

Migration Patterns between the Russian Far East and China's Northeast: Lessons from Experience and Plans for the Future

Olga Yurievna **Adams***
Moscow State University

Abstract

The Russian Far East (RFE) is a vast territory with land borders with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and North Korea and water borders with several other APEC countries. Presently it comprises 36% of the territory of the Russian Federation but only 5% of its population (around 6.5 million). From 1991 to the present the population has steadily declined, and attempts to reverse the trend have not been successful. Bordering the RFE are three northeastern provinces of the PRC with a total population of 106 million. During the Cold War years, the Russian-Chinese border was "sealed shut" to migration, and sporadic economic and political exchanges initiated in Moscow and Beijing did not have any lasting impact on the neighboring areas. After the fall of the Soviet Union, restrictions on trade were lifted and the borders were open for "tourism" – a word which carried much deeper connotations in the early 1990s. This period of visa-free travel was marked by skyrocketing numbers of travelers from the PRC's neighboring provinces resettling,

often illegally, in the RFE. The issue became politically charged and new migration policies were haphazardly designed. An increasing number of Russian university students were going to China to study, and many stayed there, also often illegally, as there were few opportunities at home at the time. In the early 2000s the trend has once again intensified. The RFE remains an economically depressed region and the central government's efforts at reviving its economy are now combined with stimulating intra-state migration. Deepening economic and social ties between RFE and its East Asian neighbors require comprehensive up-to-date migration policies which are still in their early stages of development.

Keywords: *Russian Far East, PRC Northeast, migration policies, adaptation*

JEL classification: *F22, F52, F59, J61*

1. Introduction

In the broadest sense, migration is defined as the “permanent or temporary resettlement of people in a new place”. Internal migration refers to moving within one’s country of origin, while international migration, to moving to other – “destination” – countries; the latter is a key concept in today’s global world. The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates that in 2013 there were 232 million international migrants in the world, crossing borders and resettling in new places following jobs or family, pursuing educational opportunities, or escaping from war, ethnic strife or hunger. The United States of America (USA) hosted the largest number of international migrants at 45.8 million, or about 20% of total; the Russian

Federation became the destination country for 11 million people (which made it second largest).¹ The OECD report notes that despite the crisis of 2008, global migration stock keeps rising, albeit somewhat more slowly. This means that people continue to seek new opportunities and are willing to tackle the challenges of adapting to new economic, cultural and linguistic realities to take advantage of them. For some, living in a foreign land is temporary – even though they may remain for decades until the children get their education, etc. – while others leave their native countries intending never to look back.

Migration is always a “result”: of geographic and resource push and pull; the outcome of government policies (both intended and not); the call of opportunities; an informed personal decision; or just daydreaming. This human and often seemingly irrational dimension of migration should not be ignored even though it cannot always be neatly categorized. It presents additional difficulties in studying migration, while at the same time making it an illuminating research perspective to observe a host of subjects – from people undergoing another socialization as they adapt to new environments (with often quite unexpected results), to policy planning which reflects a widespread (if unacknowledged) sentiment concerning migration and migrants, and is often subject to the electorate’s pressure on issues like job security and market competition, the social safety net, migration quotas, etc. and wider questions such as inter-ethnic and inter-faith co-habitation (the European Union provides many examples).

The present article aims to trace the changes in migration patterns between the Russian Far East (RFE) and China’s Northeast over the last two decades (since the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991) and to map the trends and factors that initially shaped and continue to influence them. We shall start with a brief overview of border area history, and through analysis of the migration policies and practices which were developed

during the systemic upheaval in immediate post-Soviet Russia and government-directed modernization in the People's Republic of China (PRC), we shall demonstrate changes in migration flows between contiguous countries. The RFE will be the article's main focus: over the course of its non-linear development, the region has undergone many rapid transformations. Initially czarist Russia's distant frontier, the RFE then became a heavily militarized defense line, then a largely neglected area in the aftermath of Soviet Union's breakup, and finally, as a result of actively promoted "Asian Vector" in Russian politics, it has been proclaimed the "gateway to the Asia-Pacific region". With few features that make it an attractive area for resettlement, sustaining stable demographics has been an issue: it is currently threatening to impede the region's modernization; the negative population trends of the early 1990s have not yet been reversed. According to Alexander Galushka – the minister of Far Eastern development – for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union, in 2014 the number of births in the region was by 9,334 higher than number of deaths. However, this widely publicized number is disputed by the regional statistical bureau (Primorskstat) that quotes 24,693 births and 25,953 deaths (higher by 1,260) in 2014. The statisticians agree that the demographic losses have slowed but have not been reversed: 75,467 people arrived at the Primorsky Region in 2014 and 79,415 left (a 3,948 net loss as compared to 7,139 in 2013)².

In regard to policy development, the author maintains that even 20 years of area-specific cross-border experience have not yet translated into a well-designed, long-term migration strategy that could function as an important measure to help minimize negative demographic trends and fully utilize the RFE's potential as a hub of international cooperation. Among the contributing factors is a lag in the development of a national migration policy, local authorities' habit of advancing the agenda they formed in the 1990s (when they were left without much assistance or

guidance from the federal government), which has often allowed them to pursue short-term gains to the detriment of strategic long-term goals and caused radical policy shifts with each change in administration. Due to the lack of reliable statistical data and systemic research into the issue of trans-border, or, in Russian-language sources, “cross-border” migration in the RFE (which encompasses migration from the former Soviet republics), it remains a sensitive subject to an often ill-informed public and is prone to political manipulation. Despite being a notable presence historically and through the post-Soviet years, and likely to grow in numbers and role, the Chinese migrant population in the Russian Far East continues to receive little attention from local authorities in terms of developing a legal framework accommodating changing patterns of migration, implementing policies of adaptation and educating native populations on migration issues in order to ease persistent xenophobic attitudes. Historically the cradle of China studies in Russia, the Far Eastern Sinological community should be actively involved in monitoring and studying cross-border interactions in search of answers to the most fundamental questions: What are the prevalent forms of migration from China to the RFE, and what are their associated challenges and benefits? What is urging people to leave their native environment to make a life in a distinctly different cultural setting? How are they contributing to local society, and are they even interested in making the Russian Federation their adopted country, or is it merely a waypoint en route to other dreams?

The primary sources for the article were official documents signed by the central governments of both countries (treaties, agreements, memoranda of understanding, etc.), statistical reports from migration agencies in Russia and China, regional agreements and policies, and reports from traditional and social media. Secondary sources include scholarly studies from Russian, Chinese and Western researchers which

provide often contrasting perspectives on the subject; publications from local print media allowing a glimpse of prevailing sentiment and fluctuating public opinion.

2. The Neighboring Areas: Mutual Compatibility and a Shared History

The Russian Far East (RFE) is a loose definition for vast territories in the watersheds of rivers to the Pacific Ocean, Sakhalin Island, and smaller archipelagos in the eastern part of the Russian Federation bordering China's Northeast, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK/North Korea), Japan and the USA (they share a water border). Comprising approximately 36% of Russia's territory, the RFE was home to only 7% of its total population during the Soviet period (up to 1991) and around 5% after its dissolution (6.3 million people in 2013). In 2000, the Far Eastern Federal District was created, comprising 9 federal subjects³. Of those, the southernmost Amur and Primorye territories⁴ will be our main focus, since they both border the PRC's Northeast (2,536 km out of total 4,209 km of the Russia-China border) and are home to the largest numbers of Chinese migrants.

