisements for that project included a giant billboard of more than 6000 square meters that lined a freeway in Moscow for several blocks advocating the importance of children.\textsuperscript{71} The government then established 2008 as “Year of the Family” for the entire country. In 2009 it continued the theme with “Year of the Youth.” Many state-produced commercials and music videos carried the theme to homes via television and Internet, while paper advertisements for these

\textsuperscript{71} An image of this can be viewed at http://www.adme.ru/social/2007/10/05/20503/
projects can still be found in most public areas, especially on public transportation. The commercials and advertisements promoted births, but also used nationalism to discourage apathy and encourage youth to work at rebuilding Russia into a strong, wealthy, and self-sustaining nation.

One example of these commercials shows a young man strolling down a busy street, content to be single until he is distracted by a romantic young couple and accidentally falls into a manhole. The voiceover says, “In Russia, life expectancy for a single person is six years less than that of a married person. Create a family and live longer.”72 In another commercial, several young parents are seen carrying expensive merchandise in baby strollers. The narrator says, “You can love things, but things can not love you.”73 In one more example, Roma Pititsin and his wife Sveta change their minds about having kids when they imagine their future without any posterity. After introducing his parents and grandparents, Roma says, “They all are happy for us and are waiting for grandchildren, but we don’t want children. It isn’t cool to have kids.” Suddenly, Roma and Sveta morph into an elderly couple and Roma remarks, “But this is us in 30 years, without parents and grandparents, and without children. Is this the end of the Pititsins? No. We changed our minds. There should be many Pititsins. And now it’s cool.” The clip ends with the phrase, “Children—this is

72 This commercial can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmN TY2ZqUo&NR=1
73 This commercial can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BuizuaYaW4&feature=related
happiness.” The first two commercials focus on love that attracts people to marriage and family. The third clip, however, employs an incentive for having children much more in line with the government’s rationale for promoting family—the fear of becoming weak and eventually disappearing for lack of a rising generation. The current demographics problem in Russia is a serious threat that undermines the productivity and growth of a country that was once one of the world’s most powerful.

To stress the importance of generating a productive generation of Russians, the government created a music video targeting its youth. The video begins by flashing pictures of famous Russians who helped make Russia “the greatest nation on earth.” The statements “biggest nation on earth,” “richest nation on earth,” and “greatest nation on earth,” cross the screen and invoke nostalgia for a bygone sense of superiority. Later in the video, a young family appears on the screen with a caption that reads, “Children are not in your plans.” The two children in the frame then disappear and words materialize that read, “A family is not in your plans.” This time “you” disappear, leaving your spouse, perhaps indicating how your apathy destroys you, not just your would-be-family. Still later in the video, an airplane flies over a landscape covered with buildings, depicting Russian production. The words across the screen read, “You create nothing, you produce nothing—production is

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74 This commercial can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvrQd0ZW1Jo&feature=related
75 This video can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1wT5yfNo8U&feature=player_embedded
An English translation of the text can be found at http://www.readrussia.com/blog/media/00089/
not in your plans.” The video ends with a picture of the earth and words that state, “There is no one except for you. Decide yourself. Only two options remain for our nation—rebirth or oblivion.” This video stresses the importance of production and the creation of family. It also suggests the main problem preventing this production is apathy and self indulgence. What is interesting is that the nightmare result of this apathy is annihilation of the state, not just annihilation of self. Though it is not claiming, as it did in the 1920s, to be the answer to the family question, the Russian state is asserting, as did the Soviet state, the importance of making the state the object of one’s affection, or at least one of the objects. In other words, it is fostering nationalism. This message turned out to be a hard sell on some of Russia’s youth who invoked the Soviet government’s misuse of that affection by deceiving its people. But the themes of national pride and duty that play throughout the clip are clearly tools Moscow has been successful in employing over the last decade, given the emergence of nationalist youth groups.76

In addition to pro-natal propaganda in the media, the government offers incentives for childbearing. Over the last few years Moscow has promised subsidized housing to young families,77 and in May of 2008, revived the “Hero

77 Receiving subsidized housing or other pro-natal awards from the government are not contingent on marital status, but upon having children. Many pro-natal advertisements show a single mother with one or two children. However, the
Mother” award created in 1944, which was discontinued with the breakup of the Soviet Union. The Motherhood Medal 1st Class is a decoration awarded to all mothers bearing and raising 6 children. The 2nd Class is awarded to mothers bearing 5 children. In Soviet times, it was awarded upon the first birthday of the last child, provided that five other children (natural or adopted) remained alive. Children who had perished under heroic, military, or other respectful circumstances were also counted.\textsuperscript{78} The award was reinstated last year at a special dinner in the Kremlin honoring several large families from all across Russia, and now comes with a monetary award of 50,000 rubles.\textsuperscript{79} National television broadcasted the ceremony and both Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev spoke on the importance of having large healthy families.

