3 Russian foreign policy and migrant workers

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Introduction

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian foreign policy has constantly been attempting to balance cooperation with the West, the promotion of integration in the former Soviet economic space and cooperation with China and other Asian countries. In this vein, the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union and its enlargement, has probably been the most ambitious political initiative of President Vladimir Putin. In the Russian Foreign Policy Concept (Kontsepsija vneshei politiki Rossiskoi Federatsii 12 February 2013), the primary strategic aim is to strengthen Russia’s influence over the former Soviet area and its sphere of interest, and increase Russia’s globalized competitiveness through this regional integration process.

The history of the official Eurasian integration began in 1995 when the Agreement on the Creation of the Customs Union between Belarus and the Russian Federation was signed. After Kazakhstan joined, these countries established the Treaty on Enhancing Integration in Economic and Humanitarian Spheres in 1996, also signed by Kyrgyzstan. In 1999, the Agreement on the Customs Union and Common Economic Space was signed, with the additional membership of Tajikistan. A series of legal changes were set in motion in the member states. The Agreement stipulates that the single economic space creates an area which is formed on shared regulative economic mechanisms based on market principles and the application of harmonized legal rules, and that there is a single infrastructure and coordinated fiscal, monetary, foreign exchange, financial, trade and customs policies, which are implemented to ensure the free movement of goods, services, capital and labour force.

In 2000, a new organisation was created with the signing of the Treaty on the Creation of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC). This development was accompanied by the work of such institutions as the Interstate Council, consisting of heads of state and governments, and the Integration Committee. On 1 January 2012, the Eurasian Economic Space began functioning to promote the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital as well as the harmonisation and unification of industrial, financial, tax and investment policies (Galiakberov and Abdullin 2014: 118). On 29 May 2014, the heads of state of the Russian Federation, Belorussia and Kazakhstan signed the Treaty of the Eurasian Economic Union (hereafter, the EEU), which forms the final end result of the
multi-stage structure of agreements. The members of the EEU pursue a harmonised policy in the key areas of integration, the energy, industry, agriculture and transport sectors (Kansikas and Palonkorpi 2015: 204). The EEU has been officially functioning since 1 January 2015. The Ukrainian crisis put an end to the goal of having Ukraine as one of the key members in the EEU, which underlined the symbolical importance of including Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.

Our chapter focuses on the conflict between Russia’s foreign policy goals in Eurasian economic integration and its labour market conditions, particularly with regard to organised interest representation and positions taken on the diminishing of the shadow economy. The political connotations of the EEU have received quite a bit of attention both as a regional and interest-based counter-force to European Union enlargement and as a manifestation of Russia’s Great Power identity and civilisational geopolitics. In the first case, Russia’s foreign policy challenges to Eurasian integration are most of all shaped by pragmatism and globalisation. They can be interpreted as an attempt to define and consolidate the contours of Russian national sovereignty in a ‘borderless’ world and advance its legitimate international interests. In the latter case, the Russian foreign policy is defined by a search for Russia’s historical place and mission in the post-Cold War world (see Morozova 2009: 676). We present a view in which the shadow economy is one of the main practical challenges to both versions of Russia’s regional geopolitical ambitions.

Since November 2014, the shadow economy in Russia is estimated to have increased by 3–4 million persons, mostly because of layoffs in small businesses. According to Rosstat, there were 5.4 million individual entrepreneurs in the Russian Federation in 2013. Between 2013 and 2015 over 600,000 individual entrepreneurs have lost work and many more are in danger of losing their official registration because of strict credit and fiscal policies. In 2015, the number of the unemployed grew by 19,000–20,000 persons each week. Altogether, the shadow economy may have reached 40 per cent of the Russian economy, because of the ongoing economic crisis. Against this backdrop, there is increased official attention to the modernisation of the Russian labour market and migration policy, including work-related migration. Thus, two parallel and contradictory processes are currently taking place in Russia.