Rich in natural and bioresources (both marine and land) with its key geographical position and features (deepwater non-freezing ports, navigable transborder rivers) that defined the goal to transform the region into Russia's gateway to Asia in the first place, the RFE quickly became the focus of attention in the czarist government's expansionist policies that prompted the arrival of the first Russian settlers in the XVII century, and in the dispatching of mapping expeditions in the early XIX century. Negotiations with Qing China were initiated on delineating borders in this vast and largely uninhabited area⁵. After signing the Treaties of Aigun' in 1858 and Peking (Beijing) in 1860, the territories in

the Primorsky region (Primorye) were ceded to Russia, with a small number of Chinese settlers permitted to settle there while remaining subjects of the Qing empire: this set a unique diplomatic precedent which may have played into the local population's habit of freely moving around the area without regard to formal borders. The area's settlement was supported by the Russian government's patronage - it played the key role in attracting populations by providing the necessary incentives (that role remained fundamentally unchanged through the 1990s until market forces came into play), but maintaining a stable presence in the remote border area has always been difficult. Recognizing the demographic challenges faced by newly acquired territories and the necessity to tap into Asian human potential, General Konstantin Posyet, in his 1874 memorandum to the czarist government, wrote that "the Amur and Primorye regions suffer from a lack of grain, cattle and labor" – a situation he proposed to remedy by establishing close ties with Korea and inviting settlers from there⁶. His proposed solution was not met with enthusiasm by officials who feared divided loyalties among settlers that might lead to the creation of a "fifth column" close to areas of potential Russia-Asia conflict. Despite not being well-versed in Asian nations' social structure and customs, official documents and diaries of that period correctly noticed the tendency of Koreans to set up permanent insular agricultural communities, as opposed to Chinese migrants' intraregional mobility – which in modern studies is termed "pendulum migration" referring to the temporary character of settlement. The Chinese population was temporary in the area, not considerable in numbers, and only increased in the 1880s with the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway (東清鐵路) and other projects: in the years leading up to the Revolution of 1917, the RFE as Russia's Asian outpost was actively building up extractive industries' capacities, ports, and railroads – all of utmost importance due to the

ever-present challenge of transporting industrial output to the central parts of Russia. All these endeavors required a considerable supply of low-skilled labor, which internal migrants arriving in the area under the government resettlement policies could not meet. Asian migrant laborers – Chinese, Korean and Japanese – were therefore a constant feature in the Far East. Official policy toward them remained unstable and susceptible to narrow political interests, mistrust, and xenophobia among the local Russian population, including the officials themselves⁷.

The well-documented unwillingness of successive Primorye governors to allow wide-scale Chinese settlement in the Far East, even with the area's desperate need for human capital, was justified by their *perceived* prevailing loyalty to China, and the "impossibility to russify them" in the words of Vladimir Arseniev, a famous XIX-century Russian explorer, military-trained cartographer, and author of books on the ethnography of Far East. A knowledgeable historian of the region, he recognized the challenges Primorye faced if it wanted to become a fully integrated part of the empire, engaged in productive cooperation with neighboring China: its prolonged history as a no man's land, neighboring empires' relatively recent interest in the area and their competing claims of sovereignty, and the vying claimants' resulting ambiguous status there. These issues continued to exert their influence until nearly all contact gradually ceased and the borders were closed during the Soviet era. Nonetheless, acculturation, defined as learning about and borrowing from another's cultural traditions while retaining one's own, was certainly taking place in the Far East – neighbors were residing in close proximity and interacting constantly. Over the years, Chinese nationals' waxing and waning population as laborers, gatherers of taiga resources, traders, and, at the time of October 1917 Revolution, even as fighters for the new "people's power", established itself as a stable social presence in the Far East, albeit subject to ever-present political shifts, nationalistic

whims and changing market demands – “always ready to disappear again” in the words of I. Saveliyev – which did not facilitate integration into their host society. That their native countries were so close may also have been viewed as a bonus for Korean and Chinese settlers, since the same was not true for newly arriving Russians. This perceived advantage may have influenced local policy-makers who attempted to strictly regulate the numbers of Asian settlers.

Vladimir Arseniev’s observations from over hundred years ago captured the challenges of receiving migrants from a densely populated and culturally different country which was at odds with a country in which population was sparse and territory was vast. The challenges in establishing a distinct identity in the Russian empire’s frontier area were particularly acute in the Far East. Writing on the history of Harbin and the role the Chinese Eastern Railway construction and concession played in its transformation into the center of Russia-China relations, B.R. Chiasson points out that “like Vladivostok, Tiflis, Orenburg, and Baku, Harbin had been constructed as a center of Russian political and economic power. These cities acted as both oases and fortresses for Russian identity in non-Russian parts of the Russian Empire” (Chiasson, 2010: 156). All of the previous imperial outposts had distinct roles and formed specific industry anchors – vast agricultural lands in Kazakhstan (Orenburg), the oil industry (resource extracting) in Baku, the military fortress of Tiflis. Vladivostok was all those combined (save traditional crop cultivation) and was the farthest from the empire’s heartland, and this further influenced the trajectory of its development and the characteristics of the local Russian population. In Amur *oblast’* in 1897, there were 103,523 Russians and 9,585 Chinese and Koreans; in 1911, Russians numbered 242,304 and Chinese and Koreans 38,006⁸.

All these factors contributed to the formation of a unique Russian Far East identity with its main feature being its ability to function in a

remote area at the intersection of divergent nations and to be responsive to foreign cultures while retaining its own. B.R Chiasson mentions the identity of Russian immigrants to Harbin in the late XIX-early XX centuries as distinct from that of Russians hailing from “Russia proper”. This observation holds true in regards to modern day Far Easterners, who refer to the rest of their country as “the West” and often have more knowledge about China, Japan and Korea (at the very least the closest tourist destinations) than they do about Western Russia. Moreover, today, just as a hundred years ago, the challenge of a “permanently transitory” population has not been resolved: forging a permanent community loyal to this often challenging area and making long-term life plans there has had a limited degree of success.

Due to mounting tensions in the 1920-40s that eventually led to Japan entering World War II against the USSR, the latter’s focus on development in the RFE shifted towards creating a heavily fortified Far-Eastern line of defense – buildups of the Navy and industry, border reinforcement and their subsequent sealing. The Russian “gateway to Asia” closed shut. Migration between China’s northeast provinces (東北三省) and the RFE virtually stopped then, and Chinese settlers also suffered greatly from the forced relocation of ethnic minorities as practiced in the 1930s all over the USSR⁹. Border issues continued to remain unresolved and during the Cultural Revolution resulted in bloody clashes and numerous casualties in 1969 on Damansky Island (珍寶島). These border-related questions unavoidably loomed large, coloring mutual perceptions – while there were no “territorial disputes” according to a host of Russia-China border documents, “unresolved issues” were nevertheless present. After the Maoist-indoctrinated military provocation on Damansky, the border was sealed shut. It was not until the “Agreement on Easing of Population’s Movement between USSR and PRC” was signed in 1988 when sporadic and limited visits

began again.

On the other side, the northeastern region of the People's Republic of China (also called "Northeast" or "Dongbei") struggled to solve its own development issues. Historically a part of the Manchuria region (滿洲), the Northeastern provinces (東北三省) of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang (the latter two border the Russian Far East) and parts of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, are similar to the RFE in terms of richness in resources and high costs of extracting them. In a series of policy decisions similar to the Soviet-era development in the RFE, after the founding of the PRC in 1949, the region was earmarked to become the Republic's heavy industry base – its development, just like RFE's, government-directed and -funded, dependent upon dispatches of highly-qualified personnel from the central regions of China to manage large steel-making, petrochemical and heavy-machinery enterprises, e.g. automobile manufacture and shipbuilding. This distinct pattern of socioeconomic development – a frontier area heavily reliant on state support (state patronage) for development and attracting people in order to fulfill its two main tasks – resource-extraction and border protection – is still recognizable in both areas, even though the PRC's Northeastern policies have proven to be more consistent and successful in adjusting to changed conditions.

