

Demographic Development of Vietnam in the Context of the “Asian Vector” of Russia’s Foreign Policy

¹Sergey Ryazantsev and ²Elena Pismennaya

¹Institution of Russian Academy of Sciences,

Institute of Socio-Political Research RAS, Moscow, Russia

²Department of Applied Sociology, Financial University, Moscow, Russia

Abstract: After political events in Ukraine over the period from 2014-2015 and as their consequence, escalating tensions between Russia and the West, the “Asian vector” that is the Russian turn to the East, China, Korea, Southeast Asia has become a new direction of Russia’s foreign policy. The “Asian vector” of Russia’s foreign policy can step-by-step change geographical priorities of Russia’s migration policy. Now a days the main countries which send labor migrants are China, Vietnam, North Korea, Turkey. The role of China, Vietnam and other Asian countries in the flows of educational migrants to Russia is significant. In the face of the cautious attitude towards Chinese migrants and the high degree of “Chinese phobia” in Russian regions, migration from Vietnam is a real alternative to Chinese migration to Russia. Vietnam has the great demographic potential to become the regional leader in Southeast Asia in migration to Russia in the medium term. But still migration policy of the Russian Federation towards Vietnam is “asymmetrical” because Russia has not abolished visas for Vietnamese citizens (even for short journeys) and considers Vietnam as a “migratory-dangerous country”. It influences visa procedures and the Vietnamese should get a Russian visa only being offered an invitation formalized in the Federal Migration Service by an inviting organization or person. If attracting Vietnamese labor migrants an employer should obtain an allowance to attract foreign workers but this procedure is very bureaucratic, informationless and expensive. Although, the migration potential in Vietnam is significant, Russia will not attract and receive Vietnamese migrants into the labor market and universities without the conceptual change of migration policy towards Vietnam as well as without active formation of the migration flows in Vietnam. Russia’s migration policy should be more available to educational migrants, entrepreneurs, businessmen and investors from Vietnam and other Asian countries. An innovative approach to Russian migration policy can improve the socio-economic development and the population stabilization in Far East regions which for the past 25 year suffer an economic setback and lose their population. The Russian Far East thanks to Asian and Vietnamese migration can become a geopolitical and economic corridor that will connect Russian to the rapidly growing Asia-Pacific Region.

Key words: Demographic development, migration policy, “Asian vector” political relationship, socio-economic development, Russia

INTRODUCTION

Political relationship between Russia and the West after the crisis in Ukraine has reached the freezing point. Russian leaders are on the lookout for political and economic alternatives to traditional Western partnership with a view to ensuring the socio-economic development of the country. This is proved by the visit in November 2014 the President of Russia Putin and the visit of the Prime Minister of Russian Medvedev to Vietnam in April 2015, on the course of which they discussed the issues on the consolidation of partnership, the development of

political relationship, trade and economic relations. Vietnam is notable for convenience of the geographical setting, occupying the strategic location in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific Region facing the South China Sea. Possessing cheap labor resources, Vietnam is a good city for the production of various products for the countries of North-East Asia, Europe and America. Over recent years, there were much more attention paid to this region Voskresensky (2015). After the Ukrainian events in the period from 2014-2015 and escalating tensions between Russia and the West, the “Asian vector” of Russia’s foreign policy has significantly gained

traction. And Russian was more directed to the East towards China, Korea and Southeast Asia (Baikov, 2011). Most likely, the “Asian vector” of Russia’s foreign policy will have a great impact both on migration processes and migration policy of the Russian Federation towards attracting migrants from the countries of Asia. The demographic situation in Russia is characterized by gradual aging of its population, reducing labor resources and contingent of students of higher education institutions. Now a days the Russian economy and Russian universities greatly depend on labor migrants and foreign students. The aggravation of the “demographic deficit” will spur Russian employers and universities to seek resources abroad. In the conditions of sanctions and political confrontation with the West, the vector of these conditions will be also directed, most likely, to the East. Thus, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam can and should become a strategic partner of Russia, not only in matters of geopolitics but also in economic and socio-demographic spheres.

DEMOGRAPHIC POTENTIAL OF VIETNAM

The number of Vietnamese population in 2014 was 90.7 million people being increased since 1990 by 24.7 million people. Vietnam is the 14th most populous. Despite the positive dynamics of the growing number of the population of Vietnam, the rate of its growth over the considered period has almost twice decreased that is from 1.92% in 1990-1.08% in 2014. Vietnam is the densely populated territory with spotted distribution of the population that is caused by geographical features of the country. Thus, for example, at the average population density of 274 people km⁻² in the Red River delta and the South-East Region this figure is by 3 and 2 times higher, respectively. Vietnam is one of the most densely populated countries in Southeast Asia relinquishing to Singapore and the Philippines.

