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# Modern Migration Trend in the South of Russia: a New Challenge?

## ABSTRACT

Modern challenges of foreign policy in Russia might have a potentially prolonged impact on socio-economic and political situation in the southern parts of the country and create a new frame to tackle external migration and attitude of locals to it. This issue is investigated on the basis of a pilot survey held from 25 May to 25 June 2014 in the regions of the Southern federal district.<sup>1</sup>

**Key words:** ethnic group, labour migration, forced migrant, challenges of foreign policy, Southern federal district, ethnic stereotypes, migration balance, tolerance.

**General Description of the Southern Federal District.** Since early 90s of the XX century southern regions of Russia became notorious in and outside the country firstly due to the acute interethnic conflicts and military actions in Chechnya and Dagestan (Tishkov, 2007). Being located on the southern edge of the Russian Federation and having become a turmoil “belt”, North-Caucasian republics couldn't guarantee living conditions enough to provide decent employment and living standards. This long-term situation forced streams of people to leave native land for other regions of the country seeking for employment opportunities. An essential part of migrants from the North of Caucasus arrived in the neighbourhood regions of the south of Russia bringing their habitual models of behavior that caused tension in local recipient communities.

The complex nature of socio-economic, political and cultural issues of the North Caucasian republics caused the establishment of an independent North-Caucasian federal district in January 2010 (Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi..., 2010). Simultaneously and due to the above mentioned reason the Southern federal district (SFD) uniting the Krasnodar Territory, three regions (the Astrakhan Region, the Volgograd Region, the Rostov Region) and two republics – the Republic of Adygea and Kalmykia, was shaped. During the Soviet period the Rostov region, the Krasnodar Territory and the Republic of Adygea were a part of the North-Caucasian economic district having been composed before the war; The Astrakhan, the Volgograd Region and the Republic of Kalmykia were the components of the Povolzhskiy socio-economic district. Thus, weak development of integrative forces is explained by the newness of the macroregion.

On the one hand similar climate and landscape features, major affinity of the system of transport, peculiarities of the economic complexes having been established over dozens of years (including interregional economic relations), on the other hand traditional trends of the migration of the population, structure of ethnic expatriate communities, as well as the established educational centres attracting young people allow to distinguish two subregions. The first one may be called Azov-Black Sea (the Rostov region, the Krasnodar Territory, the Republic of Adygea) and Povolzsko-Caspian Sea (the Astrakhan, Volgograd region and the republic of Kalmykia).

Occupying a modest territory of 420,900 km<sup>2</sup> (2,5% of the territory of the country), SFR has the fifth largest population – 13963,9 thousand people (9,7% of Russia's population). Industrial production comprises over 20% of the gross regional product, mainly developed in the Rostov and Volgograd regions and in the Krasnodar Territory. The role of the Astrakhan region is essential in mining industry (oil and gas). The southern macroregion is well-known due to its role in agriculture as it houses over one sixth of all farm lands of Russia. Over the first half of 2014 SFD has demonstrated positive growth of the economic activity in the majority of fields. At the same time there are negative trends, e.g. investments into the capital stock of big Russian companies decreased by 3,8%, the amount of contract works – by 18,3% (Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie..., 2014, p.6-15). Negative trends can be noticed in the features of the standard of living: food and fee-paid services prices have been growing in SFR more than nationally wide. Besides the unemployment rate in SFD is 1.1% higher than the national one. With the national unemployment rate of 5,0% (according to ILO methodic), the one in Kalmykia is 10,6%, in Adygea – 8,4%, in Astrakhan – 7,6 (Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie..., 2014, p.55-56).

The macroregion under discussion is quite densely populated (but for Kalmykia). Being composed of assorted ethnical groups, the Russians are the dominating group (83,7% according to the 2010 census). The Armenians represent 3,2% of SFD population being concentrated in the Azov-Black Sea subregion. Title ethnic communities of Adygea and Kalmykia are only 0,9% and 1,2% of the regions' population (Tishkov, 2013, p.6).