By the time reforms were initiated, the Northeast had been consistently demonstrating positive results from planned industrialization policies – in 1978, Heilongjiang and Liaoning occupied the 4th and 5th positions respectively among all provincial administrative units in per capita GDP growth (Fan and Sun, 2008: 10). Wide-scale heavy industry development attracted a large number of internal migrants: cumulative net migration in 1981-85 (the PRC's 6th 5-year plan) was 365,300 people in Liaoning, 102,900 in Jilin and 202,100 in Heilongjiang (Yu, 2006).

In the early stages of reform, the region started to rapidly lose hard-earned gains due to general contraction in Northeastern heavy industry, its subsequent privatization (which raised serious concerns due to the opaque process and often unfulfilled social obligations by the new owners), and competition from new industrial centers in the coastal provinces which were nimbly adapting to new challenges. As a result, by the mid-1990s the region – by then dubbed “the rustbelt of China” – was dealing with sharply falling production (Heilongjiang slipped to 12th in the rating cited above) and soaring unemployment, which when combined with large populations, became important factors leading to its shift from the net migration “destination” area of the planned-economy era to the net migration “origination” provinces during the reforms. Internally, preferred destinations for migrants from the Dongbei fell into two categories: origination areas of migration flows previously directed into the Northeast – the provinces of Shandong, Hebei, the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia – were now becoming destination areas with the direction of migration reversed; and newly developed and promising areas, to include the deltas of the Zhujiang and Changjiang Rivers and the Beijing-Tianjin capital region (Yu, 2006: 32-33). There were most likely two primary motivations to migrate at that time: family ties or pursuing new opportunities and realizing one’s potential in a more diversified setting. In both cases, migration was a personal choice and not the result of government-directed resettlement of large numbers in the planned-economy era. This is an important distinction, since it dispels the image of the Russian Far East as “the only choice” for migrants from the struggling Northeast, as it was often portrayed in the RFE’s mass media in the 1990s when the subject of the “threat of Chinese infiltration of the Far East” was first raised.

The Russian Far East and China’s Northeast share a complicated history, long contested borders, and a rich experience of co-habitation,

despite long periods of mutual isolation. Representing unique and highly divergent cultures, the two nations were facing similar challenges in the remote Far East in the XVII-XVIII century – a short period in their respective presences there, adjusting to life after signing border-delineating treaties which restricted habitual free cross-border movement (especially from the Chinese side) and making the region “their own”. From that time to the late XX century, nearly all aspects of settling the area were under government patronage: strategic decisions and funding came from the center; this approach in the 1990s began to be supplemented and, on Russian side, almost completely replaced by turbulent market forces operating with limited government oversight. Subsequently, voluntary outward migration intensified and resulted in substantial demographic losses to the area. In light of acute problems in the RFE – depopulation, decreased life expectancy, and low birthrates – and limited appeal as a destination choice for migrants, there is an obvious need for new resettlement policies and incentives that would utilize years of inter-country cooperation in the border areas. Let us take a closer look at its non-linear history.

3. 1990s: Systemic Changes and First Encounters

After the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991, things looked bleak for the RFE. The integral part of the centrally planned economic system for 70 years, the region was completely dependent upon the central government’s policies and subsidies. Attracting internal migrants proved successful with solid state support and generous financing: by January 1st of 1991, the Primorye’s population was the largest it had ever been: 8,056,600 people.¹⁰ However, starting that same year, it had to map out its own path. Demographic challenges loomed larger than ever – outward migration from RFE began after 1991 and has not been reversed

since: in the period 1990-2009, RFE's population shrank by 1.594 million people – a net loss of about 20%.¹¹

Whole industries collapsed without government financing, with high transportation costs to ship products to the country's center, and hitherto unseen competition from imports. Left with no support from the center and no new vectors of development that would include the region in a socioeconomic system already undergoing drastic change, the RFE's regional authorities began looking outwards for new opportunities, at first primarily to import basic staple foods and consumer goods to satisfy a newly impoverished population. Rules and regulations reflecting "local conditions" were created quickly – principles of strategic partnership between Russia and China could truly be seen in practice in the Far Eastern border areas. While never contradicting central policies, they were dealing with the practical issues of creating working mechanisms of cross-border cooperation; many of these mechanisms, understandably, were not addressed in the official framework documents. The urgency of matters led to documents being promulgated in rapid succession and, with all their shortcomings, they lay the foundations of localized international cooperation.

Despite that the situation was far from being settled in the Russian border areas, understandable in the context of its systemic upheaval (a rough transition from state socialism to wild capitalism), migrants from the Chinese Northeast started to flow into RFE, taking advantage of visa-free entrance granted according to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Russia's embassy's in PRC *nota verbale* in 1991 (in 1993 the "Agreement on Visa-Free Tourist Groups' Exchange" was signed) which allowed visitors from bordering countries to enter with just their passports as members of tour groups; border control points exchanged lists of names and affixed them with entry-exit stamps. In essence, "border tourism" at the time provided a relatively simple opportunity to

visit the contingent country (usually without venturing outside the border areas, as tour groups were obligated to cross into and out of the country together) for a variety of reasons – from conducting business to visiting relatives – and with a few adjustments remains a staple of current RFE-Northeast trans-border relations. Over the years, the reasons for travel have changed; today, conventional tourists constitute a larger percentage of people crossing land borders between Russia and China.

In the early 1990s, a trickle of visitors quickly turned into a steady stream: from 1988 to 1993, the number of arrivals from the PRC grew 13.5 times – from 55,500 to 751,200. In a short span of two years, arrivals just from Heilongjiang province saw a spike from 33,200 in 1991 to 73,000 in 1993 (Nechaeva, 2008). While this growth was often portrayed in the RFE media as a rush of Northeasterners to “colonize the Far East”, these figures reflected just the number of crossings through border control points mainly located in Heilongjiang province, with no breakdown by “reason for visit”. Furthermore, the number of Chinese and Russian tourists in the border areas was roughly equal – 3,689 groups from China (110,000 tourists) and 3,662 from Russia (102,000).

Visa-free travel rules allowed up to 90-day stay per visit with no limits on subsequent returns. As mentioned earlier, there was very little conventional (recreational) tourism, etc. involved in most of these border crossings: the primary aim of visiting the neighboring country was to conduct rudimentary business. The basis of the new trans-border (“regional” in Russian sources) trade in the early 1990s was barter – the RFE used raw materials (diesel, oil, bioresources, timber, coal etc.) and Soviet-era surplus (mostly military) goods to trade for PRC-manufactured consumer goods and staple foods. Barter exchanges were soon complemented by the so-called “shuttle” trade – a far cry from any sort of regular organized business activity: Chinese and Russian traders would literally carry suitcases full of goods for sale in the border towns.

Throng of Russian “tourists” poured into Northeastern border towns to buy consumer goods for resale at chaotic markets that sprung up all over the RFE, with the highest concentration in Primorye in the vicinity of the border: towns of Grodekovo and Suifenhe on the Russian and Chinese sides respectively quickly became the bustling hubs of commercial activity with a “Wild West” atmosphere. Visa-free Chinese “tourists” shuttling across the border frequently overstayed their 90-day allotments (as did Russian visitors to the Northeast, albeit on a smaller scale). Rule reinforcement was sporadic due to a lack of resources, legal loopholes, an absence of shared computer databases of registered offenders, language barriers, and little cross-border practical interaction by law-enforcement authorities – apart from a few official visits to sign new memoranda of understanding. Fragmented statistical data on the number of Chinese visitors to the RFE from that period come mostly from border control and law-enforcement agencies.