Despite considerable efforts and resources Moscow has put into increasing the birth rate, success has been hard to come by, especially since the recession. Economic difficulties caused the government to back down on some of its promised incentives for child bearing, upsetting a host of young mothers and prompting many soon-to-be mothers to seek abortions. Whereas \textit{Vremya} (Time) reported in 2008

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that over 1500 young families would receive subsidized housing that year,\textsuperscript{80} the same magazine reported in 2010 that only 140 young families received subsidized housing a year later in 2009.\textsuperscript{81} Many women became incensed and accused the government of deception. One such woman lamented in 2009, “All last year, the powers that be through the media and through advertising called on us to get pregnant.” But shortly after they did, many of them or their partners lost their jobs and, finding themselves unable to provide for a child, sought for abortion.\textsuperscript{82} Due to this and an accelerating rate of decline for the “number of women in prime child-bearing age groups,” the number of births in Russian in 2009 was “projected to be 200,000 fewer than in 2008.”\textsuperscript{83} The Kremlin has not at all abandoned its pro-natal policies, but clearly the falling birthrate, aggravated by the recent economic recession, has made bleak the prospect of Moscow solving Russia’s demographics crisis internally. While the state campaigns for a more productive and re-productive population, using nationalistic undertones to encourage its youth, the present realities of Russia’s population crisis, requiring it to depend on foreign labor to sustain its economy, conflicts with the ideals behind these campaigns.


\textsuperscript{83} Goble.
Interdependency vs. Integration in Central Asia

While Russia struggles to free itself from dependence on foreign labor, Central Asian countries struggle with their dependence on remittances despite popular inclinations to remain home. To borrow from the title of Ann McMillan’s essay on Xinjiang and Central Asia, the way Russia and Central Asia depend on each other for labor and remittances is a system of “interdependency—not integration.”\textsuperscript{84}

This interdependency exists between Central states as well. It is the result of hardened lines and mistrust and resentment between ethnicities and between regimes. Paradoxically, this mistrust cements the region into a system of shared labor where regimes rely on the disparity between economies in order to survive (in the case of remittance seeking regimes) or prosper (in the case of immigrant seeking regimes). The unwillingness of Central Asian states to operate as an integrated region influences policy decisions and hinders effective migration reform that would even out economic disparities and allow significant progress in infrastructure. Centuries-old clan divisions, as well as national identities solidifying since Stalin’s border demarcations in the 1920s, and now exacerbated by the break up of the Soviet Union, contribute to this lack of integration. These next two sections

look at some of the conflicts that prevent greater integration in the region and strengthen economic interdependency, rendering everyone vulnerable to setbacks if states alter current migration schemes. Many of these conflicts stem from a Soviet legacy and the influence national identities now have on ethnic identities. They become enflamed by poverty, a lack of resources, and competition between regimes.

Interdependency began developing under Soviet control during the last century and has contributed to interdependency today. Contradictory policy due to conflicts of interest regarding Central Asia can at least be traced back to this period. One of the legacies of the Soviet era influencing migration today is Moscow’s dual agenda of “Russification, and simultaneous support for ethnic-language schooling, ethnic classification, and autonomous ethnic homelands across the USSR.”

According to Cynthia Buckley,

> The persistent salience of ethnicity as a marker of individual identity within the Soviet context tended to limit the extent to which minority groups could hope to, or wish to, assimilate into majority cultures while maintaining their ethnic identity. Educational policies stressing native-language instruction and political structures reifying ideas of ethnic homelands reinforced the primacy of ethnic identity.

At the same time, the Soviet regime urged Central Asians “to migrate from their homeland” not only for the purpose of redistributing the Union’s labor resources, but also “to contribute to the mixing of various nationalities and thus develop more bonds among the ‘Soviet people.’” Paradoxically, the communist regime favored

86 Buckley, 4.
87 Fierman, 256.
both a process of assimilation and one of segregation. And both were approaches to achieving unity under Moscow.

In Martin Malia’s book, “The Soviet Tragedy,” he speaks about Moscow’s methods for dealing with its borderlands as “the mixture of force and tact necessary to keep them quiet.” From early in the Soviet period the center ruled the periphery by using native elites to manage, under the supervision of Moscow, cultural and political institutions. According to Malia, “The purpose of this was to appease local nationalism by dignifying it, and at the same time to co-opt it for the purposes of building socialism.” Though Moscow also relocated large numbers of ethnic Russians into its periphery in order to dilute territorial homogeneity and thereby assimilate these nationalities into one Soviet people, in general, Moscow’s efforts inadvertently created nationalisms where there had been none before. The republics the Soviets carved out of “old Turkestan” contributed to this developing sense of nationalism and by the end of the Soviet period had distinct national interests defining them.