In this chapter, we will look at these processes with the aim of outlining the dynamics between the EEU, domestic discussions on migration and attempts to modernise the Russian labour market. We aim to answer the questions: what is the significance of regional integration in the formation of policy on labour market modernisation? And what perspectives do public organisations bring to the discussion on the shadow economy? The chapter is structured in the following way. First, we look at the Russian foreign policy goals.
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in the EEU process and evaluate this against domestic sentiments about migration and the ‘borderless world’. Second, we outline some of the main elements related to the shadow economy in the Concept of Migration Policy until 2025 and examine the viewpoints of two labour market organisations with regard to Russia’s economic modernisation. Finally, we compare the complicated and ambitious plans to change Russian migration policy in the EEU with the policy recommendations of these organisations.

**Foreign policy goals of regional integration and domestic anti-migrant sentiments**

Eurasian integration has been one of the key foreign and economic policy goals of Putin’s third presidential term. Just before the United Russia party meeting at which his presidential candidacy was announced, an article was published in which he outlined Russia’s integration policy. It consisted of economic integration in the sphere of the former Soviet Union, a post-Cold War world Gaullist idea of Greater Europe and its multiple centres and Russia’s role and identity in Eurasian as a ‘European power in Asia, not a Eurasian power in Europe’ (Sakwa 2015: 18–19).

The loose ideological background behind the Eurasian integration process is Eurasianism, which can be interpreted as a civilisational world-view, or as a political justification of Russia’s foreign policy, or as economic policy in terms of a Custom Union and wider Eurasian economic cooperation comprising Chinese economic initiatives (Silk Road) and Russia’s initiatives to establish a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok. The president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, is often mentioned as the founding father of the ideational justification of Eurasian integration because of his 1994 speeches referring to Lev Gumilev’s (1912–92) Eurasianist ideas. The establishment of the EEU consolidated the foreign policy framework that President Putin outlined with regard to Eurasian integration during his election campaign in 2012. In the EEU, answers to the questions of Russia as an imperial state versus a nation state, Russia as a Eurasian versus a European state, and Russia’s response to the challenges of globalisation in the frame of post-Cold War international relations are sought at a very practical level.

The EEU’s political reasoning can be found in various sources. Richard Sakwa (2015: 12–13) approaches the Eurasian Union in the framework of ‘regionalism’. He sees that regions are potentially becoming the successors to traditional nation-states and a way for them to response to the pressure of globalisation. He points out that there are three ‘dominant forms of regionalism in the world today – micro-regional economic integration, meso-regional political integration and macro-transcontinental security regionalism’. The EU represents micro-regional integration overlapping with both the meso-political regionalism of the Council of Europe (CoE), encompassing a number of countries stretching through Europe
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to Asia. In security politics, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) embodies macro-regionalism. Sakwa claims that there is not only one normative form of regionalism, as we often see it from a Eurocentric perspective, drawing on the EU experience. He claims that ‘there are diverse forms of regionalism, each with its normative logic combining political, security, economic and identity dynamics’.

The dynamics connected to Russia’s regional ambitions have also received some attention at the official level from the presidents of both Kazakhstan and Belorussia, who have underlined that they favour economic integration but are hesitant to advance a political integration that would diminish the political sovereignty of their states. In his interview in Izvestiya (26 October 2011) President Nazarbayev emphasised his consistently repeated statement that Eurasian economic integration does not mean any restoration or reincarnation of the Soviet Union. This point of view was again restated by him and also President Lukashenko during the Ukrainian crisis. The Western reaction to President Putin’s initiative has for the most part considered it not just as a form of rational regional integration, but as a hegemonic power politics on a collision course with the interests of the West.12

Sergey Markedonov (2012) and David Lane (2015a) take a different view and point out that this interpretation might be an oversimplification. Eurasia is crucially important for Russia’s policy not due to its past but primarily because of issues of the present globalisation. Lane sees the Eurasian Union as a complementary regional capitalist economic formation in the world economic system and as an attempt to construct a new pole in the multipolar world order preferred by Russia’s foreign policy. He assesses that the objective of a regional bloc is to ‘reverse the effects of globalisation, particularly to ensure the sovereignty of the nation state’. The dominant feature of the post-Cold War world has been international borderless trade and the deterritorialisation of politics, and in this vein regional forms of association have become major components of international political and economic organisation (Lane 2015a: 4–6, also Cooper 2013).