Russia-China cross-border interactions in the 1990s predominantly reflected the turbulent systemic changes on the Russian side. Victor Larin, director of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of Indigenous Peoples of the Far East of the Russian Academy of Sciences and historian of Russian-Chinese border interaction, considers the period of 1990s a “lost” time for Russia’s Asian politics in general, and Russia-China border areas in particular due to the prevailing pro-Western attitudes among policy-makers, their singular focus on Europe and the United States as the main avenue for Russian foreign policy, and negligence of the Far Eastern territories, which in his view explains the lack of long-term policies for the area’s development which should have included plans for mutually beneficial cross-border cooperation (Larin, 2005: 22-23). The area, which had for a long time been completely shut off from any international exposure because of its military nature and hence with no previous experience or training in navigating the

subtleties of international politics and business, suddenly found itself in a precarious sink-or-swim situation. Against this challenging backdrop, ordinary Far-Easterners, for decades shielded from interaction with foreigners despite living in the border area, were suddenly exposed to the thrills, demands and challenges of “intercultural communication” (the term would become very popular later with entire university departments devoted to its studies). Feelings of insecurity and “abandonment” by Moscow were also unwelcome news for a population long-accustomed to their government taking care of long-term plans and daily concerns.

In the confusion of the moment, even available resources were underutilized: there was little involvement by the long-established Far-Eastern sinological community in due diligence of various agreements and education of both the general public and establishment in the subtleties of Chinese culture and traditions. The lack of reliable statistical information on the number of visitors from the Northeast, instances of overstays, etc. fueled the politicization of the international migration issue with sensationalism and unsubstantiated claims in the local media¹², with a haphazardly designed and sporadically implemented local regulatory framework for Russian-Chinese cross-border relations at the time. Developing against the backdrop of a sharp decline in living standards in the RFE, widespread feelings of insecurity and the loss of a moral compass, cross-border exchanges quickly became rife with corruption among police, border control and customs employees. Official documents on cross-border interaction during the transitional period (from 1991 to 2000) demonstrate Russian regional actors’ ambivalence: on one hand, they were objectively interested in widening the scope of economic cooperation with their neighbors; on the other, they were wary of such cooperation, fearing the “Chinese threat” (中國威脅論). These factors translated into ambiguity and

inconsistency in policies, their slow implementation, and the formation of a negative image of Chinese migrants among the public.

The first attempts to address the issue of work migration – something which has been consistently regarded in the mass media as a potential threat to the ethnic and cultural composition of the RFE – included the “Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the PRC on Principles of Dispatching and Receiving Chinese Citizens to Work in Factories, Associations and Organizations in the Russian Federation”, signed on August 19th of 1992 in Moscow. A few notable points from this agreement include:

- Multiple “authorized actors” – the Ministry of Labor in Russia and the Ministry of Foreign Economic Affairs and Trade in China. Considering Russian governmental organs’ limited experience in dealing with migration issues at that time, it appears to be a more far-sighted move by the Chinese.
- The proposed actors were Russian “economic entities”¹³ (receiving) and Chinese foreign economic cooperation companies of ministries and administrations; provinces, autonomous regions and cities of PRC vetted by the Ministry of Foreign Economic Affairs and Trade and hereinafter referred to as “Chinese companies” (sending). Workers sent remained the responsibility of the state organs in China that sent them; receiving them in Russia was often delegated to newly created commercial entities. With their status being still in flux with legal frameworks still being developed, questions concerning a foreign workforce were often left unanswered in a comprehensive and timely manner by government organs. This, in turn, created confusion and opportunities for malpractice; in the RFE, the situation was worsened by the economic hardship of the transition period, as we see below.

- “The number and professional qualifications of Chinese citizens and the period of their stay in the Russian Federation are regulated by contracts between Russian economic entities and Chinese companies. However, the duration of stay cannot exceed 3 years.” Work conditions and work schedules, labor protection and the stipend paid to Chinese workers are covered under Russian law, taking into consideration special conditions set forth in the present Agreement (Article 3). Work contracts could be terminated “in the highest interests of the participating parties”, among other reasons.
- Article 4 stipulated that Chinese workers could not bring their family members to Russia. This article further stipulated that workers arriving must be between 18 and 45 years of age, and qualified specialists – up to 55 years of age. Articles 3 and 4 clearly demonstrate a lack of interest in foreign workers staying in Russia longer and becoming better integrated into the host society. Of course, many questions associated with long-term migration were not a high priority for government officials and budding entrepreneurs at the time.

While the document above provided a generalized legal foundation for labor migration – almost too late, as by the time the document was issued, large-scale “inter-state” contracts were becoming fewer and were largely absent in the border areas – area-specific concerns remained unaddressed.

The publication of the first post-Soviet “Federal Focused Program of Economic and Social Development of the Far East and Baikal Region for 1996-2005” coincided with then President Boris Yeltsin’s reelection campaign, and was widely perceived as an empty election promise among inhabitants of the Far East. “Easing of social tensions” was stated as one of its main goals, and the plan to achieve it was through

vaguely defined economic measures: “formation of transportation corridors” in order to strengthen Russia’s position in the worldwide transportation system; development of a resource base for the oil and gas industry and their pipelines; development of the marine bioresources of Far-Eastern seas; modernization of key economic sectors – energy, transportation and fishing – creating necessary conditions for the development of small- and medium-scale private business¹⁴. Measures to stop “negative demographic tendencies” were mentioned in passing, and the only solution offered was “encouraging” internal migration from the northern parts of the RFE to the more developed south. The potential of international migration were not discussed at all. As M. Alexandrova from Moscow Institute of Far Eastern Studies’ Center for Research and Prognosis on Russia-China Relations pointed out in her analysis of the development programs for the RFE over the course of over 100 years, “unless it was designed specifically for the region with the central government in charge of implementation and, most importantly, funding, it was likely to become a failure”¹⁵ as was once again proved true in the case of the Federal Program for 1996-2005 (even though in 2002 it was extended to 2010). More official documents were to follow, with varying degrees of attention paid to migration issues.

On the other side of the border, the Northeast’s economy looked better despite its struggles and challenges. Following its tried-and-true strategy of experimental implementation of new policies, the PRC’s central authorities designated the province of Heilongjiang as the gateway (口岸通道) to the Russian Far East. In 1992 a few townships – Suifenhe (綏芬河), Manzhouli (滿洲里), Hunchun (琿春) and Heihe (黑河) – received “designated areas of trans-border trade and cooperation” status. These measures served important purposes:

- new policies designed by central authorities in Beijing could be quickly tested in practice and adapted to accommodate unforeseen circumstances and regional challenges – varying greatly in a vast country, this approach exponentially increased their effectiveness;
- upon making them de facto points of China-Russia economic trade and exchange, small towns became a magnet for internal migrants, thus somewhat easing the problem of unemployment in the Northeast;
- in the same “wave” of liberalization, border towns in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (Hunchun, Yanji) in the PRC began to pull the Korean diaspora’s resources into the orbit of a burgeoning trans-border cooperation which, too, served the overarching goals of modernizing the Northeast and widening its participation in international cooperation.

Through the 1990s, RFE authorities tried to replicate the experiences of Northeastern “free border trade towns” with Special Economic Zones (SEZs) that would have been created in order to solve specific problems, with all projects playing an important role in international cooperation and the free flow of labor. Among the most trumpeted of these SEZs were “Tumangan”, which was supposed to become the hub for high-tech industries utilizing the geographical proximity of the RFE, Northeast, and North Korea, and the convenience of a transborder river, the Tumenjiang (Tumangan in Korean) which provides access to the Pacific Ocean; SEZ “Nakhodka” focused on modernizing the commercial port in the city of Nakhodka (in the south of Primorye) and turning it into a competitor to other ports in the region and with investments from the Republic of Korea (South Korea), China, Singapore and other Asian countries. “Big Vladivostok” was supposed to turn its namesake into a Far Eastern Hong Kong, providing financial services for this unique area, positioned at the crossroads of Asia and

Europe, attracting foreign investors and highly qualified foreign workers to its modernized natural resource, manufacturing and logistics industries. Unfortunately, none of these projects materialized, and shifts in RFE migration policies to attract highly skilled labor remain to be seen.