These national interests became more pronounced with independence from Moscow in the early 1990s. Nation building outside the context of serving the Kremlin was a radical shift, especially since much of the infrastructure and many of the resources necessary for independent survival, formerly accessible by virtue of the Union, now resided in foreign countries. The Soviet system diversified

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89 Malia, 439.
production according to regional potential in order to maximize production. Hence, much of the Union’s cotton was grown in Central Asia, while much of its grain was grown in Ukraine and Siberia. "Azerbaijan produced oil and Moldavia and Georgia contributed wines and spirits, while Russia supplied the steel."\textsuperscript{90} Also, Soviet factories produced parts in bulk, which meant creating a finished product often required obtaining different parts produced in bulk elsewhere in the Union. When the Union broke apart, so did these lines of production. Today, many Soviet-era factories in Central Asia are used only for the scrap metal that can be stripped away and carted across the border to be sold in China.

Maximizing productivity is also one of the reasons behind Stalin-era relocation projects. During this time large segments of populations were resettled in various parts of the Union to populate sparse areas deemed potentially fertile or rich in natural resource. Often, however, the government cited other political reasons for these deportations. For example, dekulakization, or the deportation of thousands of Kulak peasants from Ukraine to Northern Siberia in the 1930s, was propagated as uprooting and rehabilitating capitalist elements of society. However, these northern settlements also clearly fulfilled a state ambition to harvest wood and other resources of the rich, but brutal northern territories. Examining some of the internal government documents during this time reveals the government’s priority of relocating for production purposes over rehabilitation purposes. One senior official wrote, "We need to turn the camps into colonization villages without

\textsuperscript{90} Malia, 439.
any expectation of a set period of imprisonment.” And later in the same document, “We need to colonize the North in the fastest of tempos.” Obviously, there were long-term goals for these settlements other than simply indoctrinating wayward citizens.

Stalin’s regime exerted great efforts in determining and enforcing the ideal spread of populations and resources. Perhaps this is why Hilary Pilkington can assert in her book, “Migration, Displacement and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia,” that “the former Soviet Union has been transformed from a country whose population was surprisingly reluctant to migrate, especially over long distances, into a region whose very stability is threatened, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by current migration trends.” With fewer restrictions and regulations on population movement following the end of Soviet rule, and the collapse of economic integration, groups not only found it easier to migrate, but necessary, especially from impoverished Central Asian countries. Though nationalisms that formed under Soviet rule helped build a sense of territorial belonging in Central Asia that might have seen ethnic groups in the region readily cling to their new nations, the aftermath caused these groups to turn again toward Moscow for economic assistance through remittances.

It is important to recognize that ethnic diversity alone does not appear influential enough to be the root cause preventing effective integration in the region. The success of ethnically diverse Kazakhstan to develop economically and politically

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over the past two decades suggests this. However causal ethnic diversity may have been historically in dividing Central Asia, it does not completely trump efforts for integration in today’s political context. Though civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997) and several other conflicts coming after the Soviet Union dissolved show how powerful these divisions still are, border integrity has survived more or less (China did extend its western border into Kyrgyzstan during border disputes in the 1990s). National borders themselves and the extent to which citizens now identify with these nations, however, do appear to inhibit integration, especially in countries with poor economies. The scarcity of jobs ignites otherwise passive ethnic discrimination and creates a need for tighter borders. Conversely, it also creates a dependency on healthier states to keep their borders open so impoverished states can export their unemployment. At least among remittance seeking states, this is a conflict that etches deeper racial and national lines, the opposite of what integration requires and the reverse of the healthier social and political infrastructure that integration would produce.

Before discussing some of the adverse effects disputes over migration throughout the region have on integration, it may be helpful to give a clear example of another area where greater integration and cooperation would benefit the region: Central Asia’s limited water supply. This will illustrate the way states in the area are prone to work bilaterally, as opposed to regionally, and the negative impact this can
have on states uninvited to the table. As rivers are not conscious of borders, but run throughout the region, the actions of individual states to manipulate water sources for their own benefit inevitably cause conflict. Though a number of regional organizations sprang up in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse, none of these seems to effectively regulate competing national and regional interests, nor do any of them exclude larger and more influential players like Russia or China. A forum for cooperation among Central Asian states, based solely on their shared interest, does not exist.