A rather high degree of ethnic and confessional homogeneity of the region's population co-exists with certain patchiness of ethno-cultural landscape of SFD and doesn't guarantee absence of international tension, causing quite acute conflicts. A vast complex of managerial, legal, ethno demographic, migration, socio-economic and socio cultural problems particular for each of the regional communities contributes to the development of the latent potential in the field of interethnic affairs. Although regional and local authorities mostly manage to cut conflicts short, their multiple nature creates trouble interethnic spots. Every year there occur rather headline-making local interethnic conflicts that attract attention of state authorities and civil society outside the South of Russia (Matishov, Batiev, & Kotelenko, 2011).

<sup>1</sup> Project of the Allocated scientific centre “Ethnological monitoring of interethnic relations and religious situation in the South of Russia” in 2014 (research advisor V.A. Tishkov, frame developer – V.Stepanov)

Foreign policy 2014 as a challenge to local authorities. Political events of 2014 again drew attention of administrative bodies to the issues of political stability in all entities of SFD. The momentum to political life was given by several global-scale events: 22nd Winter Olympic Games “Sochi-2014”, deep political crisis in neighbouring Ukraine and the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of Caspian Sea region state leaders (September 2014). Events of that scale are a challenge for regional authorities. They result in massive inspections initiated to check the competence of the latter, which consequently shapes the attitude of state authorities to them.

It can be acknowledged that the governments of two key regions of the district (the Rostov Region and the Krasnodar Territory) have coped with the given tasks quite successfully. Fully cooperating with the state bodies the team of A.Tkachev managed not only to meet tight deadlines and complete the global building project of numerous Olympic venues, but also to stage this two-week sporting event on the level which allows “Sochi-2014” to be considered one of the best Olympic Games in the history of the world sport. Having evolved into a large-scale military campaign, Ukrainian political crisis became a severe test the Rostov region management. In limited period of time it had to organize accommodation and other facilities for dozens thousands of refugees, transport corridors allowing the forced migrants from the South-East to relocated to other regions of the Russian Federation. Team of V.Golubev resolved that complex issue rather efficiently.

Thus the governors’ teams of the Rostov Region and the Krasnodar Territory reinforced their standing in the first half-year period of 2014. Consequently, it can be assumed that two terrorist attacks committed in Volgograd before the New Year unveiled weak points of the regional authorities management and became one of the main reasons for the resignation of governor S.Bazhenov. The latter event triggered a massive personnel rotation in regional administration and in the local “United Russia” office. The day of popular vote became an indicative example when two of three entities of the RF presenting the Povolzhsky-Caspian Sea subregion of SFD, with the management teams of Azov-Black Sea subregion kept, entered the group of pilot regions where governors were chosen by popular vote prior to the scheduled date.

As has been mentioned before, the 4th Summit of Caspian Sea region state leaders became the central event of 2014 for the current political agenda of the eastern subregion of SFD due to the historic decisions about the status of the Caspian Sea, the ways and scale of costal cooperation, navigation and preserving bioresources.

Apparently due to the new wave of tension escalation between Russia and the allied West, Russian government enhances cooperation with the countries of the Caspian Region (reaching thus the Middle East). Current state policy demands for active assistance of new regional management teams that have to be supported not only local political and economic elites, but also by the local communities. On the one hand that enhances the necessity for balanced regional policy targeted at consolidating various social groups, on the other hand it contemplates the monitoring of interethnic cooperation and strengthening their complementary nature.

Migration situation in the SFD. Conflictogenic potential of interethnic cooperation within the SFD largely correlates with the migration activeness and ethnic composition of local area communities (Avksentiev, Aksumov, & Gritsenko, 2011). Territories of almost all regions of the Southern district turned into the centres of migrants’ attraction within ten post-soviet years and joined the list of regions leading in the number of refugees and forces migrants. Each interethnic aggravation (a military conflict especially) in the North and South Caucasus in the late 1980s and in the 1990s drove to the migration waves with a considerable part of people staying in the neighbouring parts of Russia and the south Russian regions contributing to their national diversity (Dyatlov, & Ryazantsev, 2005, p.127-134), ( Sushchiy, 2013). Over the last ten years the scale of ethnic migration into SFD from the North Caucasian republics, the South Caucasus and Middle East have been significant. Thought the majority of people coming don’t consider permanent residence. For example, according to the estimation of local supervisory agencies about 800,000 foreigners enter Astrakhan region annually with only 100,000 of them applying for migration registration (Tishkov, 2013, p.64). Taking into account the fact that a part of this amount repeatedly undergoes registration, it is still a significant group for the one-million people region.