“The Plan for the Revitalization of the Old Northeast Industrial Base” (振興東北老工業基地) of 2007 provided a necessary general impetus and framework for Northeast development. Upgrades to aging production facilities, the development of new industries with a focus on modern technologies, and diversification of the region’s economy were named key goals of the state-funded program. Thus newly established and rapidly developing centers of cross-border cooperation were contributing to a much larger effort to reform the PRC’s economy, which gave the area an additional advantage over its counterpart in the RFE. The country-wide “one thousand people” policy (千人計劃), adopted in 2008, aimed to attract and “fully utilize” top foreign talent in key areas of research and innovation, logically fed into the “Revitalization Program” which was also attractive to internal migrants due to its opportunities, to include those in the trans-border exchanges. In their analysis of the experience of years of active economic cooperation between the RFE and Northeast, Russian researchers also point out the far more developed legal foundation for commercial activity conducted in the border area, with streamlined registration, banking and tax procedures and labor regulations with the specifics of the border areas in mind. All those, once again, provided a competitive advantage to the Northeast while raising the effectiveness of dialogue between China’s provincial governments and business interests, allowing them to adapt to changing conditions quickly. Strict regulations on export-import business – requiring the participation of Chinese middlemen, limits on the registration of foreign companies in the border areas, etc. put RFE’s

companies at a further disadvantage, compounded by the “unpreparedness of Russian government structures in charge of foreign trade”, which resulted in further lagging with updates to legal documents¹⁶.

Summarizing the cross-border co-operation experience of the transition period, we can see many similarities between the paths to development of the two nations, similarities which allowed Russia and China to engage in productive – if chaotic – economic exchanges in the 1990s to early 2000s. In the transitional period after Soviet Union’s collapse, early forms of business cooperation (barter exchanges and shuttle trade) eased the problems that scarcity in food and consumer goods posed to the RFE, and helped to alleviate the problem of unemployment in the Northeast, thus proving objectively beneficial to both sides. At that time, policies governing international cooperation in both countries were being developed at clear, if somewhat divergent, “central” and “local” levels, with centers setting overarching goals and engaging in generally positive and optimistic dialogue, while regional authorities tried to apply these general themes to solve practical problems in regional development, which oftentimes brought unexpected results. A legal framework on migration was in its embryonic state on both sides, with the Chinese side closing the gap faster by enacting countrywide policies that included the Northeast as a priority. Local migration policies became a logical “extension” of the socioeconomic plan for development for the region. On the Russian side, the question of migration from China and finding ways of successfully utilizing its potential unfortunately received insufficient attention in academic and policy-making circles and became the purview for border and law enforcement authorities. That relegation led to growing alarmism among the public, which was mostly unfounded: a few smaller-scale sociological studies of Chinese migration in the RFE showed

insignificant numbers of migrants in the sociological sense of the word, although the number of visa overstays and visa-free policy violations was relatively high.

4. Continuity of Change and New Policies

The turn of the 21st century brought changes both to global migration flows and to how the issue of migration was understood. Economic considerations remain the primary impetus for migration (temporary and permanent), with high numbers of illegal migrants from poor countries in North Africa, Pakistan, Afghanistan and others continuing to attempt to resettle in developed European countries, Australia and North America. Migration between higher-developed countries (including Russia and China) is becoming much more nuanced. For example, outbound labor migration from the PRC is now following two clear routes that, for purposes of our analysis, can be termed “private-” and “state-sponsored”. The former is the traditional way of an individual’s resettling in the destination country following job prospects, family members, etc., and relying on the process on his/her own resources and making his/her own decisions about where to settle, the duration of stay, job changes, etc. State-sponsored labor migration occurs in an organized fashion in order to provide human resources for PRC-funded large-scale projects – latest examples of this would include oil exploration and extraction and infrastructure projects in Africa and Central Asia. Workers and specialists are relocated by their companies (often state-backed) and do not have flexibility in matters mentioned above. On the other hand, they are better protected against the vagaries of unfamiliar places and job market fluctuations.

Returning to the regions in question, new migration policies were put in place at the beginning of this century, and both governments were

actively involved in their implementation. The approach of choice for China is “crossing the river, feeling the stones” (摸石過河) when experimental policies are tried out – and adjusted accordingly – on a smaller scale first, in order to optimize them for wider implementation later. The successful strategy of “designated areas of international cooperation” has been realized in both policy-making and functioning free economic zones close to the border in the Northeast, which has been consistently paying particular attention to developing cooperation with the RFE.

The “Primorsky Krai Migration Program for 1999-2000” was the first document focusing on Far Eastern area-specific migration issues; by its contents, it was more of a “statement” than a “program”, but with all its drawbacks, it gives a clear account of the disastrous economic situation in the area in the transition period: a 92% loss of “financial investments from all sources” (meaning mostly central government funding) when compared to 1997; a 93.1% drop in industrial and 96.3% drop in agricultural output; a 96.4% drop in consumer goods production. In the context of the ongoing socioeconomic upheaval in the early 1990s, Primorsky Krai was also receiving the first wave of mostly ethnic Russian and Korean migrants arriving from the former Soviet republics, escaping from civil wars, ethnic conflicts and economic hardship. The Program mainly focused on that group of refugees, with “international labor migrants” receiving only a cursory note. “Economic revival” was named the key provision for a successful migration policy, and its aims were the “regulation of migration flows, taking into consideration the socioeconomic capabilities of the region’s cities and townships and the ethnic compatibility of the populations; creating conditions for receiving migrants and providing necessary conditions for the protection of their rights; the organization of an immigration control system; and the cooperation between executive and border control organs”¹⁷. The

Program's 2-year life span was too short to achieve meaningful results, and the shift in attention to the more pressing concerns of hosting repatriates from the former USSR left foreign migrants behind.

The number of foreign workers was relatively insignificant – a total of 10,333 in 1998 (2,500 fewer than in 1995) working in construction (2,915), agriculture (4,208) and trade (1,938); manufacture workers numbered 834. The majority came from the PRC (7,179), DPRK (2,134), Vietnam (127) and the Republic of Korea (61). There were 670 workers from NIS – Newly Independent States (former Soviet republics) – Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan¹⁸. Overall, in 1994-1998, the PRC was the main sending country for labor migrants – 69.5% of the total, while DPRK's share was 20.6%, NIS' 6.5%, and Vietnam's 1.2%. These numbers dispel the persistent myth about “China's seizure of the RFE”. Moreover, the “Migration Program” above lists a host of other problems foreign migrants encountered upon their arrival, most of them stemming from the challenging local economic conditions and the ineptitude of local authorities, e.g. “lack of contractually stipulated work” for those arriving to work in construction and, as a result, their “looking for other employment opportunities, often in small-scale trading in low-quality consumer goods, which creates unfair competition to local manufacturers” (the latter not truly a threat, since local consumer goods manufacturing had already all but ceased). Most puzzling was that “that the same companies which were unable to guarantee construction work continued to bring over foreign workers for consecutive contract periods”. Salary arrears were common in agriculture, once again forcing workers to look for other opportunities, often in places far from those stipulated in their contracts, which was technically another breach of contractual obligations.

These circumstances helped cast Chinese migrants in local public opinion in an excessively negative light at the same time likely pushing

them in the direction of strengthening diasporisation in their interpersonal ties. Defined as a process of collective adaptation of a group of people – however loose – of common origin and cultural socialization to another cultural and linguistic setting as a way of dealing with the challenges of long-term living in a foreign setting often perceived as inhospitable or hostile, diasporization attaches particular importance to maintaining ties with the country of origin (both for practical and cultural-pull reasons), and it may eventually lead to the formation of diaspora proper (examples of Chinese diasporas around the world abound).