In February 2009, the Kremlin agreed to a deal with Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev that promised over $2 billion in economic assistance to Kyrgyzstan. The initial $450 million already disbursed to Kyrgyzstan was allocated for the use of fixing the national budget prior to the July 2009 presidential elections and for beginning construction on the Kambar-Ata hydropower plant on the Naryn River, a high priority project for Bishkek. Though the plant will be a boon to Kyrgyz infrastructure, the project has drawn continued opposition from Tashkent. Uzbekistan is down stream from the site of the plant and worries its cotton industry will suffer, as well as millions of Uzbeks, if the plant is built. The agricultural

96 A similar project in Tajikistan (construction of the Rogun Dam) threatens Uzbekistan’s agriculture for the same reason. Uzbek president Karimov has accused Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan of carelessness concerning the realistic consequences of carrying out these projects. Tajikistan, however, the poorest of the Central Asia states, is hoping to become a net exporter of electricity. See Dogan Media Group. “Uzbek Leader Blasts Neighbors in Water Row.” Hurriyet Daily News and Economic Review 2009.
vitality of Uzbekistan is at stake and it appears Moscow prioritized the expulsion of US and NATO forces (which some have suggested was Moscow’s main objective in agreeing to the deal) over the agricultural needs of Uzbekistan. However, Moscow stopped payments after the initial $450 million, citing as its reason that the money was not used in accordance with their agreement. For this reason the bulk of the aid, $1.7 billion, has been postponed until the issue can be resolved. Some think Moscow’s reluctance to go forward with its promised loan for the plant is a sign that it in fact does not want to upset “Central Asia’s delicate geopolitical balance.”

Meanwhile, Kyrgyz officials have begun negotiating with China to fund the hydropower project.

The fact that China was willing to negotiate a similar deal with Kyrgyzstan as the one Russia agreed to, signifies the preference of SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) member states (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) to deal bilaterally with each other despite creating forums at the regional level for multilateral collaboration. Though Kazakh president Nazabayev has expressed interest in forming a “Central Asian Union” between the five countries of Central Asia, and during a diplomatic visit to Kyrgyzstan in 2007 even prevailed on Kyrgyz president, Bakiyev, to agree to set up “an interstate council for discussing bilateral issues,” analysts say “plans for more economic integration could fail because of the ambitions of each national leadership, and a common fear that

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Kazakhstan would dominate the others.”

Central Asia’s labor force, like its water source, could more effectively benefit the entire region if it was dealt with on a regional level. Instead, each state deals with the issue unilaterally and bilaterally, either seeking to prevent illegal immigration and protect jobs for their own citizens, or seeking leniency from economic powers for their émigrés.

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Integration vs. Interdependency: contrasting Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

The demographic crisis facing Russia and creating a need for additional labor power is nearly the opposite problem facing Central Asian states. Populations in these states continue to grow despite economies unable to provide work. Consequently, these regimes depend on remittances earned in neighboring markets to bolster their own, however unfavorable the conditions are for immigration into these markets. And Russian markets are not the only place these remittances are obtained. Within Central Asia itself, disparities between economic capabilities of different states cause a chain reaction of migration from worse economies to better. This is not adequately countered by the creation of jobs at home, but instead is perpetuated by remittance-addicted regimes, afraid of civil and political unrest if émigrés are forced to return home unemployed. Policies that perpetuate this process conflict with polices that would create jobs at home, enable economic independence from Moscow and satisfy the desire of populations to remain at home where deep seated loyalties have drawn them for centuries. The following two cases illustrate the influence economic stability and ethnic integration can have on migration policy. While Kazakhstan's growing economy and anti-discrimination laws invite immigration, in Kyrgyzstan, a poor economy that fosters ethnic
competition over the limited number of jobs prompts restrictive immigration policies.

_The case of Kazakhstan_

A healthy economy, capable of sustaining its own workforce and attracting more, can ease otherwise intense competition along ethnic lines, while poor economic conditions tend to stoke a sense of ethnic entitlement based on national borders. The example of Kazakhstan illustrates this point. Kazakhstan has managed to dissipate somewhat ethnic tension within its own borders through equal rights legislation and economic development. However, its inability to integrate with the rest of the region, whether due to resentment from a proud and historically central Uzbekistan, a skeptical and isolationist Turkmenistan, or simply a desire to exert influence on impoverished regimes, does little to alter the region’s interdependency.