After 1975 in the country the baby boom began that caused the rapid increase in population. Increasing impacts on the social infrastructure of society has forced Vietnamese authorities to limit the birth rate of the population. Since, 1983 the authorities put forward a demographic policy that limited the birth of more than two children (from 1975-2010 the total birth rate has almost twice decreased-from 33%-17%).

In 2014 the total birth rate in Vietnam was 17.2%, being increased by 0.2% as compared to 2010. On the other hand, over the past 5 year the total birth rate in Vietnam which is not influenced by the sex-age structure of the population, has been increasing. In 2014 it was equal to 2.09 births, being increased as compared to 2010

(2 births per woman). The duration of the Vietnamese’s life has increased. In 2010 men’s duration of life has reached 72.3 year old in 2010 as compared to 66.1 year old in 1990 and in 2010 women’s duration of life has reached 76.2 year as compared to 69.6 in 1990. The National Statistical Service of Vietnam has fixed the highest figure of expected lifespan in 2014 in more urbanized regions of the country such as the South-East and the Red River delta-75.9 year old and 74.5 year old, respectively.

Over the period from 1990-2014 the share of the manhood of the country has slightly increased and the female population has decreased. In Vietnam only 98 men are accounted for by 100 women. This trend is observed in the framework of the gradual increased in population during the considered period. Moreover, in some provinces characterized by the high birth rates, the share of men is significantly higher than the share of women. These provinces are, for example, Kon Tum Province (117.7 men are accounted by 100 women), Lai Chau (104.6 men), BcKn (103.6 men).

The reason for this phenomenon is that in the conditions the birth rate limits and modern methods of identification of the sex of unborn children many families prefer boys. In 2013 in Vietnam the figure was equal to 113.8 boys per 100 girls that testified to the regulation of the sex of unborn children. This problem is typical for many countries in Southeast and East Asia. In order to avoid serious sex imbalances in future the government of Vietnam removes restrictions on the birth of more than two children.

LABOR POTENTIAL OF VIETNAM

The significant demographic potential of Vietnam directly determines the number and structure of labor resources. The total number of labor resources, namely, of the population at the ages from 15 and older in 2013 was 53.3 million people being increased by 1.7% as compared to the previous year and as compared to 2000 by 38.1% that in absolute terms was 14.7 million people. The perceptible increase in the labor market is caused by attaining the working age of children born in the 1990s as well as by significant reduction of mortality of the population of the working age. From 2000-2013 the number of labor resources in Vietnam has been increasing on average by 1 million people per year (or by 2.5%) that was twice higher than the growth rate of the total population.

The age structure of labor resources in Vietnam has a character that is typical for South-East Asia. In 2013 the share of a group at the ages from 15-24 was 14.9%. In 2013

the share of a group at the ages from 25-49 was 59.9%. The proportion of a group at the ages from 50 and older was 25.3% that is explained by the decreased rate of mortality at older ages, the improvement of life in general and as consequence, the increased expected lifespan.

The distinctive feature of Vietnam in terms of characteristics of the labor market is the high level of employment. In 2013 the number of the employed population in the economy exceeded 52 million people or 98.1% of the total working-age population. The rate of employment in rural areas and in urban areas is high. As opposed to Russia, in Vietnam the rate of employment in rural areas is even higher than in urban areas. By 2013 Vietnam the differentiation in the rate of employment of men and women was almost eliminated.

The distinctive feature of the Vietnamese labor market is the high share of low-skilled labor power (if in 2010 it was 39%, then in 2013 it was 41% that notes the presence of certain problems in the nation's economy). One more important characteristic of the labor market is the distribution of the working population according to its employment status. In Vietnam the largest share is accounted for entrepreneurs or self-employed. In Russia, by this term are understood small business owners.

In close proportion with the high number of low-skilled jobs is the level of professional education. In 2012 only 17% people of the working age had a diploma, certificate or any document confirming any particular skills with the term of apprenticeship for at least three months. Despite this relatively low level of education of the population, its dynamics is positive and since 2000 it has increased by 6% in total.

EMIGRATION FROM VIETNAM

According to the data of international migration exchange statistics, Vietnam is the greatest sender of migrants. Over the past 5 year the scales of legal emigration from Vietnam have been remaining stable and were equal to 80-88 thousand people (Pismennaya *et al.*, 2015). Traditionally, the main countries of Vietnamese citizen's immigration have always been Taiwan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Japan, Laos, Cambodia, Macau. In recent years migration has intensified to the countries of the Persian Gulf such as the UAE, Qatar, Brunei. Migration to Eastern Europe and the Russian Federation in contrast reduces.