A. Kireev argues that this process does not come to completion if migrants perceive their foreign stay as strictly temporary, in which case there is little need for it; or they choose to assimilate into the receiving society¹⁹. However, even if migration is of the semi-temporary variety (seasonal, pendulum), the possibility of migrants' diasporization rises, especially under challenging or unstable conditions described above. Even with this sociological explanation in mind, the possibility of the formation of Chinese diasporas, with their opaque and insular nature and perceived links to ethnic cross-border organized crime, have long been a favorite image in alarmist mass media pieces in the RFE (and Russia in general). There is no doubt, in the absence of reliable institutionalized support networks (such as professional associations), interpersonal relations and ethnicity- and common culture-based connections are viewed by Chinese as vitally important in a foreign environment, but to make the leap towards a full-fledged diaspora in its classical interpretation requires at least one generation raised and socialized in a foreign society, which is clearly not the case with the Chinese presence in the RFE. There are a few professional organizations, such as the "Association of Chinese Citizens in the city of Vladivostok", which was established in 2007; moreover, Chinese-owned businesses are generally

viewed both by migrants and locals as protecting the interests of Chinese citizens in Russia, but all these arrangements are a far cry from the long-established, full-fledged Chinese diasporas in Western countries. I. Saveliev considers the Chinese presence in Russia unique because “it never has had a naturalized Chinese community as a core, strong enough to fight for legal equality with Russians. It has always been a highly mobile, floating community with vague boundaries.”²⁰

Further legal developments included the “Protocol to Establish a Working Group on Migration Issues” which was signed in May of 2006. The stated goals were for a new, smaller and more agile structure and included “cooperation in regulation of migration flows, including in the legal basis of cooperation; regulating of external migration flows, guaranteeing migrants’ rights and interests, joint measures against illegal migration; and strengthening of cooperation between government organs in the area of migration”²¹. The most important aim of a working group was to establish regular channels for information exchange that were to assist in the stemming illegal migration and fight against trans-border criminal operations. In September of 2009, a joint Russia-China “Program on the Revitalization and Development of Border Territories” was signed by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Hu Jintao and aimed at the convergence of development plans for the Northeast and Russian Far East. Calling for “deepening cooperation in trans-border labor movement”, the document did not mention the potential of inter-state migration and its associated challenges, however. The document drew fire among Russian economists and academics, who saw it as yet another example of turning the RFE into a “resource area” and exploiting its natural riches for China’s benefit without putting adequate effort into developing production capabilities which would help maintain population levels²². The debate on the degree of compatibility of development goals is still open, but regardless of the direction it takes,

the demographic issue remains of utmost importance. The long-held intention of Russia's policy-makers to find an internal solution to the problem of declining populations should be cast aside in order to fully utilize the potential of migration – including international migration²³. So far, it has been a difficult journey.

In Russia's policy to attract migration flows, "The Strategy for the Development of Primorye and Zabaikalye Regions up to the year 2025", the sense that authorities are reluctantly acquiescing is noticeable: "in any case, even with the most positive developments, attraction of migration flows is unavoidable ... It is imperative to design and implement measures to introduce migrants from foreign countries to Russian cultural values and traditions ... [This should be accomplished] via a network of language-training centers, qualification services and naturalization centers"²⁴. The measures planned are one step in the direction of migrants' adaptation to their new country – even though it is likely that the majority of them would not plan a permanent move.

Higher education historically provided avenues for international migration. Current worldwide trends provide even more opportunities, both for quality education and for possible permanent or long-term often job-related migratory opportunities for new graduates. The Russian Federation has been expanding its efforts to attract prospective students who are approaching education both as an academic pursuit and an avenue to successful integration into Russia's society. According to the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation, as of end of 2012, the highest number of university students came from Kazakhstan (30,700), Byelorussia (White Russia) (27,100) and China (16,900); followed by Ukraine (11,200), Uzbekistan (10,900) and Azerbaijan (8,300)²⁵. Mongolia sent 5,600 students, and Vietnam 3,900. There are currently approximately 1,000 students from the PRC studying in the RFE.

The new campus of the Far-Eastern Federal University (FEFU) on Russky Island off the coast in Vladivostok is likely to attract some new arrivals due to its location and an established tradition of academic cooperation and exchange with the PRC and other Asian countries. As of January 2015 there were 2,000 students from 35 countries studying in the FEFU, and 70% of the foreign students were from China²⁶. FEFU is joining the intense competition in higher education market – students are increasingly choosing North America and Europe as their top destinations for higher education, especially for advanced degrees. Nevertheless, Russian institutions of higher learning continue to improve their cooperation with the PRC: Moscow State University recently announced plans to establish a joint China-Russia university in Shenzhen with instruction in three languages – Chinese, Russian and English. FEFU among other things is increasing the number of Russian language learning programs as an introduction to higher education in the RFE in the hope of persuading prospective students to earn their degrees in Vladivostok.

Meanwhile, studies on regional migration that were carried out in the late 1990s to mid-2000s (Gelbras, 2002) addressed the issue of statistical distortions in calculating the number of border crossings separately from the number of visas, work permits and residence permits that were issued. They also demonstrated that the number of migrants from the Northeastern provinces was relatively low and that the patterns of trans-border migration were mostly of the non-permanent variety, with so-called “seasonal”, “visiting” (“vacation”) and “pendulum” migration flows dominating and the majority of migrants polled planning “to work in Russia and save money to open businesses back in China”. According to V. Gelbras’s estimates around 86 400 people permanently resettled in Russia during 1998-2003.²⁷

In the first half of 2010, nearly 220,000 visitors from the PRC – 25% more compared to the same period of 2009 – arrived in the RFE; 22,300 work permits were issued to PRC nationals during the same period. The spike in numbers can be plausibly attributed to massive construction projects in preparation for the APEC Summit of 2012. A total of 36,900 Chinese migrants were “engaged in labor activities” in the RFE at the time, with the majority concentrated in Primorsky Krai – 16,700, or 43% of the total. A total of 7,000 visitors were charged with administrative offenses (visa regulations) – 4% fewer than the previous year.²⁸ In 2012 - the year of the APEC summit – Primorye was leading in numbers of visitors – 82,000 – primarily due to the newly built infrastructure (suspension bridges in Vladivostok). In the first 9 months of 2013, 130,000 tourists from the PRC visited Russia. The summer of 2013 was marked by disastrous flooding in the Amur Oblast’, which did not seem to stem the flow of tourists – 35,500 in the first 10 months – or 99% of the previous year’s figures. The Khabarovsk area witnessed a rise of 15.6%, bringing the total to 3,500 as of October 1, 2013.²⁹

With the expansion of visa-free tourism and intensifying competition in order to attract foreign visitors which prompt authorities to offer more incentives, in 2014 a total of 1,125,000 visa-free Chinese tourists visited Russia. Another 286,000 visitors acquired Russian visas for business and work purposes. The interest to visit Russian Federation is clearly on the rise. Moreover, thanks to a host of new tourism-related agreements between PRC and Russia, visa-free visits are now possible not only to the border areas of the RFE, but also Moscow, St. Petersburg, Sochi, Volgograd and Crimea.³⁰ Moscow is the most popular destination – during January-March of 2015 it hosted over 9,500 tourists from PRC. Amur Oblast’ attracted 6,500 visitors during the same period, and Primorye 5,500. RFE remains the most attractive – and affordable - destination for visitors from the Northeast.³¹ Due to the weakened ruble,

the standard itineraries now reserve time for shopping – including groceries – which tourists perceive as superior in quality than those of Chinese origin.

