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A Study on Russian Immigration Issues

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Abstract

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the number of population in Russia increased slowly. In the Far East and Siberia, the population presented negative growth, which severely influenced the social-economic development. Immigration, on a certain extent, has compensated the labor shortage and stimulated the Russian economic development. This article reviewed the immigration status in recent years, detailed explained the immigration policy and analyzed the contributions and issues foreign immigrants brought to the Russian economic development.

Keywords: Russian, immigration, labor force resources.

1. Introduction

Russia is a vast but sparsely populated country and for its socio-economic development and population crisis resolving Russia has gradually introduced immigrants to enter the country with one of the world's largest number of foreign residents.

Based on theories of dynamic migration mechanism and production factors flows, the article analyzes the phenomenon of foreign immigrants in Russia, talks about its migration policy, presents information of actual population and composition of foreign residents and changes happening in Russia. The article discusses Russian migration management and migration policy objectives and regulations, combined through evolution and evaluation of its immigration policy.

2. Research Methodology

This paper uses interdisciplinary research methods, from the political, economic, cultural, and other views for comprehensive research demonstration. This article also uses the method of comparative study to compare the relevant policies of Russian immigration, and analyzes the contribution of immigrants to Russia and the problems brought about by them.

3. Demographic situation in Russia

Russia bestrides the Eurasia continent with a land territory of 17.07 million square kilometers. It is the largest country in the world, but the number of population is only 147 million (statistics up to January 2017) [1], only the 1/4 of the average density of the world's population. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the population of Russia presented a negative growth. High mortality rate and low birth rate brought population crisis to Russia, especially in Siberia and

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other remote areas. In the past 25 years, from the disintegration till now, the number of population dropped approximately 2 million. Population decline caused the labor shortage, which greatly restricted the economic development of Russia. Currently, the demographic situation has the following four features:

(1) Population quantity keeps declining

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, economic depression was triggered and a large number of high quality population immigrated to the other places. The population growth presented a negative growth while several severe population crises occurred in Russia. In 1993, the total number of population was 148 million, the highest in history. Since then, from 1994 to 2009, the number of population progressively decreased year by year. From 2010 to 2017, the population growth increased slowly. Social, political and economic status of the Russian society have turned better since the regime of Putin, while the huge pressure brought by the continuous population decrease has been released. However, since the Ukraine crisis in 2014, Western countries, represented by America have enforced the economic sanction to Russia, which caused continuous economic deterioration in the Russian society and therefore, influenced the population growth. From 2015 to 2016, the population growth in Russia was only 0.4 %. The future is not optimistic considering the complex domestic demographic situation. According to the estimated predication of Goskomstat, the number of population will continuously decrease in the first half of the 21st century and this downtrend will continue. The estimated total number of the population will be 138 million to 132 million [2]. The average life span of Russian people in the year 2015 was 66.5, among which male was 59.1 years old and female 73 years old. The gap of the average life span was 14 years, the largest disparity in the developed countries.

(2) The number of working-age population keeps decreasing

The working-age population takes a large proportion in the death rate. In recent years, the death number of working-age population has reached approximately 500 thousand annually, which is a huge loss to a country. Among the dead who were aged among 18 to 50, 80 % were male [3]. It was estimated that in 2015, the number of working-age population (male among 16 to 59; female among 16 to 54) was 88.36 million and in the long term, the population decrease would be 500 thousand to 800 thousand each year. This would no doubt bring dramatically negative influence on Russia who already trapped in the labor crisis.

(3) Trend of population aging

In 2011, the number of the retired in Russia was the first time exceeded 40 million and the annual retirement cost took 9.9 % of the total Russian GDP [4]. Such gigantic number of retirement would apparently bring huge social-economic burden to the Russian financial department and could easily trigger various socio psychological issues.