During the first half-year period of 2014 four of six SFD entities demonstrate positive migration balance except for the Volgograd region and the Republic of Kalmykia (Chart 1. (Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie..., 2014)).

**Chart 1**  
**Migration Balance January to May 2013 and January to May 2014**  
**According to the SFD Entities (People)**

<i>SFD entities</i>	<i>growth /loss 2013</i>	<i>growth /loss 2014</i>
<b>The Republic of Adygea</b>	850	1973
<b>The Republic of Kalmykia</b>	-1384	-1190
<b>The Krasnodar territory</b>	21202	15821
<b>The Astrakhan region</b>	-1983	3329
<b>The Volgograd region</b>	-3089	-2052
<b>The Rostov region</b>	181	1440

Although together with the general loss of migrants in the Volgograd region in favour of other Russian territories the migration growth from the CIS stays stable (in January – May 2013 balance of foreign migrants was positive – 1098 people, over the same period of 2014 it was 910). The neighbouring Asian CIS states such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan are the donors of foreign migration for the Volgograd and Astrakhan regions. The new comers from these regions find employment in agriculture, vegetable growth and on the cattle runs. Migration figures of the Rostov region grew due Ukraine. Over the period of January – May 2014 positive migration balance in the Republic of Adygea is explained by the population exchange with the CIS members and other countries. The largest migrant flow (97 people) was from the Syrian Arab Republic.

The migration situation has changed since June 2014 being impacted by the military confrontation between the new state political

power and Donbass rebel fighters.

One of the results of the armed conflict was a large-scale escape of civil population, a considerable part of which had to flee to the Russian Federation. According to Federal Migration Service (FMS) estimation, in June Russian border was daily crossed by 5-10 thousand people from Ukraine. The major part of refugees was in the Rostov region which borders two self-proclaimed Republics of Donbass. Substantial aid was provided by the Krasnodar and Stavropol territories and the Volgograd region — areas geographically close to the effected Ukrainian territories. These South Russia territories were financially supported from the federal budget so that they could provide temporary accommodation facilities. The Rostov region got 111 million rubles (maximum amount among Russia entities), the Volgograd region and the Stavropol territory received 25,6 and 23,6 million ruble correspondingly (the fourth and fifth amounts). To sum it up, over 50 thousand people were accommodated in the Rostov region, with 42 thousand living in host-families, in the second half of the summer. With the financial aid provided and a part of migrants having returned to their native places in Donbass, the group of people settled in the region has considerably influenced its infrastructure.

The flow of migrants from Ukraine has indisputably enhanced the humanitarian aspect of migration. Still current migration issue together with the existing trend of migrant flow from the Asian republics of CIS to the south-eastern entities of SFD require public opinion monitoring on migration and migrants' integration.

Labour migrants coming from the near-abroad states isn't a new phenomenon for the inhabitants of South Russia. Each of the South-Russian entities has an annual fixed quota for the foreign labour force. That is why about half of the population experienced private contacts with the labour migrants. Being acquainted with them and sure in the absence of threat on their side explains the quite calm attitude of the locals to the prospect of migrants being employed at unskilled jobs in the three cities.

Together with that labour market situation, primarily, the salary rate, employment pattern and free vacancies, influence the attitude to employment prospects of migrants. Quality of life with revenue as the most important factor varies in all regions under discussion. Thus, the Rostov region has the 42nd place (36,4 points), Astrakhan — the 50th (34,3 points), Kalmykia — the 82nd (3 points) according to the population income level [Rating of Russian regions...]. Unemployment figures prove the lack of social well-being. For example, due to the flow of forced migrants from Ukraine, the number of officially registered unemployed in the Rostov region reached 16,9 thousand people by the end of June 2014, in the Krasnodar Territory it was insignificantly lower (16,2 thousand people), in Astrakhan — 4,4 thousand people, and in Kalmykia — 3,1 thousand people (Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe polozenie..., 2014, p.199).