As part of Kazakhstan’s constitutional reform in 1995, it passed legislation that outlawed racial and gender discrimination. ¹⁰¹ At the same time it called for the return of its diasporas.¹⁰² Considering the vastly diverse ethnic make-up of Kazakhstan’s population, the political reasons for this type of legislation are obvious. Less than half of the country’s 17 million citizens in 1993 were ethnic Kazakhs and establishing a national identity that suddenly favored Kazakhs over other groups would surely reap conflict. The government even found it necessary to

backtrack on its original 1991 designation of Kazakh as the nation’s official language. The wording of the new constitution in 1995 clearly puts Russian back on par with Kazakh in official realms.\textsuperscript{103}

Creating an identity as a sovereign state was nonetheless important, but had to be done in a way that retained and attracted skilled laborers as the economy grew from foreign investment. The fact that Kazakhstan sought to reclaim its diasporas living abroad sets it apart from other Central Asian states who depend on keeping much of their workforce abroad. Also, the fact that it was forced to outlaw racial discrimination in order to build the state, rather than promote xenophobia to do the same, sets it apart from Russia. Though it suffered a rise in mortality (mostly among Slavic groups) during the initial transitional stage after separating from the Soviet Union, its demographic crisis was not as severe and the country has since started to recover.\textsuperscript{104}

The ethnic conflicts influencing policy in Kazakhstan are less heated than in other Central Asian republics due to a strong economy and the 1995 legislation against racial discrimination. Migration policy appears to come more from economic strategy than from the desperation that seems to guide other Central Asian states. Kazakhstan has the advantage of being the strongest economy in Central Asia and, though it manages well the potential tensions between its various ethnic groups, it competes with Uzbekistan over regional dominance. Uzbekistan presents a

\textsuperscript{103} Kusainova, 535.
challenge only because it has the largest Central Asian population and houses within its borders the historical centers of Central Asia.

Like Russia, Kazakhstan has a net inflow of migrants and deals with the challenge of optimizing its economic and social development with an additional workforce. While some Kazakhs believe the government should address the problem of inner migration (by creating a competitive job market in areas outside of major market cities) first before embracing migrant workers from abroad to crowd Kazakhstan’s capital cities,\textsuperscript{105} Astana continues to entice foreign labor with an open migration policy and an emphasis on legalizing all immigrants. One reason for this is that Kazakhstan faces a similar, though less pronounced, demographics problem as Russia and needs immigrants to fill positions in its growing economy.\textsuperscript{106} Because the government benefits from collecting taxes from registered immigrants,\textsuperscript{107} it enforces this policy, but not without resistance from businessmen and corrupt officials seeking to save money through participation in illegal immigration and human trafficking. Though Kazakhstan faces many of the same challenges that Russia faces in regards to human trafficking and labor exploitation, its native population is friendlier to Central Asian ethnicities and the government seeks


different ways of addressing its demographics problem instead of encouraging xenophobia.

Kazakhstan has, therefore, eluded the demographic and xenophobic conflict plaguing Russia, while enjoying a growing economy more independent from Russia's than the economies of other Central Asian states. Yet, would it survive any better than Russia would without immigrant laborers? In other words, if becoming a net importer of foreign labor is a sign of a healthy economy, can other Central Asian states, who currently provide this migrant workforce, truly share the region's economic prosperity while they remain net exporters of foreign labor? I suggest that while Kazakhstan presents a model for effective migration policy in relation to maximizing economic potential, it does so at the detriment of other economies in the region and at the dependence it now has on remittance driven neighbors.

The case of Kyrgyzstan

In contrast to Kazakhstan, the other Central Asia states are not net importers of migrant labor, but net exporters. This does not mean they are without immigrants. It does mean, however, immigrants add stress to the already suffering economy, which aggravates conflict between workers. With jobs already scarce and employers apt to hire illegal immigrants over locals because of cost, resentment brews. In Kyrgyzstan, as in Russia and any country in the region employing labor migrants, the construction and agriculture sectors recruit the majority of migrant workers. Also similar to the situation in Russia, “because of high unemployment in Uzbekistan, Uzbek migrant laborers are willing to do the hardest work for very little
pay in southern Kyrgyzstan.”\textsuperscript{108} This is understandable given the condition of Uzbekistan’s economy, and the hopelessness with which most Uzbeks approach the job situation at home.

Though many Uzbek residents of southern Kyrgyzstan are legal residents, migrant workers from across the border are illegal. Of course, it becomes difficult to determine who is legal and who is not, who is taking jobs from the local population and who is not. The situation “stokes inter-ethnic tension,” which most recently surfaced “during the economic and political turmoil associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union, wherein the Osh region was the scene of clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz.”\textsuperscript{109} Perhaps the main factor keeping these groups from clashing today is the ability and incentive for Kyrgyz to find work in Russia and Kazakhstan. However, if Russia begins to prevent the inflow of migrants inside its borders, and Kyrgyz are forced home, Osh would surely be the site of hostility once again.