(4) Server imbalance of male and female ratio

In 1913, a year before the World War I, Russian sex ratio was 98:91, approximately balanced of male and female. After the World War II, in 1951, the number dropped to 57:78 and reached the lowest point in the entire 20th century. Since then, the proportion of male gradually increased and the gender ration of male rose accordingly. But it was still on the low side. Till 2017, the total number of population in Russia reached 146 million, with the sex ratio of 86:100.

The population issue in Russia was deeply rooted in complex economic, social and physiological reasons.

The population decrease was directly caused by the low birth rate and high mortality rate. From the economic perspective, the Russian economy has collapsed since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. 1993 witnessed the first server population decrease, which continued till today. Economic depression, sharp drop in people's living standards, concern for the future and culture shock of the Western countries made the younger generation worry about the cost of raising children and some of them even refused to have descendants, or chose to have fewer children. Deteriorating living conditions contributed to the existing social problems, such as alcohol abuse, drugs and diseases. Violence and serious accidents frequently occurred. Moreover, cardiac diseases, ADIS and other diseases transmitted in the country and leveled up the mortality rate, especially the mortality rate of the young adults. Later, Russia gradually abolished the free medical system, which severed the situation. On the other hand, sufferings and sorrow exerted extremely high philological pressure on the general public in Russia and increased the mortality rate. This also produced great negative influence on Russian social-economic development.

4. Russian domestic immigration status

(1) Composition and distribution of foreign immigrants

According to the statistics, foreign immigrants came from approximately 120 countries in the world. Because of visa-free policy between the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Russia (except for Georgia and Turkmenistan), immigrants from these CIS countries take a large proportion of the Russian immigrants. For example, in 2006, immigrants from Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Azerbaijan took 52 % in the total number of immigrants and this number jumped to 74 % in 2009. As for the composition of nationalities, the number of Russian nationality was dropping in the foreign immigrants. For example, Russian nationality took 60 % in the foreign immigrants from 1990 to 1995. According to the survey of Immigration Research Center, to the year 2008, only 40 % of foreign immigrants would take Russian as their major language. Furthermore, the number of immigrants who came from Islamic countries or believed in Islamism increased significantly. In 2010, they took nearly the half proportion of foreign immigrants [5]. According to the estimated statistics from Russian Federal Migration Services, many immigrants were from Non-CIS countries, such as Turkey, North Korea and China [6].

(2) Life of foreign immigrants in Russia

According to the released data of the World Bank, Russia had attracted 12.3 million immigrants by the beginning of 2010, only second to the United States (absorbed 42.8 million of immigration) [7]. More than 10 million immigration populations, Russia has no doubt become one of the largest immigrant countries. Nearly 40 % of foreign immigrants gathered in the central Russia. Moscow, a city with huge labor demands and specified markets had taken nearly 1/3 of the immigrants. Moscow absorbed 6 %, followed by Urals region. 1/6 foreign immigrants gathered in petroleum production areas of Yamalo Nenets Autonomous Okrug and Khanty Mansi Autonomous Okrug. Far Eastern Federal District ranked third and had taken 1/10 foreign immigrant who collectively stayed in Primorsky Krai. Khabarovsk Krai and Amur had relatively fewer foreign immigrants.

As for the educational level and career occupations of these immigrants, only half of the immigrants received higher education, incomplete higher education and secondary vocational education. Compared with local citizens, the educational discrepancy was huge. Foreign immigrants mainly engaged in construction, trade, manufacturing, agriculture, housing and utilities, transportation, mining and other professions that had lower demands on the labor quality. Such industries with worse working environments and low payments attracted a large number of low quality foreign immigrant labors.

5. Russian immigration policy

(1) Russian immigration management organization

Russian Federal Migration Service answers to all the immigration management issues. It is a Russian Federation executive authority that subordinate to the Russian Interior Ministry and responsible for implementing the nation's immigration policy as well as supervising and managing foreign and stateless people.