Attitude to foreign labour migrants in regions of SFD. In order to study the attitude towards this problem a pilot survey was conducted in the three entities' capitals: Rostov-on-Don, Astrakhan and Elista from 25 May to 25 June 2014. The choice of the regions was done purposefully as it was aimed at comparing public opinion on these issues in the regions with different levels of socio-economic development, ethnic composition and level of migrant appeal. The survey was conducted by means of structured interview using random sampling technique following the city zone division. Altogether 200 people were interviewed in each city following the set criteria (sex, aged, level of education).

Last two dozen years of studying migration processes in the South of Russia demonstrate the ambivalent nature of tackling labour migration in the host communities (Kurbatsev, 2010), (Petrov, 2009), (Rozin, 2001), (Sushchiy, 2013). It can be assumed that the alarm caused by the labour market situation explains that a half of those surveyed feel themselves threatened by the migrant flow. 51% of the respondents from Rostov-on-Don consider that labor migrants "rob them of vacancies". 34,5% of those asked in Astrakhan and 39% in Elista share this point of view. Wariness grows along with specifying the area of employment of labour migrants. Using the modified Bogardus scale while conducting the survey highlighted that the closer a migrant settles to a citizen' private life, the less such an employment is supported by the city dweller. Particularly, if employment for an unskilled job in the housing and utility sector doesn't worry the majority of the respondents, the job of a security at school or pre-school centres arouses alarm and is negatively evaluated by more than a half of the respondents (chart 2).

**Chart 2**  
**Negative Responses to the Question: "What is Your Attitude to the Foreign Labour Migrants Being Actively Employed to the Following Unskilled Jobs?"**

(Each City N = 200 People)

Response	Rostov-on-Don		Astrakhan		Elista	
	Answ.	%	Answ.	%	Answ.	%
Housing and utility sector	51	25,5	42	21,0	63	31,5
Junior medical attendants in polyclinics	106	53	94	47,0	92	46,0
Security at school or pre-school centres	112	56	108	54,0	135	67,5

The survey confirmed the presence in the mass-consciousness of the stereotype of foreign labour migrants being criminalized. This stereotype is more widely spread in a big city with its higher level of anonymous social pressure. For instance, almost a half of Rostov-on-Don respondents consider that the foreign labour migrants commit crimes more often than the locals, another half deny the same (40,5 : 49% consequently). Astrakhan is marked by a classical trine with 37,5% supporting the idea, 32,0 % denying it, and 30,5% not being able to give the answer. In Elista, with its high level of personal contacts with the migrants only 11,5% claim their being involved in criminal affairs, 52,5% deny any possibility of that and 36,5% find the question difficult to answer.

The collected data demonstrate general distrust of population to labour migrants that is proved by the direct question about the list of states migrant flows of which have to be restricted. Attitude to the descendants of the near-abroad states is determined by treating the ethnic culture (including the faith-based one) as a close one and sharing a common experience. Let us remind that such countries as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Kirgizstan mostly contributed to the migration balance of Russia from 1990 to 2007 (Rybakovsky, 2011, p.30). Survey frame was supposed to identify the attitude towards the descendants of the above

mentioned republics. Thus, the respondents of Rostov-on-Don are more positive about the migrants from Ukraine, Belorussia and less to those from Moldavia. Treating the Ukrainians complementary is explained by their long-lasting and deep roots in the local communities of the South of Russia and Rostov region in particular (Sushchiy, 2013b). Descendants of other near-abroad states are unwanted by the majority of those asked. Firstly, the above is true of the migrants from Central Asia: 60%-67% of Rostov-on-Don natives supported the entry restriction to those from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kirgizstan; migrants from Azerbaijan cause the same reaction (62%). Speaking about the level of alienation, the second place is given to migrants from Georgia, Baltics states and China (50%). It has to be noted that migrants from the above listed states (but for Baltic States) do come to work in the Rostov region. The least annoying are migrants from the South Caucasus states that either provide an insignificant number of migrants (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) or that are traditional donors of the population for the South of Russia, such as Armenia. In other words, the majority of population accepts migration from the republics similar in ethnical, cultural and religious respects, such as Ukraine and Belorussia. Astrakhan demonstrates a bit different trend. These respondents are in favour of restricting migration from China (56,5%), Georgia, Tajikistan, Kirgizstan and Uzbekistan (48%). They are less worried about the migrants from Ukraine, Moldavia, Baltic States and Armenia. 30% to 38% of respondents are in favour of restrictions for these countries. The most threatening for Elista citizens are the newcomers from Middle Asia, China and Ukraine. Though the percentage of those supporting restrictions for these countries is smaller than in Rostov-on-Don, 43 to 47,5%. The descendants of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Baltics States worry 33%-35% of Elista population.