Several more issues involving ethnic conflict plague the Kyrgyz economy and disrupt integration with foreign groups. Besides the large number of Uzbeks living in the south, Kyrgyzstan is also home to roughly 600,000 ethnic Russians. This number is much lower than it was during the early 1990s when around one million Russians lived there. According to Alla Pyatibratova, after the Soviet Union dissolved, Kyrgyzstan, along with many post-Soviet states, made efforts to redefine itself nationally. Yet, in so doing, it ostracized its Russian minority somewhat,

\textsuperscript{109} Umetov, C.
causing many to return to Russia.\textsuperscript{110} Those who left reported feeling “unwelcome by the adoption of legislation designed to promote the cultural traditions of the respective states’ titular populations.”\textsuperscript{111} This exodus hurt the economy, depriving the country of many of its former skilled laborers.

Kyrgyzstan is also home to nearly 150,000 Uighur. Though many Uighur in Kyrgyzstan live near the border of the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China, many also live in the large market cities of Bishkek and Osh. Since many work in the markets, local Kyrgyz market traders at the same markets harbor similar resentment for Uighur as they do for Uzbeks. They claim they are unable to compete with the labor migrants, and that “the numbers of Chinese, Uighur, Turks, Koreans, Iranians and Uzbeks have increased dramatically in recent years.”\textsuperscript{112}

Because unemployment in 2007 was over 17\%, lobbyists urged the government to ban migrant laborers from working in the local markets. Many of these migrants were already banned from markets in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, pushing them further into a corner and edging them closer to more desperate measure of obtaining basic necessities.\textsuperscript{113}

Besides feeling oppressed by native Kyrgyz, the Uighurs, who first came to Kyrgyzstan in the 1950s and 60s due to difficult circumstances in China during that

\textsuperscript{110} Many also left purely for financial reasons, since Kyrgyzstan’s economy suffered more than Russia’s after the collapse.


\textsuperscript{113} Orozobekova, \textit{Reporting Central Asia}. 
period, also feel "the Kyrgyz government is persecuting its ethnic Uighur minority to curry favor with China."\textsuperscript{114} A murder trial in 2001 that found a Uighur man guilty without much evidence, caused many to draw this conclusion. Not only Kyrgyzstan, but many Central Asian states have increasingly targeted Uighurs as “undesirable aliens” since the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was formed and began “promoting mutual assistance in fighting terrorism, extremism and separatism.”\textsuperscript{115} Though the region is unable to cooperate on matters such as “trade, water and electricity,” which could go far “toward alleviating the many societal woes that exist in this area,”\textsuperscript{116} terrorism, extremism and separatism seem to be issues meriting some cooperation, which, in the case of Uighur migrants, allows regional interests to influence migration policy on a local level.

\textsuperscript{115} Jumataeva, V.
\textsuperscript{116} Mackerras, 94.
Regional Incentives for Stability vs. Maintaining Interdependency

Russia’s national interests described in the first section are hardly in line with its regional interests to maintain friendly relations with Central Asia. The Kremlin’s reluctance to take a firm position on both the issues of migration and the increase of xenophobia signify a contradiction in policy. This contributes to tensions within Russia and causes Moscow to fall out of favor with emigration countries, particularly with Central Asia. According to Marlène Laruelle, “The failure to find a solution to this question could open the door to harmful forces of destabilization both domestically and in the emigration countries.” \(^{117}\) Good relations between Russia and its southern neighbors allow Russia to influence trade in the area as well as political loyalties. However, positive relations depend heavily on Russia’s support for migrant workers from Central Asia. The remittances Central Asia receives from its migrant workers in Russia and elsewhere make up a substantial portion of its GDP\(^{118}\). Tajikistan is the most dependent with nearly half its GDP coming from remittances. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan depend on remittances for thirty and twenty percent of their counties’ GDP respectively. And because these states are not

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\(^{118}\) Kazakhstan is the exception with a net output instead of net input.
creating jobs at home, nor encouraging workers to invest locally, they continue to rely on Russia’s economy to sustain their own.