Major responsibilities of Russian Federal Migration Service include: implementing national comprehensive strategic policies within the defined working scope; implementing and adjusting normative laws within the defined working scope; issuing national identify documentations for Russian citizens; registering citizens of Russian Federation and supervising the public officers properly register the local residents; issuing entrance, stay and temporary stay documentations to foreign citizens and stateless people; supervising and ensuring foreign citizens and stateless people obey the laws and regulations during their stay and temporary residence; registering foreign citizens and stateless people in the Russian Federation; cooperating with other governments and organizations to inhibit illegal immigrants and generate relative policies; enforcing the laws and regulations of the Russian Federation on refugee problems; involving in the cause of providing political sanctuaries to foreign citizens and stateless people.

(2) Goals, principles and tasks of Russian immigration policy

The solution of immigration is centered on the issue of labor shortage. The essence of immigration policy is to solve the population crisis and promote the sustainable social-economic development. It has been pointed out in "New Proposition of Immigration Policy prior to 2025"; Russian immigration policy aims to stimulation the economic, social and demographic sustainable development, and guarantee the national interest. The ultimate goals are: sustaining the stable population growth, stimulating the population growth, ensuring adequate labor forces for economic growth, promoting national modernization and innovation, improving the competitiveness of the domestic economy and ensuring the national safety. In the meanwhile,

according to the new proposition, immigrant policy should follow the principles below: ensuring individual rights and freedom, eradicating any forms of discrimination, obeying national laws and international regulations. The tasks of immigration policy are increasing opportunities for overseas Russian settlers to return back to Russia, implementing mechanisms that attract, select and use foreign labors, promoting the development of domestic immigrants, performing humanitarianism responsibilities to these forced immigrants, and striking illegal immigrants [8].

(3) Russian immigration policy regulation

In the first half of the 1990s, prior to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the focus of Russian immigration policy was to take in the forced immigrants. In 1992, Russian Federation released “Long-term Immigration Outline”, providing assistance to refugees and forced immigrants. In 1993, Russia passed through “Forced Immigration Law” and “Refugee Law”, identifying the obligations of the country to these two types of immigrants. In the latter half of the 1990s, immigration policy had been adjusted. New released “Exit and Entry Law of Russia” specified that foreign citizens and stateless people were required to meet the following two requirements in entering and exiting the country: valid ID recognized by the Russian Federal as well as a valid Russian visa. For citizens of the former Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, they could enter Russia visa-free only on the condition that their countries had agreed on the visa abolition agreements with Russia. In 1998, Russian Federation put forward a series of new immigration policies based on the situations at that time. In the new protocol, it was stated that Russia would take in a number of refugees and in the meanwhile severely stroke illegal immigration. In June 2002, Duma of the Russian Federation passed through “Russian Federation Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens”, in which the length of stay of foreign citizens were strictly regulated and working scope for citizens who came from “mutual visa-free” countries was narrowed to the minimum. In the exact same year, Russian government has proved “Regulations on Short-stay Resident Permits for Foreign Citizens and Stateless People” in November. According to the new regulations, immigration office answered to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, supervision on immigration office was strengthened and counter measurements were produced restricting foreign immigrants. In June 2006, President Putin issued “Stimulation Measurements for Foreign Russian Nationalities Who Are Willing to Immigrant Back to Russia”, while Duma consecutively modified “Laws on Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in Russia Federation” for two times, eliminating the restrictions on the legal working permits of immigrants from other Commonwealth of Independent States except of Turkmenistan and Georgia. As long as the employers submitted paper notification to the government, they could offer these immigrants vacant job positions without having to wait for the government’s approval. New immigration policy was beneficial in attracting Russian people who lived abroad to come back to Russia. Social status of working immigrants from other Commonwealth of Independent States was raised accordingly. The new immigration policy contributed to the labor shortage issue and provided abundant labor forces. However, the new policy that was only valid for immigrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States had certain racial discrimination features in its core. In 2012, President Putin signed “New Proposition of Immigration Policy prior to 2025” and proposed a three step strategies for the next 13 years immigration policy. The first phase was implemented from 2012 to 2015, legally ensuring the immigration policy, supporting the orderly advancement of target, task and fundamental directions, producing detailed principles that the country and individuals would co-found the basic infrastructure construction for foreign immigrants, build educational centers and training centers, and provide legal assistance and information services to legal immigrants.