Suspicious attitude towards labour migrants doesn't imply any pronounced protesting statements: almost 70% of respondents are unlikely to take part in any protest movements or walk-outs against labour migrants. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that about 31,5% of male and 10% of female population are ready to support such movements. This fugue is a considerable 20% (or one-fifth) of the selection. Although according to the European social investigation data a number of states (Hungary, Portugal, Bulgaria, Estonia, Cyprus) support the exclusion of migrants of other ethnic affiliation even more (Project ESS-Russia).

Citizens' attitude towards integration prospects of foreign migrants. International documents define integration as a two-way process with both parties responsible for the result, the migrant and the host community (Guide to development ...). Integration of migrants into the host community is mainly denoted by the institutional conditions, created by the regional authorities and the civil community. It firstly stays for mastering the language (the Russian Language), accepting migrants' children in local schools, that requires extra-curriculum Russian language courses, and providing with civil legal aid. Empiric studies of migrants integration in Moscow underlines that employers are not interested in providing labour migrants with civil legal aid, only state services are able to organize that efficiently. But state polity and investments of that kind have to be supported by the population.

The gathered data demonstrate general positive attitude of the respondents towards arranging institutional help to integrate labour migrants into the host community. Simultaneously only one point, state support of schooling for labour migrants' children, received major support (Rostov-on-Don – 65,5%, Astrakhan – 47%, Elista – 44%). Other kinds of aid to labour migrants are more disputable. So, 10 to 25% of those surveyed consider aid necessary only in respect of those, demonstrating their willingness to stay in Russia. 30 to 40% are sure that such kind of help has to be fee-paid. There is a notable dependence: the lower standards of living in the region are, the more people support the fee-paid aid strategy. Thus, according to the quality of life level the Rostov region occupies the 42nd place, Astrakhan – the 50th, Kalmykia (Elista) – the 82nd [The Russian Federation entity ranking... P.10]. Fee-paid aid to labour migrants is supported by 14% to 17,5% in Rostov-on-Don, 20% to 32% in Astrakhan and 35,5% to 41% in Elista correspondingly. Using the experience of the European States in the sphere of migration regulation it can be assumed that in Russia there will be acute contradictions enhancing negative attitude towards migrants, while airing these problems.

The conducted analysis of the attitude of the South Russian inhabitants towards the prospects of labour migrants' integration allows to draw the following conclusions:

1. The first half of 2014 was marked by Russia facing foreign policy challenges that directly affect regions of SFD. Among these challenges are an attempt to discredit the Olympic Games "Sochi-2014", Ukrainian political crisis and military actions in Donbass, the 4th Summit of the Caspian Sea region state leaders. These events triggered the federal centre policy aimed at strengthening political situation in SFD entities. Taking into consideration the above mentioned events migration processes may become an additional challenge for political stability in the southern macroregion.

2. The majority of SFD entities maintain migration appeal even though there is a population flow to other Russian regions. In particular, the Volgograd and Astrakhan regions are attractive for labour migrants from the neighbouring Azerbaijan and CIS Asian republics – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirgizia, Tajikistan. The Krasnodar territory and Rostov region are appealing for migrants from Moldavia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as for the descendants of CIS Asian republics. The number of labour migrants from these states is relatively small, which contributed to the decrease of migration influence on socio-economic situation in the regions of SFD.

3. Foreign policy events of 2014 – military movements in Donbass and the 4th Summit of Caspian Sea region state leaders – gave a momentum to intensifying migration flow: to the Rostov region and Krasnodar territory from Ukraine, to Volgograd and Astrakhan regions from CIS Asian republics. Inrush of foreign migrants may serve as extra pressure on the labour market and regional social infrastructure and turn into an additional factor threatening socio-political stability. The evidence of the latter is contained in the deeply rooted stereotypes in South-Russian mass consciousness of migration being tightly connected with criminal activities, general mistrust of the locals to labour migrants and readiness of a part of the population to support protests against labour migrants entering the country.

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