Sakwa points out that the Eurasian Union is a strategy to meet global economic competition by taking advantage of Russia’s historical ties with the former Soviet Union. Like Lane, he also emphasises that in economic terms, the EEU does not challenge the principles of a capitalist economy: free trade and movement of capital and workforce. As a response to hesitant current and potential member states of the Eurasian Union and to Western sceptics and critics, Putin has assured that the integration project in Eurasia relies on all-European values of freedom, democracy and market rules and has nothing to do with re-establishing the past Soviet Union (Sakwa 2015: 18).
But Russia’s foreign policy choices in regional integration can also be seen in the framework of an alternative strategy of right-wing anti-globalism.\textsuperscript{13} Mikhail Remizov holds that this alternative is not only acute in Russia but claims that it has ‘particularly good chances for success’. While President Putin defines the disintegration of the Soviet Union as the geopolitical catastrophe of the millennium, for Russian ‘nationalists’ it represents a chance to consolidate the Russian territory on a national foundation. Remizov claims that what Russia needs and what makes it strong is its already now prevailing high cultural and ethnic homogeneity. He ends up counting Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians living in Russia as belonging to a single ethnic entity (Remizov 2012: 4, 6).

Yet another perspective is to see the EEU in connection to Russia’s role in Asia, particularly with regard to China. Chinese migration and the role of the Chinese in Siberia have been long-lasting topics in Russian discussions on the future. China has penetrated deeply into the Russian economy and the total number of Chinese immigrants in Russia – both legal and illegal – is variously estimated to be several millions. Some analysts have therefore paid attention also the influence of the EEU on relations with China. It is suggested that the EEU is also an attempt to establish a stronger economic bloc to counter the effects of China in Central Asia. Apart from everything else, the creation of the EEU is hoped to slightly balance the asymmetric size of the Russian and Chinese economies and the Chinese influence over member states of the EEU and the Central Asian region (Krichevsky 2011).

Eurasian integration has contributed to the tensions in Russian domestic identity politics, which reflect the universal discussions about the effects of large-scale migration. For some Russians, the EEU signifies Russia’s cultural and political diversion from Europe towards Asia and a weakening Russian (Russkii) ethnicity due to the influx of Muslim migrants from Central Asian states. For others, migrants represent a concrete social and political threat in their communities, and the deterioration of social and legal order.

However, the EEU has received wide acceptance across all major political parties in Russia. The dominant ‘United Russia’ has favoured the economic dimensions of this process, while the Communists, for instance, have welcomed attempts to draw the former Soviet republics into closer alliance with the Russian Federation (Cooper 2013: 89). Migration policies are at the heart of various questions, including technical ones, which influence public attitudes towards the EEU. As Kazantsev points out, the challenge for the Russian government lies in the attempts to simultaneously foster integration through common labour markets with the Central Asian states and to manage the consequences of work-related migration (Kazantsev 2015: 212).
According to the Levada Centre’s recent surveys, there is room and support for the idea of the EEU among the Russian public. A rapidly increasing portion of respondents support the statement that Russia has its own specific way of development (55 per cent in a 2015 survey), compared to the diminishing portion of those who hold that Russia’s way is European civilization (17 per cent of respondents), even though as recently as 2013, 31 per cent still supported the ‘European way’ as a good choice for Russia. Moreover, in 2015, 19 per cent of respondents supported the statement that Russia should turn back to the development of the Soviet Union (Levada Centre 2015a). Although the Ukrainian crisis and economic sanctions have certainly affected this change in opinions, the results can also be interpreted as showing public responsiveness to the idea of Russia-led regional development.14