(4) The development and evolvement of Russian immigration policy

At the beginning of disintegration of the Soviet Union, numerous immigrants flushed into Russia and made some positive contributions to the development of the Russian society. But due to the existence of illegal immigrants who brought negative influence on different aspects of the Russian society, including social and political sectors, Russia government began to take server measurements against illegal immigrants, adjust immigration policies and restrict the entrance of immigrants to the country. Foreign immigration impacted both the local labor market and the local employment. Especially after the economic crisis in 2008, the economic climate was tough and employment opportunities were cut down. Russian government took much severe measurements to control the number of immigration. The specific counter measurements were as follows:

1) Implementing strict immigration registration policy

“International Law on Russian Federation” that published in 2002 had clearly stated foreign citizen who applied for Russian nationality should live in Russia for a consecutive five years after

he/she gained the permanent residency. Before the release of the new policy, applicants were only required to spend three consecutive years. What is more, according to the new policy, applicants should meet the Russian language requirements and have legitimate source of income.

2) Enhancing exit-entry administration and increasing the striking power of illegal immigrants

In February 2003, President Putin had signed “Modification and Reinforcements of Russian Federation Exit-Entry Law” in which he specified “When the foreign citizens or stateless people entering the Russian border, they are required to take and fill in the entry card. When they are departing from the Russian Federation, they are required to return the entry card to the custom.” In 2007, Duma passed through an amendment, increasing the punishment intensity to the illegal immigrants and illegal employers.

3) Implementing quota and issuing work permits

In July 2006, Russian Federal issued new federal registers “Registration Law for Foreign Citizens and Stateless People in Russia” and “Reformation Bills on Foreign Citizens Legal Status in Russia”. The concept of labor quota was introduced in which the Russian government would announce the labor quota of immigrant labors for the next year. The exact amount of labor is identified by the practical need and decided by the government. Russian nationality settled abroad share the priority of urgently needed talents quota. Foreign immigrants could only get the labor quota as long as they get the illegitimate working visa. In the meanwhile, the Russian government began to organize the retail market. A series of regulations and standards have been put forward to supervise the retail trade. Prevention has been taken to organize the market, striking and eliminating illegal activities and illegal immigrants to protect the basic rights of the local people.

4) Emphasizing on the immigrant quality and encouraging high quality immigrants

Russian enterprises no longer need to apply foreign labor license when hiring skilled experts since July 2010. In August 2011, Russian government modified “Registration Law for Foreign Citizens and Stateless People in Russia”, clarifying that foreign skilled experts do not need to register within three months of their working stay and their families could have the privilege of three years visa.

(5) Limitations of Russian immigration policy

1) Immigration policies are discriminatory and exclusive

According to the attachment file “Principles of Foreign Russian Nationalities Who Are Willing to Immigrant Back to Russia” that subordinated to “Stimulation Measurements for Foreign Russian Nationalities Who Are Willing to Immigrant Back to Russia”, a series of incentive measurements should be granted to these Russian nationality immigrants, for example, appropriation of funds. For Russian nationality immigrants who settled abroad, three types of appropriation were issued with different amount of subsidies. In addition, local Russians have strong exclusion for the immigrants. Some people speculate on illegal political immigrants and pose much crime on immigrants. However, the truth is, crime rate of the immigrants is no more than that of the locals. According to the statistics of Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, immigrant crime rate only takes 3 % to 4 % in the national crime.