The emigration flow of Vietnam is represented by several categories. The first category is temporary labor migrants who go abroad to work. This migration flow fixes and controls the Ministry of Labor, Disabled War Veterans and Social Protection of the Population of

Vietnam. Legal labor migrants were mostly sent to work in Malaysia (34%), Taiwan (27%), Korea (14%), Qatar (7%), Japan (5%), Macau (3%) and other countries (11%). In recent years the flow of Vietnamese labor migrants to the countries of the Persian Gulf also activates.

For the Russian Federation traditionally Vietnam was the important source of labor power, usually closing the top ten key countries which supplied foreign labor power. The latest agreement between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Russian Federation on temporary employment of Vietnamese citizens was signed on 18 August 2003. Its undoubted advantage was the attempt to enter the Vietnamese temporary labor migration policy into the organized area. Also the agreement has also made an important step towards the legalization of a large category of Vietnamese undocumented migrants in Russia. It has recognized the legitimacy of residence of Vietnamese citizens who have arrived under the agreement on 2 April 1981 with their registration in the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and obtaining a permit for working in the Russian Federation. An important part of the agreement is the determination of self-dependent looking for a job by a Vietnamese citizen within Russia (Article 2 of the Agreement Protocol). But, the lack of the agreement is the lack of a list of specific regions, industries and the number of labor migrants from Vietnam necessary for the Russian economy.

As a result, despite the agreement on labor migration, the flow of labor migrants from Vietnam to Russia during 2000-2010's has been steadily decreasing. The peak of the absolute number of Vietnamese workers was in 2009, when about 98 thousand permits for working in the Russian Federation were issued. In 2004 the Vietnamese were equal to 10% of all foreign workers in the Russian labor market. In the period from 2011-2013 the number of documented Vietnamese migrants has reduced to 10-12 thousand people. It was caused by the Russian economy crisis and the tightening of Russia's migration policy. In 2014 the number of work permits issued to citizens of Vietnam in the Russian labor market was a little >16,000 among them about 376 Vietnamese citizens have got a work permit as highly skilled specialists (Ryazantsev *et al.*, 2013).

In 2014 the main sectors of Vietnamese citizens' employment in Russia were service (38%), trade and building industries (7%). The second category is "business migration", "investment migration" and "commercial migration". Adventurous entrepreneurs and Vietnamese merchants quite actively emigrate to the United States, Australia, Europe and Asia for business and entrepreneurship development. The Vietnamese have started a lot of businesses and companies outside

Vietnam. In the Russian Federation Vietnamese entrepreneurs and businessmen have started clothing manufacture and building companies, farms, restaurants. Mostly, they actively use Vietnamese worker's labor power.

The third category is educational and educational migration. The government of Vietnam actively sends students, postgraduates, doctoral candidates, trainees and researchers for foreign education and trainee job. Till the 1990's the main countries of destination were the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries which were the partners in the socialist coalition. After the 1990's geography of Vietnamese citizen's education has significantly expanded. Nowadays a great number of Vietnamese students study in the United States, Canada, Australia, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, China, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia. In 2013 in the Russian Federation only about 3 thousand Vietnamese citizens have been studying that is much lower than during the Soviet era.

The fourth category is matrimonial emigration and trafficking in women. Quite a lot of Vietnamese women get married to foreigners and leave their countries for permanent place of residence in China, Taiwan, Japan and the Republic of Korea. A third of the flow of emigration from Vietnam is presented by women. Vietnamese women often fall victims to trafficking in women and slavery are exploited by their husbands or traffic organizer, fall to prostitution and relaxation services are exposed to domestic violence or sex industry violence.

The fifth category is migration for the purpose of family reunification. This type of migration is connected with a mix of personal and economic motivation. The numerous Vietnamese diaspora attracts new migrants from Vietnam. The sixth category is forced migration. At different times Vietnamese immigrants were considered by a number of host countries as refugees. Within the organized programs a combined total of around 2 million Vietnamese people have got the refugee status in the United States, Australia, Canada, Japan and Western Europe. In the coming years there is a significant risk of forced environmental migration from some provinces of Vietnam caused by global climate changes.

MIGRATION POTENTIAL OF THE VIETNAMESE POPULATION

Of course, the Russian Federation should pay close attention to the migration potential of Vietnam as one of the most prospective resources. The population of Vietnam is characterized by the young age-sex structure which is a good basis for the export of labor and

educational migrants (Lukyanets and Nguen, 2014). The calculations show that Vietnam has the significant migration potential that is about 2.6 million people. The implementation of potential migration purposes of the Vietnamese will depend on a variety of factors both in Vietnam and in the host countries. The Vietnamese economy is now being actively developed and "absorbs" a significant part of the workforce. Nowadays the countries which attract labor migrants from Vietnam, have different economic and geopolitical priorities which can change. Moreover, a lot will depend on migration policy of the host country, activism of government agencies, companies and private agencies of employment (Kuznetsov and Ryazantsev, 2011).