The disagreement on Russia’s imperial future lies on the common interpretation that in the Soviet Union (ethnic) Russianness (Russkii) remained unclear and only after the fall of the Soviet Union did this suppressed identity start to blossom. The Eurasian integration project has provided a major political platform for the reassessment of what ‘identity’ signifies in real foreign policy terms. As Marlene Larue points out, ‘a political project always mobilises some kind of identity and no political objective can be achieved without reference to specific cultural symbols’ (2009: 7). According to Serguei Oushakine, in the Soviet Union, ‘the Russian dominance in political, social, and cultural areas was widely practiced but rarely acknowledged in any explicit way’. The Soviet model of nation-building allowed Russian ethnicity to persist as an indeterminate source of power (Oushakine 2009: 10).

The fall of the Soviet Union gave birth to a demand for a new definition of a Russian ethnically defined state identity, clearly separate from the former Soviet imperial identity (Oushakine 2009: 89). This ongoing discourse on ethnicity and Russia’s identity is intertwined with the discussion of Russia’s future and role in the former Soviet space. Essentially, Russian discussions on migration and the Eurasian integration process have used similar arguments to those found in other industrialised societies faced with globalisation and rapid societal transformation. In the Russian case, the culture threat hypothesis, the core (national) values hypothesis, the cultural affinity and race hypothesis (Buckler 2008) seem to have captured the imagination of the political elite as well.

Ethnic nationalism (support for the statement ‘Russia for Russians’) and xenophobic or reluctant attitudes towards immigrants from southern republics and Central Asia has been a widely accepted position in Russia. In a 2012 Levada Centre survey, the majority of Russians (56 per cent) agreed with the statement ‘Russia for ethnic Russians’ and no less than 70 per cent of respondents answered that government should restrict the influx of
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migrants. In a similar vein, a clear majority of respondents supported the statement that illegal migrants from CIS countries should be expelled from Russia (Levada Centre 2013: 157–9).

From September 2012 to June 2013, popular opinion turned against even internal migration. The proportion of respondents in favour of limiting migration for permanent work or residence from other parts of Russia to their home regions or cities increased from 57 per cent to 65 per cent. A devastating majority, 71 per cent of respondents, agree with the statement that immigrants increase the crime rate, and 67 per cent think that immigrants take jobs from Russians. Only 24 per cent see migration in an economically positive light when answering the statement ‘immigrants generally facilitate Russian economic growth’ (Levada Centre 2013: 158–9).

With regard to the dispute of Russia’s favourable development as a multicultural state versus a culturally and ethnically homogeneous state, popular support for the official definition of Russia as a poly-cultural state is rather low. As many as 46 per cent respondents agree with the statement that ‘immigrants destroy the Russian culture’, and only 23 per cent clearly oppose this idea. The slogan ‘Stop feeding the Caucasus’ increased in popularity from 55 per cent to 62 per cent of respondents between 2011 and 2013 (Levada Centre 2013: 155–7).

These sentiments have caused a political response at the highest level. In Putin’s article, ‘The national question’, written for the presidential election campaign in 2012, he underlined the role of the EEU in controlling migration policy. Putin saw the role of the EEU as ‘curbing chaotic migration from post-Soviet states by means of regional integration’. Following an international trend, he furthermore connected migration and the integration of migrants to national security, the rule of law, corruption and criminality. In this manner, Russia’s institutional problems and various aspects of migration were ‘securitised’ as a problem demanding a law-and-order response.