2) Solutions on illegal immigrants are temporary adjustments

Illegal immigration problem is closely connected with the complex immigration procedure of the Russian Federation. The application process was rather complicated for foreign labor quota and working permits. Long pending period could easily cause the illegal immigrants. Russian government relies on administrative penalty instead of simplified the immigration procedure in dealing with such situations. The employer, sometimes takes advantage of the strong “relationship network” they have in Russia. It was beyond the reach of legal sanctions considering the serious corruption issues. Illegal immigrants without illegal working permits have to stay with their employer and bear with their squeezes because once they left; they would face huge fines and even captured in administrative custody.

3) New immigration policy has limitations on compulsory requiring immigrants to grasp Russian language

In December 2012, amendments of “Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in Russia” and “Education Law” came into force. In the amendments, it is required for foreign immigrants to grasp some Russian. Such regulation benefits people from Commonwealth of Independent States and Russian-speaking regions, but raises the threshold for immigrants for China and the other places in the world. The requirement of the Russian language is beneficial in absorbing high quality immigrants and stimulates economic development. For some lower end industries that

attract physical labors, they have minimum requirement on language ability.

6. Conclusion

(1) Immigrants' contributions

Foreign immigration has made great contributions to the Russian social-economic development, solving the population crisis under the server demographic situations. According to the predication of Russian Demography and Ecological Center, the permanent residence of Russia would be 98 million in 2050, and less than 70 million in 2100 [9]. It can be predicted in the following decades, a huge number of immigrants are still required to maintain the current progress of economic development and fix the labor shortage problem. Most of the foreign immigrants are proper-aged labors that create wealth for the Russian economy. They improve the structure of labor and fill in many job vacancies. These low labor cost immigrants save many enterprises from bankruptcy. For example, traffic transportation in many Russian cities is highly relied on Ukraine and Armenia immigrants. They ensure the daily operation of such enterprises. On the other hand, some foreign immigrants have professional knowledge and expertise and work in some specified industries such as construction. They play important roles in improving the overwhelm labor quality and cutting down the training fees for skilled labors.

(2) Issues brought by immigrants

However, the huge influx of immigrants also causes a series of economic, social and psychological issues. Unlike the local residents, immigrants, especially non-Russian nationalities, have different language, life style and core values. Large imports of immigration influence the local labor market and pressure the local residents. Conflicts related to economic interests between foreign immigrants and the local people are easily be triggered. Unemployment rate keeps rising, especially the Economic Crisis in 2008 taken numerous jobs from people. Local residents believe it is foreign immigrants who take their jobs and lower their living standards. They feel threatened and the contradiction becomes increasingly server.

Illegal immigration is one of the major issues in Russian immigration policy, which has rather negative impacts on the society. For example, illegal immigrants stimulate illegal economic actives; bring server tax evasion; cause great loss to the Russian economy and finally threaten the national security. It is reported that in 2008 immigrants from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and just three Caucasus countries have brought ten billions of dollars from Moscow to their own country. Only a small number of them actually pay the relevant taxes to the Russian government. Illegal immigration will impact the order of the society and increase the crime rate such as smuggling, abducting and kidnapping. According to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, most of the organized crimes are committed by illegal immigrants and the total number of crimes has reached 35 thousand per year in Russia, among which nearly 60 % of cottage theft are committed by illegal construction workers from CIS countries [10].

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Исследование иммиграционных процессов в РФ

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Аннотация. Со времен распада Советского Союза численность населения в России увеличивалась медленно. На Дальнем Востоке и в Сибири показатель численности населения имел отрицательный рост, который сильно повлиял на социально-экономическое развитие. Иммиграция в определенной степени компенсировала нехватку рабочей силы и стимулировала экономическое развитие России. В этой статье рассматривается иммиграционный статус в последние годы, подробно обсуждается иммиграционная политика и анализируется вклад и проблемы иностранных иммигрантов в российской экономике.

Ключевые слова: российский, иммиграция.

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