The migration potential in Vietnam focused on Russia is about 85 thousand people. In the provinces of Northern Vietnam the migration potential is about 24 thousand people, including 6000 people in Hanoi. However, Russia has practically exhausted the possibilities for the reception of Vietnamese migrants at the current level of migration policy. In "peak" 2009 Russia accounted for about 100 thousand labor and educational migrants from Vietnam and then their number began to reduce. The main reasons were the economic slowdown and the rigidity of Russia's migration policy (in particular, Vietnam in some departmental documents is considered as a "migratory-dangerous" country). Although, the migration potential in Vietnam is significant, Russia will not attract and receive Vietnamese migrants into the labor market and universities without the conceptual change of migration policy towards Vietnam as well as without active formation of the migration flows in Vietnam.

CONCLUSION

The Russian Federation does not have a clear definition of strategic interests in the sphere of the formation of migration priorities and the regulation of migration from Asia and Vietnam aiming at the socio-economic development of the country. Considering the trend towards the "Asian vector" of foreign policy, Russia's migration policy should also be more focused on the socio-economic and demographic (migration) potential of Vietnam as a strategic partner of the Russian Federation in the Asian Region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is possible to note several future-oriented aspects of the "Asian vector" of Russia's foreign policy and the strengthening Vietnamese direction of Russian migration policy.

Firstly, East and Southeast Asia is not only a region of the intense economic dynamics but also has the high degree of self-sufficiency and sustainability in the context of the issues of the world economy. In the conditions of escalating tensions at the world level it can promote the formation of stable Russian partnership with the countries of the region for the long run.

Secondly, considering the growing economic role and political ambitions of Vietnam as a country that claims to take the leading positions in the region of South-East Asia, the Russian Federation should develop and adopt the government strategy of cooperation with Vietnam for attracting the flows of labor migrants with various qualifications. The development of cooperation between Russia and Vietnam in the field of migration is a favorable factor for the increasing influence and significance of Vietnam as a successful economic state both at the regional and world levels. It will also allow the Russian Federation to fix previous strong positions in the region of Southeast Asia.

Thirdly, the need for increased cooperation between Russia and Vietnam in the area of migration should be considered not only in the context of current difficulties in co-operation with Western countries but also as the counterbalance towards growing power and influence of China (Ryazantsev and Hongmei, 2010). It should be noted that current relations between Vietnam and China are very embittered and in this situation the Russian Federation should accurately formulate its position in the region.

Fourthly, it is necessary to develop and support the inflow of socio-economic initiatives, innovations, investments and entrepreneurs from the East to strengthen innovation capacity and competitiveness of the Russian economy and the labor market. In this context Russia's migration policy should be more available to educational migrants, entrepreneurs, businessmen and investors from Vietnam and other Asian countries. An

innovative approach to Russian migration policy can improve the socio-economic development and the population stabilization in Far East regions which for the past 25 year suffer an economic setback and lose their population. The Russian Far East thanks to Asian and Vietnamese migration can become a geopolitical and economic corridor that will connect Russian to the rapidly growing Asia-Pacific Region.

REFERENCES

- Baikov, A.A., 2011. Models of integration expansion in European and East Asian/Bulletin of the Moscow University. Intl. Relations World Politics, 4: 28-35SS.
- Kuznetsov, N.G. and S.V. Ryazantsev, 2011. How to use the Russian migration potential of Vietnam (Part 1). Asia Africa, 6: 36-42.
- Lukyanets, A.S. and K.T. Nguen, 2014. Demographic Potential of Vietnam: General Characteristics. In: Migration bridges in Eurasia: Source book of the VI International Research and Practical Conference. Ryazantsev, S.V. (Ed.). Institution of Russian Academy of Sciences the Institute of Socio-Political Research RAS, USA., pp: 256-260.
- Pismennaya, E.E., I.S. Karabulatova, S.V. Ryazantsev, A.S. Lukyanets and R.V. Manshin, 2015. Impact of climate change on migration from vietnam to Russia as a factor of transformation of geopolitical relations. Mediterr. J. Social Sci., 6: 202-207.
- Ryazantsev, S. and J. Hongmei, 2010. Chinese Migration to Russia: Trends, Consequences and Approaches to Regulation. Economic Education Publisher, Moscow, Russia,.
- Ryazantsev, S.V., Manshin, R.V. and K.T. Nguen, 2013. Comparative analysis of Vietnamese and Chinese migration to Russia. Migration Law, 1: 5-10.
- Voskresensky, A.D., 2015. Russian-Chinese relations in the context of the Asian vector of the Russian diplomacy (1990-2015). Comp. Politics, 1: 32-54.