The article was also a response to the Russian nationalistic opposition, as Putin emphasised the dangers of nationalism, which threaten the stability and peaceful relations between different ethnicities and religions. Nonetheless, as a concession to critics of migration, much attention was also given to improving the work of law enforcement agencies. In particular, Putin underlined the fight against corruption and demanded better control of the implementation of laws and regulations, such as registration rules and penalties for their violation (Putin 2012). Within the framework of domestic politics, his article is interpreted as a response to the liberal–nationalistic opposition (see Chapter 4 on Alexey Navalnyi’s role) and its critics of corruption, the wrongdoings of the current regime and social
problems, which the opposition has connected to the ‘Asian influence’ and migration in general.

‘Decent work’ and EEU integration

In 2012, a new Concept for State Migration Policy until 2025 was enacted in Russia. The concept is based on an emphasis on integrative policy measures, the differentiation of various groups of immigrants and modified rules for each group, the increased effectiveness of the implementation of regulations and the curbing of the shadow economy. According to the Concept, the legislation of the Russian Federation does not meet the demands of economic growth and industrial development, nor does it sufficiently support the demographic and social requirements of Russian society. Migration legislation is evaluated as attracting temporary workers and not facilitating their transition towards permanent stay, adaptation and integration into their surrounding communities. As an addition to the challenges of integration, the Concept mentions that the new – post-Soviet – generation of migrants from Russia’s southern neighbours have a lower level of education and professional qualifications and less knowledge of the Russian language.

The Concept brings out the large number of illegal migrants, from 3 to 5 million each year, who work in the shadow economy, which mainly contributes to the negative sentiments among Russian citizens. This document states that difficulties in obtaining permits to stay and housing slow down the process towards citizenship among law-abiding immigrants. The lack of programmes for integrating migrants into Russian society has led to their isolation and increased negative attitudes towards them. To change the situation, Russian policymaking should be inclusive and also use the resources of the mass media.

Migrant workers have already been necessary for Russia’s economy for a long time, with an estimated 10–11 million foreigners working in the Russian Federation. Of these, around 75 per cent have stayed in Russia for longer than three months (Virkkunen and Fryer 2015: 56). Immigration has played a major role in preventing Russia falling into an even deeper demographic disaster than the one it experienced in the 1990s. The flow of Russian immigrants returning from the former Soviet republics has compensated for the population losses caused by the drastically increased mortality rate after the fall of the Soviet Union. During the 21 years between 1992 and 2013, the natural death rate of Russia gave a loss of 13,200,000 people, which the immigration of 8,400,000 people compensated by 63 per cent. A larger majority of immigrants were returnees (1997: 70 per cent) and ethnic Russians (62 per cent) from the former Soviet republics. Ten years later, the turnover was respectively 35 per cent and 30 per cent (Mezhevovo 2015: 25–6). In 2010, the population
of Russia was 142,800,000. Without migration, the figure would have been 130,000,000 (MPC 2013: 3).

In spite of the improvements, the future of Russia’s demographic development in a ten-year perspective presents a challenge for the government. The mortality rate is high by world standards, the 22nd highest in the world, despite the decrease in mortality in 2005–12. On one hand, Russia cannot solve its demographic crisis with migration alone, but on the other, it cannot meet the demands of its labour market with the insufficient birth rate in coming years (Critical 10 Years: 7). The labour market conditions are intertwined with the modernisation and diversification of the Russian economy. Before the current crisis, the economic structures and management models did not encourage companies to modernise their production processes (Remizov 2012: 29) and thus improve their world market competitiveness.15

To guarantee employment opportunities to Russian citizens, the government has limited the number of foreign workers employed in Russia using quotas, which in recent years have not exceeded 3 per cent of the entire labour force. Additional medical examination requirements and a ban on participation in certain types of activities have been introduced with regard to foreign workers. A mandatory Russian language examination and a test in Russian history and the principles of Russian legislation is required, although this is not applicable to that section of the workforce labelled highly qualified specialists. In the Eurasian integration, Russia will not only lose the possibility of imposing any institutional restrictions on immigration within the common free market zone, but it will also have to take the obligation to ensure equal rights with regard to employment, wages and other social and legal guarantees to the citizens of the member states (Troitskaya 2012).