Though economic independence would improve the social and political stability in Central Asia, as it increasingly has in Kazakhstan, government control over business and agriculture in most Central Asian states inhibits the growth necessary to free the region from dependence on Russia’s economy. In Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, strict government controls over the production and sale of cotton benefits government officials, but deteriorates the conditions for workers. Stringent harvest quotas cause local governors to prioritize meeting government quotas over maintaining favorable conditions for workers. Consequently, private cotton farmers are run out of business, workers on government farms are paid little and millions of teenagers and children miss school to help fill government demands.119 In Kyrgyzstan, President Bakiyev imposed a sharp increase in taxes in 2008 for small and medium businesses. This policy caused unemployment to increase as businesses collapsed, and the number of Kyrgyz seeking work abroad increased. In January of 2009 hundreds of small businesses were closed in Bishkek.120 Unfortunately, the surge in migrants seeking work in Russia coincided with the cave in of much of Russia’s construction industry—the sector of the economy employing the greatest number of migrant workers. Remittances continued to sustain Central

120 Marat.
Asian economies as before, but from the emigration of a larger portion of their populations. Central Asian authorities’ pleas to Moscow for better protection and support for migrant workers is, therefore, partly born out of an inability to create jobs at home and consequently, a dependence on foreign income.

This is truer in Tajikistan than anywhere else in Central Asia. With nearly half its GDP attributed to remittances, Tajikistan has the greatest need for developing its economy at home by making conditions favorable for business. Until it makes significant improvement in this area, unemployment and social stability will remain an illusion. Unfortunately, bureaucratic structure impedes this development.

Currently\textsuperscript{121}, there are approximately “twenty-two different organizations that regulate and permit businesses in Tajikistan and, as a result, starting a business takes up to two months, as opposed to circa one week in most of the developed countries.”\textsuperscript{122} If Tajikistan is able to create more favorable conditions for developing business, initially with the use of remittances, it will attract more foreign and domestic investment, providing the regime with greater resources to create jobs at a home and rely less upon remittances. Until that happens, Tajikistan is at the mercy of Russia and Kazakhstan’s immigration policies.

Apart from remittances, many Central Asian governments have political incentives for keeping their working class in Russia or Kazakhstan. While the job market remains abysmal at home, keeping the number of unsatisfied job seekers to

\textsuperscript{121} Statistic from 2007
\textsuperscript{122} Sergey, M. “Remittances and Tajikistan’s Private Sector Development.” Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst. 13 June 2007 issue.
a minimum keeps out a potential threat to political stability, given that if these workers returned in mass, they would remain unemployed and become desperate and potentially lethal to the state. The recent revolt in Bishkek illustrates this, where, after the government increased taxes sharply on utilities due to the recession and bankrupted hundreds of businesses, violent protests forced the president to flee. With considerable incentives to keep millions of people living and working abroad, Central Asia works at a regional level to encourage migration policies that would protect the status quo. And at the regional level, with virtually all world powers vying for influence in the area, Central Asia regimes have leverage (their cooperation with world players) with which to attract cooperation on this issue.

Recipient countries (those receiving migrant workers) have several reasons for wanting sending countries (those sending migrant workers) to maintain stability. Civil unrest has already led to armed conflict at several points over the last two decades, which not only disturbs regional security, but also attracts foreign involvement (especially from the United States and NATO) in the area. And western involvement is usually perceived as western agenda setting. Perhaps the most profound example of this occurred following the events in Andijan in May of 2005. Shortly after Uzbek forces dispersed a street protest against the regime’s imprisonment of extremists in Andijan, the United States and NATO questioned the legitimacy and necessity of the regime’s crack down and called for an international investigation into the events. In response, at the SCO’s Astana summit a month later, Russia prevailed on member states to call for a timeline withdrawal of western
forces from Central Asia. Within months, Uzbekistan demanded the closure of the US Karshi-Khanabad (K-2) airbase.\textsuperscript{123} One function of the SCO and other regional organizations in the area is to provide legitimacy for a homegrown agenda that may or may not coincide with western schemes.\textsuperscript{124}

Political instability in the region has also allowed drug trafficking, human trafficking, and terrorism to become entrenched in society. These problems are key issues for regional organizations such as the SCO. Separatist groups engaging in anti-state terrorism challenge state sovereignty and border security throughout the region. These issues influence the effectiveness of bilateral relations and projects. According to Joanna Lillis, “Perhaps the greatest threat today to the continuation of Kazakhstan’s economic boom is instability in neighboring countries, a trend that could potentially fuel radical Islam, produce a refugee crisis and/or cause disruptions to existing export routes.”\textsuperscript{125} Historically, trade routes in and through Central Asia have been vastly important to the region’s economic success. Maintaining those routes remains one of the greatest challenges affecting regional security and state economies today.