The public's attitudes are also demonstrating positive tendencies: in 2000, 82% of respondents believed that the PRC intended to appropriate Primorye as part of its geographic expansion, 46% considered “peaceful encroaching” by Chinese laborers and traders as a first step in expansionist policies. Over time, this alarmist mood has subsided somewhat: in 2005, 10% fewer respondents were wary of China's expansionism and 7% fewer believed that Russia's territories might be taken over. In a 2013 survey, 61%, or a full 20 percentage points fewer respondents were worried about China's territorial claims, and for the first time, the majority of respondents thought that it was “highly unlikely” that China would claim RFE territories as part of its expansion. Researchers attributed these shifts in attitudes to political changes (a new governor was voted into office in 2005) and decreased feelings of abandonment by the federal government. Paradoxically, xenophobia is on the rise: close to 75% are against granting migrants (including foreign) residency permits, and 90% in 2013 (80% in 2005) were against “marriage of their close relatives to Chinese nationals”.³² The situation certainly presents a serious challenge to fostering tolerance and acceptance, and local government should deepen their efforts in this area, possibly moving their focus to primary-school level education for them to become an integral part of the socialization process.

Another paradox is the increasing outbound migration from the RFE to the Northeast along education and retirement lines. The tradition of studying in institutions of higher learning in China has long been established in the RFE, and nowadays a growing number of students choose to earn their degrees in the PRC, usually starting with a year-long language school which also serves as an adaptation time. Another

popular way is leaving to study in China after 1-2 years at university/institute in Russia, either acquiring basic Chinese language skills in specialized departments, or sparking the interest and proceeding on to China. Unfortunately for the RFE, educational migration often becomes a permanent outbound move: fragmented statistical data points at a majority of graduates not returning to their native country.

Relocation to China's border towns is growing in popularity among Russian retirees from the RFE, who cite the lower cost of living, the ease and transparency of buying and maintaining real estate, the higher quality of medical services, a healthier lifestyle and "better treatment and respect for older generation" as leading reasons for their moves. Unverified data on Russian-language websites discussing the particulars of permanent relocation to the Northeast report that 30,000-40,000 Russians have already acquired real estate in China. New transplants do not feel disconnected from their native country and family members thanks to advances in communications technology and geographical proximity. While retirement relocation appears to be a positive experience for new migrants, the RFE, unfortunately, is losing its demographic battle once again.

5. Conclusion

Changing locations is quickly becoming second nature to millions of people. Their reasons and destinations vary greatly – forced migrants are fleeing war zones and lawlessness, voluntary re-settlers follow education and job prospects, and, in the case of an increasing number of middle-class families from China, better ecology and a more balanced lifestyle. The nature of migration is also changing – permanently resettling in a new country and severing all links to one's ancestral home is becoming rare, with all kinds of fluid migration patterns taking its place. While

these new kinds of relocation can be beneficial for ambitious individuals pursuing their own life plans and goals, this way of semi-settling presents additional difficulties for receiving societies when newcomers are not willing to fully integrate and are relying upon diasporal (in the widest sense of term) mechanisms to achieve their goals. Highly-educated and highly-skilled migrants have more options in selecting their destination, with countries competing for human talent. A host of reasons are considered by potential migrant workers – ranging from the richness of educational opportunities to the comfort of the local climate. The Russian Federation is just coming to terms with this new reality, and considering its continuing negative demographic trends, should accelerate its efforts to turn itself into an attractive destination.

In 2012, a total of 90,139 foreigners – a 53% rise compared to 2011 – acquired Russian citizenship³³. In comparison, the USA – retaining its position as a top-choice destination for international migrants – naturalized 757,434 legal permanent residents in 2012 according to the Department of Homeland Security, a 9% increase compared to 2011³⁴. In June of 2012, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed into law “The Concept of State Migration Policy in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2025”. Important conditions and imperatives were finally acknowledged: the demographic crisis in Russia and its continuing population drop; its relative unattractiveness as a destination country for migrants originating in countries other than the former Soviet republics; and the urgent need to improve its prospects as a destination for educated and highly skilled migrants and creating working mechanisms for their integration into the Russian society. Monumental tasks, such as “forming new and predictable way of life for all social groups”, are listed in the “Policy”. In 2013, a total of 135,000 people were granted Russian citizenship, in 2014 the figure was raised to 154,000 (half of them from Ukraine).³⁵

In an interesting twist, despite continuing concerns about the development goals for the PRC and Russian Federation and a general shift towards the perception of China as a political and economic heavyweight able to dictate conditions to other countries – and now overshadowing Russia – ordinary Russian citizens' attitudes towards China seem to be generally positive. According to recent polls, 64% of respondents view it as “basically good”, with an additional 13% as “very good” and 15% “undecided”.³⁶ However, this has yet to be factored into long-term strategic planning on migration-related issues in Russia in general and the RFE in particular.

Until recently, migration was an overlooked subject in Russian state policies. The surge of forced migrants in 1992-1994 from the former Soviet republics set a reactive precedent in regard to migrants – people were forced to deal with a myriad of issues in unfamiliar circumstances with no assistance from the authorities. There was no advanced mapping out of possible destinations or efforts at new arrivals' successful integration into Russian society. The situation with a wave of forced migrants began to repeat itself in 2014 with the crisis in Ukraine unfolding. This time, however, the Russian government and dedicated agency (Federal Migration Service) are more prepared. The RFE is one of designated regions for resettling people arriving from Ukraine. The state relocation expenses' reimbursement for those moving to the RFE is the highest among “designated areas of resettlement” – RR 240,000 for participants in the “State Program of Assistance to Compatriots” and RR 120,000 for dependents³⁷. However, the RFE remains a tough sell – as of the end of 2014, only 5,700 arrived there (compared to over 61,000 in the Central Federal Region).³⁸ The negative population trends continue with the total population of the RFE still just slightly over 6.2 million people in 2014.³⁹

In the RFE, the traumatic transition period of the 1990s established a pattern of short-term thinking among local elites which resulted in a lack of strategic vision for the region's future, frequent policy shifts and inconsistent migration policies, especially in relation to international migration which, in the context of the RFE, meant primarily inbound migration from China's Northeast. In all fairness, at the time the pattern of making strategic decisions in Moscow was established often with no concession to local conditions, so it was left to local authorities to find a way to adopt and minimize possible negative consequences. The trend continues: for example, the federal government's ban on foreigners' employment in retail, passed in 2007, resulted in a massive outflow of Chinese traders who previously provided affordable necessities to the vast majority of region's population.

The issue of Chinese migration to the RFE and the perceived "unbalanced character" of its relations with the PRC Northeast remain highly politicized in public opinion and mass media, even though the statistical data do not demonstrate any evidence of migrants' substantial influence on the Far-Eastern job market or the underworld. The number of workers employed remains relatively low, and newcomers are in fact often targets of criminal exploits. Expanded government efforts in educating the local population on present-day demographic challenges and the benefits of international cooperation are a requirement, as are designing and implementing adaptation policies with particular attention paid to potential long-term highly educated migrants. Engaging adaptation and acculturation capabilities of higher education may prove beneficial in this long-term effort. Culturally pluralistic societies are a sign of the times and the real need to find practical ways to cooperate and cohabitate is inescapable. A lack of exposure to different cultures, ethnicities and languages partly account for the persistent xenophobic attitudes in the RFE. Change might take longer, but efforts in fostering

tolerance should be an integral part of the socialization and education processes, with government, NGOs and migrants' associations actively involved. Citizens should have a say in the discussion of migration policies designed with local conditions in mind. The new reality of voluntary migration is on the rise, and countries around the world competing for the best and brightest, should prompt change. "New migrants – new strength" (新移民新力量) as they say in Taiwan.