Drawing from the research undertaken by the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), a picture emerges where migrant communities are in practice living completely outside the official society, as is also pointed out in the Concept of Migration Policy. When migrants were interviewed for the research and asked about their channels for assistance and support in social and legal rights and finding work and accommodation, none of the respondents mentioned state structures, while 81 per cent answered that they get help from their expatriate community and 9 per cent from the local population (Vinokurov and Pereboyev 2015: 73).

The Concept of Migration Policy until 2025 lays out the key areas of comprehensive modernisation of Russia’s immigration policy, based on thinking on national security. Among these are the protection of the national labour market; the differentiation of the control of migration flows according to length of stay, social demographics and
professional qualifications; the facilitation of the adaptation and integration of migrants into the surrounding Russian society; and the development of reliable statistical information on developments in the market and the flows of migrants (Konseptsija gosudarstvennoi migratsionnoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2025 goda).

As these lists of policy goals demonstrate, the development of the Russian migration administration, as well as thinking on the relevance of coherent migration policy in the Russian Federation, have increased in significance over the years. The Concept consolidates the official learning process of 20 years of developments in the Russian labour market. The national security framework in particular underlines the significance of the stated goals, as national security is currently the dominant mode of reasoning in the Russian government’s decision-making. The Concept lays out a breath-taking number of questions which need to be resolved in the next ten years, paving the way towards regional integration and Russia’s competitiveness in the global market.

A significant question regarding harmonisation in Eurasian economic integration is labour law and particularly regulations concerning labour organisation and protection, which have a direct impact on attempts to curb the shadow economy. The Russian Labour Law of 2006 stipulates that labour protection services should be set up in all organisations of over 50 persons, by either the employer or the employees. In smaller organisations, a labour protection expert should be established at the discretion of the employer regarding the forms of labour protection services. The goal of these measures is to observe labour protection requirements and prevent industrial accidents and occupational diseases. The cooperation of employees and employers can be carried out through collective bargaining, mutual consultations, the participation of employees or their representatives in the running of the enterprise and the participation of employees in solving labour disputes (Gorbacheva 2011: 160).

In anticipation of the Eurasian integration processes, both the employer organisations and the largest trade unions in Russia have been active in offering policy recommendations and participating in legislative development. Here, we wish to briefly look at two examples of interest representation in the Russian Federation: the National Association of Builders (Natsionalnoye obyedenenii stroitelee, NOSTROI) and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions in the Russian Federation (Federatsiya Nezavisimykh Profsojuzov Rossii, FNPR). Both organisations have a well-established position and some considerable political clout as participants in legislative processes and direct lobbyists with the Russian government.
The concept of ‘decent work’, introduced in the ILO Decent Work Agenda of 1999 forms the core of the programme of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Russia (FNPR). The programme, which presents the political and societal aims of the Federation, starts with an analysis of globalized economic conditions and their impact on national sovereignty and social stability. The critique is directed at the neo-liberal economic policies also supported by the Russian business sector. This policy is described as resulting in growing numbers of unemployed, unofficial employment and the overall degradation of the quality of life and social guarantees for workers (Programma FNPR ‘Dostoinii trud-osnova blagosostayanii tseloveka i razvitiya strani).

The most important hindrances to Russian economic modernisation, however, are found in the old-fashioned management style and economic model, as well as the dependence on imports. According to the FNPR, attempts to modernise Russian production have been overrun by new methods to take advantage of workers and diminish their earnings. The tax system (based on the 13 per cent flat tax) is seen as a major obstacle to strengthening social equality and increasing state funds. In addition to these structural problems, the Trade Union movement is under pressure, as activists are laid off and labour and other laws are broken (Programma FNPR ‘Dostoinii trud-osnova blagosostayanii tseloveka i razvitiya strani).