\textsuperscript{125} Lillis.
Conclusions

The migration question is central to understanding the complex relationships between Russia, China, and the Central Asian republics. Migration of various ethnicities within the region is most often involuntary and unwelcomed, but nonetheless necessary for the survival of the individual and of the state. Regimes, therefore, deal with the task of appeasing conflicting interests in the face of real economic and demographic circumstances. The realities are these: Russia’s population is shrinking and, more importantly, it is not expected to be able to replenish its domestic workforce without the aid of 1 million new immigrants per year until the middle of the century; Russia needs foreign labor to grow economically; Central Asia’s populations are growing despite each state’s (except Kazakhstan’s) inability to provide jobs; China’s population and economy are rapidly growing and extending beyond its borders. These realities complicate conflicting political interests in the region.

This paper has dealt with these conflicts primarily from Russia’s perspective. Perhaps the most influential of these conflicts is Russia’s need to fill a growing void in its workforce with migrant laborers, while simultaneously fostering xenophobia against non-Russian immigrants in order to bolster support for the authoritarian state. Several more conflicts of interest stem from this first one. Russia’s
government has incentives for both legal and illegal immigration and, in fact, depends on illegal immigration to provide both the needed workforce for the Russian economy and the needed outlet for nationalist groups who thrive off xenophobic sentiments toward immigrants. Nationalists groups promote fixing the demographics crisis internally through pro-natal policy and attracting Russia’s diasporas back home. Meanwhile, economic crisis and a general declining interest among Russians to raise families render pro-natal policy insufficient. In addition, pro-natal policy and anti-immigration laws conflict with incentives for developing “selective immigration” policy instead of anti-immigration laws. Russia also deals with needing more foreign workers than Central Asia is providing, despite its preference for Central Asian migrants. Finally, it deals with trying to attract Central Asians to migrate permanently despite the interest of most Central Asians to migrate on a temporary basis.

The first section of this paper explored state-fostered xenophobia in Russia and contrasted it with the country’s economic dependency on foreign labor, citing Russia’s demographic crisis as the force behind this dependency. It referred to Vladimir Putin’s loosely worded legislation on migration quotas in 2008 to illustrate the government’s efforts to satisfy opposing national interests: nationalist sentiments and an economic need for foreign labor. After establishing Russia’s need for immigration, the paper noted Russia’s preference for migrants from FSU (Former Soviet Union) republics over migrants from China, but showed how this contradicts basic numbers. Russia needs Chinese immigrants in order to fill the void
in its workforce. The discussion then moved to the conflicts arising from this need for Chinese immigrants and argued for a move toward selective immigration and a closer adherence to European models of immigration laws. A section followed describing Moscow's attempts to counter its demographic crisis with pro-natal policy and argued its inability to do so, especially after the recent global economic crisis and the general decline of Russians choosing to bear children. This section was followed by a discussion on economic interdependency between Russia and Central Asia and a lack of integration among Central Asian states. It suggested a key factor perpetuating interdependency is the inability or refusal of Central Asia to operate as a region instead of as isolated states. This stems from a Soviet legacy of fostered ethnic and national divisions in conflict with Russification policies and lines of production that required republics to rely on each other for economic stability. Today, these national lines pit impoverished Central Asian states against each other in a power struggle for natural resources and economic viability, while the need for economic interdependency is still there and sees migration as a necessary means for sharing regional potential. In turn, this locks current migration patterns in place and gives impoverished nations little maneuvering room to change migration laws or leverage with which to dictate better conditions for migrant workers. The last section addressed the negative impact of oppressive regimes in Central Asia on domestic job potential and argued this perpetuates current migration patterns. It also argued the region has common incentives for regional stability and suggests incentives for achieving this stability.
Though regional organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization sprang up in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse and appeared to facilitate multilateral alliances geared towards countering similar organizations in the West, the nature of relations between Russia, China, and Central Asia as multiple bilateral relations betrays the veneer-like quality of multilateral organizations in this region. Leaders of these countries meet often at summits and discuss regional issues, but the real work is still accomplished on the side at these summits during bilateral talks. The complexity of varying economic and demographic needs, as well as conflicting national interest, dictate this.

A situation as tentative as this one requires extensive study from the perspectives of other nations involved besides Russia. This paper addresses the topic mostly from Russia’s vantage point, and thereby raises a host of questions about China’s intentions and possible interest conflicts, as well as about the perspectives of individual Central Asian states. Why are Chinese migrants everywhere in the world and how does the Chinese global economic strategy take advantage of this? Can Russia effectively create policy for migration in its Far East that satisfies both Russian and Chinese interest in the area, while Russians continue to flee westward to urban centers? Regarding the vast emigration of Central Asians to Russia, what are the social costs in these countries? What will happen when younger generations of Central Asian migrants, spending significantly more time in Russia than in their homelands, lose the desire of their parents to return home? The
answers to these questions may reveal an even greater struggle for balancing interests in Russia, China, and Central Asia’s triangle of relations.
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