Notes

- * Sinologist Olga Yurievna Adams (Адамс Ольга Юрьевна / 澳麗佳), PhD, defended her dissertation, "Anti-corruption policy in People's Republic of China in the reform era (1978-2000)", at the Institute of Asian and African Studies (IAAS), Moscow State University (Московский государственный университет имени М. В. Ломоносова), Moscow, Russia, in 2000 with a research year at People's University (Renmin University of China, 中國人民大學) in Beijing, China. She has taught at IAAS Political Science Department, published numerous articles and lectured on the PRC's politics, public policy and social structure since then. She is currently based in Astana, Kazakhstan, where she is actively engaged in several research projects focusing on issues relating to the "New Silk Road". Her research interests are anti-corruption policies in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan; their legal systems and social issues; political culture and change in frontier societies. During 2014 the author was a visiting scholar at the Department of Political Science, National Taiwan University (國立臺灣大學), Taipei, Taiwan, as a recipient of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Taiwan Fellowship (台灣獎助金) which supported the research for the present article. <Email: oyadams_98@yahoo.com>

1. <http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/World-Migration-in-Figures.pdf> (accessed on July 4, 2014).
2. <http://primamedia.ru/news/society/27.05.2015/440148/aleksandr-galushka-naselenie-dalnego-vostoka-estestvenno-prirastalo-v-2014-godu.html> (in Russian) (accessed on July 13, 2015).
3. Federal district – unit of administrative division in Russia. Far Eastern district comprises Amur Region (*oblast'*), Jewish Autonomous Region, Kamchatsky Territory (*krai*), Magadan Region, Primorsky Territory (*krai*), Republic of Sakha (Yakutiya), Sakhalin Region, Khabarovsk Territory, Chukotka Autonomous Region.
4. In Russian “*krai*” – literally, “edge”, sometimes translated as “maritime province” or “territory”.
5. Treaty of Nerchinsk between Russia and China signed in 1689. It acknowledged the territories as belonging to China, but did not address the question of delineating borders.
6. For the observation the author is indebted to Professor.Sergey Vradiy from the Far Eastern Research Institute of History, Ethnography and Archaeology of Indigenuos Peoples of Far East: http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publictn/eurasia_border_review/Vol32/vradiy.pdf (accessed on July 4, 2014).
7. For an excellent account of the twists and turns of tsarist era and early XX-century migration policies in the Far East, see chapter “Chinese migration to Russia in space in time” by Igor R. Saveliev in *Globalizing Chinese migration: Trends in Europe and Asia* (edited by Pal Nyiri and I. Saveliev). Aldershot, Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2002, pp. 35-74.
8. http://www.inop.ru/files/8_2_2008_122.doc (accessed on August 22, 2014). Authors of the referred study cite *Asian Russia: People and way of life past Urals* of 1914.
9. A. Khisamutdinov, renowned historian of the RFE, writes about “the Chinese roundup” in the south of the RFE which was carried out at the end

of 1937 to early 1938 with massive arrests and destroying of shantytowns around Vladivostok and Khabarovsk (*Globalizing Chinese migration: Trends in Europe and Asia*. Edited by Pal Nyiri and I.Saveliev. Aldershot, Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2002, p. 43).

10. Elena L. Motrich. “Migratsiya Kak Factor Razvitiya Dal’nego Vostoka” [migration as a factor of development of the RFE]. Center for Migration Studies. http://migrocenter.ru/publ/konfer/ekaterinburg/m_ekaterinburg07.php (in Russian) (accessed on August 31, 2014).
11. <http://www.fms.gov.ru/upload/iblock/cb1/ribakovsky.pdf> (in Russian) (accessed on August 15, 2014).
12. According to Professor Larin’s calculations about 150 articles on “yellow peril” were published in the Russian media during 1992-1995 (*op. cit.*: 321).
13. In text “*predpriyatiya*” – a Soviet-era term referring to manufacturing entities. From the text it is clear that these are indeed manufacturing entities, possibly of different forms of ownership by 1992 already being established in Russia.
14. <http://www.sbras.ru/win/sbras/bef/pos480.html> (in Russian) (accessed on August 13, 2014). In 2002 the Program was extended up to 2010.
15. http://www.ifesras.ru/attaches/books__texts/Alexandrova._Sotrudnichestvo__smeznyh_territorii.pdf (Cooperation of bordering territories) (in Russian) (accessed on August 13, 2014).
16. *Rossiisky Dal’ny Vostok: Strategiya Razvitiya v XXI Veke* [Russian Far East: Strategy for development in XXI century] (in Russian), Institute of Economics of Russian Academy of Sciences, 2014 (pp. 110-113).
17. <http://russia.bestpravo.ru/primor/data05/tex18534.htm> (in Russian) (accessed on September 14, 2014).
18. “Primorsky Krai Migration Program for 1999-2000”. <http://russia.bestpravo.ru/primor/data05/tex18534.htm> (in Russian) (accessed on September 22, 2014).

19. <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/diasporizatsiya-kitayskih-migrantov-na-territorii-rossiyskogo-dalnego-vostoka> (in Russian) (accessed on September 16, 2014).
20. *Globalizing Chinese migration: Trends in Europe and Asia*. Edited by Pal Nyiri and I. Saveliev. Aldershot, Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2002 (p. 65).
21. http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/spd_md.nsf/0/88B0B41E90BBC95A44257D5100428F3C# (in Russian) (accessed on September 14, 2014).
22. Alternative view points out economic inefficiency of building advanced technological facilities from the ground up in the remote and underpopulated area, suggesting instead close cooperation with the Northeastern China where proposed manufacturing facilities would be located. The issue remains highly contentious.
23. The imperative of attracting higher numbers of foreign migrants has been acknowledged and analyzed in the works of Russian sociologists – Z. Zaionchkovskaya, L. Rybakovsky and others.
24. <http://www.minregion.ru/uploads/.../d4688f6d-1cf1-4df3-9d04-d585e8b96c2e.docx> (in Russian) (accessed on September 30, 2014).
25. <http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/statistics/plans/details/59631/full/> (in Russian) (accessed on August 13, 2014).
26. <http://www.dvfu.ru/-/studenty-dvfu-2015-v-cifrah-i-faktah> (in Russian) (accessed on July 13, 2015).
27. <http://www.strana-oz.ru/2004/4/perspektivy-kitayskoy-migracii-na-dalnevostoke> (in Russian) (accessed on September 30, 2014).
28. <http://www.newsvl.ru/vlad/2010/09/13/kollegi/> (in Russian) (accessed on August 13, 2014).
29. <http://russian.people.com.cn/95181/8467845.html> (accessed on September 14, 2014).
30. Republic of Khakasiya and city of Ul'yanovsk are expected to join the list of visa-free tourist destinations in 2015.

31. <http://deita.ru/news/tourism/14.06.2015/4910016-vvedenie-bezvizovogo-rez-hima-dlya-knr-stimuliruet-turistichsekiy-rost-v-primore/> (in Russian) (accessed on July 13, 2015).
32. <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2014/0601/gazeta023.php> (in Russian) (accessed on September 20, 2014). The “NEORUSS” project is sponsored by the University of Oslo and the Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs and studies new Russian nationalism. The survey was designed by the author M. Alexeev from the University of San Diego in cooperation with the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Far Eastern Peoples in Vladivostok. A total of 1,010 people took part in the 2000 survey, 650 in 2005 and 680 in 2013. Findings are reported in: M. Alexeev. “Parting with Asian Balkans: Perceptions of Chinese migration in the Russian Far East, 2000-13”. PONARS Eurasia.
33. <http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/statistics/plans/details/59631/full/> (in Russian) (accessed on August 13, 2014).
34. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states> (accessed on August 18, 2014).
35. <http://ria.ru/society/20150317/1052961121.html> (in Russian) (accessed on July 10, 2015).
36. <http://www.levada.ru/05-06-2014/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam> (in Russian) (accessed on August 13, 2014). The poll by “Levada Center” was conducted on May 23-26, 2014 among 1,600 respondents, with statistical error around 3.4%.
37. At the time of writing, about USD 4,900 and USD 3,500, accordingly. If the migrants do not stay 2 years or longer, they must return the relocation assistance.
38. <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2599268> (in Russian) (accessed on July 12, 2015).
39. <http://ria.ru/spravka/20150119/1043265605.html> (in Russian) (accessed on July 07, 2015)

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