In this situation, the FNPR’s list of recommendation includes the overall modernisation of employment positions, emphasis on creating high productivity work, as well as paying attention to workplace safety and effective state control of the implementation of legal rules and regulations. In addition, the Federation advocates raising the medium income level and guaranteeing the timely payment of salaries. It wishes to bring attention to the qualification of workers, the professionalism of management, and the ageing equipment in Russian industry. The Federation promises to take a more active role in fighting the shadow economy, and urges the state control agencies to pay more rigorous attention to curbing the shadow economy in the future. In more concrete terms, the Federation advocates a viewpoint according to which the flow of foreign migrants to Russia should be regulated on the basis of regional economic needs and that social benefits should be provided to those migrants working in the Russian labour market legally (Programma FNPR ‘Dostoinii trud-osnova blagosostayanii tseloveka i razvitiya strani, 9 February 2015).

At the beginning of 2016, NOSTROI held a round-table meeting entitled ‘The formation of a common market for services in the construction sector in the EEU’. The aim was to discuss the implementation of decisions made by the Economic Council of the EEU in the sphere of construction through the integration of this specific market and harmonisation of relevant legislation. Criticism was directed towards the passiveness of the authorities in all
member states in providing a normative–technical basis for the operation of services in the construction sector in the common market. In addition, the point was made that the Russian position with regard to the safety of buildings and materials in the EEU was put together without consulting the expertise of construction sector professionals (Natsionalnoye obyedenenii stroitelee, NOSTROI).17

NOSTROI strongly underlines the significance of standardisation in the EEU. Standardisation concerns technical requirements for the rules and standards of building materials, constructions and parts, and for the use of these objects. Included in the standardisation is also the organisation of the construction work, which should lead to the evaluation of the qualification of actors in the construction sector. The goal is to establish a register of reliable providers of building services (Natsionalnoye obyedenenii stroitelee, NOSTROI).18

The two approaches with regard to the challenges of the labour market and Russian industry are different, but have some important points of common interest. The trade union perspective bases its recommendations on an assessment of the negative influences of neoliberal globalisation, which an open-border policy will most likely increase. Considerable modernisation of Russian workplace culture and management is underlined as the key to industrial modernisation and curbing of the shadow economy. The essential question in this regard is investment on human capital, also redefinitions of qualifications and adequate wage levels. The builders’ point of view emphasizes technical standardisation. However, the goals of the standardization process include regard for the integrity of business owners, the control of work processes and increasing the qualification of actors in the construction market. Together with the Concept of Migration until 2025, these examples demonstrate the considerable official attention paid to the challenges in the Russian labour market. In this regard, the Eurasian Commission’s new Programme for the Development of Integration in the Sphere of Statistical Information for 2016–2019 can also be seen as one more step towards developing structures which could potentially have a positive effect on regional societal transformation.

The overall picture, which emerges from our outline points to a possible consolidation of a political agenda for and incremental labour market transformation in Russia. Its driving force is a functionalist view on post-Soviet integration and ambitious goals for legal and institutional development. The implications for Russia’s welfare and educational policies are considerable. However, it is possible that the geopolitical goals of the EEU integration are overshadowed by implementation of changes in Russian institutions. At the same time, the welcomed consequences of labour market transformation should also reinforce the interest-based thinking in Russia’s foreign policy.
Conclusions

The ethnic groups from the areas and cultures of the EEU have been and will again be pivotal for the future of Russian regional integration policies. Free movement of labour, which means a continuous influx of migrants to Russia, and enlargement of the member and associate states are currently met with mixed sentiments in the Russian domestic policy arena. Key political parties have promoted the integration process, which is viewed more critically by interest representatives in Russian labour market. We can conclude that Russia’s foreign policy goals with regard to the member states in Central Asia, are challenged by a deeply embedded nationalistic and anti-migration popular opinion inside Russia. The anti-Islamist mood, the rejection of Central Asian migrants on the basis of threat to Russian culture and society, and its core (national) values (Buckler 2008) raise potential difficulties for the whole idea of the EEU and in particular the process of deeper integration.

All in all, the Russian labour market actors, the state included, seem to have been activated by the ongoing parallel developments of the economic crises and the integration attempts in the EEU. The modernisation and diversification of the Russian economy certainly depends on the changes advocated by employees and employers alike. The economic crisis has temporarily slowed down massive work-related migration to Russia, thus giving an opportunity to assess the conditions of the Russian labour market. The anti-migration mood among the Russian citizenry may – paradoxically – increase the popularity of policy shifts. The goals of the EEU push forward questions of harmonisation and standardisation, which reveal the loopholes and old-fashioned structural mechanisms upheld by national legislation and administrative rules. Viewed in this way, the current parallel processes may – in the best of cases – provide the necessary motivation for the long-overdue changes in the shadows of the Russian labour market.

It is our conclusion, that the current labour market conditions and the shadow economy pose a serious challenge to Russia’s regional ambitions in the EEU process. The achievement of Russian geopolitical goals in the EEU is affected by practical challenges to Russian institutions. Considerable investment on human capital is required to implement real change in practices and ways of thinking. Russian foreign policy goals are thus linked with the overall development of welfare and educational opportunities in the society. The shadow economy reproduces structural corruption, from street level to corporate decisions and public procurement procedures. In this vein, the shadow economy remains a major stumbling block in the path of Eurasian integration. Finally, the prospect for further political integration is under question, given the negative consequences of the Ukrainian
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crisis among the member states. Taking into account these factors, the pragmatist, interest-driven thinking should remain a necessary component of Russia’s foreign policy.

**Notes**


2 For instance Ruget and Usmanileva’s (2010) study shows that the Kyrgyz government has passed several important policy initiatives to assist Kyrgyz migrants working in the Russian Federation. Among these are the creation of the State Committee for Migration and Employment in 2005 and a website for Kyrgyzstanis living in Russia; the adoption of a Law on External Labour Migration and in 2006 the principle of dual nationality.

3 The Agreement on the prevention of illegal migration from third countries was signed between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belorussia in 2010 (Соглашение о сотрудничестве в противдействии нелегальному трудовому миграции из третьих государств, Санкт-Петербург, 19 ноября 2010 года).

4 Договор о Евразийском экономическом союзе (Подписан в г. Астане 29/05/2014) (ред. от 08/05/2015).

5 Договор о присоединении Кыргызской Республики к договору о Евразийском экономическом союзе от 29 мая 2014 года, (Москва, 23 декабря 2014 года).

6 Договор о присоединении Республики Армения к договору о Евразийском экономическом союзе от 29 мая 2014 года, (Минск, 10 октября 2014 года).

7 Erik Shiraev (2013: 263) points out the shift in Russia’s foreign policy thinking in 2000, when a new concept based on three words – predictability, consistency and pragmatism – appeared.

8 Natalia Morozova (2009) has analysed the evolution of geopolitical thinking in Russia’s foreign policy and the definitions of Eurasianism in traditionalist, modernist and civilisational Russian geopolitical approaches.

9 www.rbc.ru/economics/26/02/2015/54ef19049a7947453eeb6428, the numbers are from experts at the Higher School of Economics and the organisation of the business ombudsman, Boris Titov.
Marc Bassin (2008) describes Eurasianism in the following manner: ‘There remains the rich legacy of Eurasianism across the twentieth century: the “classical” period of the interwar years (itself a profoundly heterogeneous and ideologically fragmented movement) and the attempts to sustain Eurasianist perspectives in the Soviet Union itself, most importantly those of L. N. Gumilev. All of these various incarnations were and are crafted to fit highly differing political contexts and advance fundamentally different political and ideological agendas, for which reason it is simply impossible to reduce Eurasianism in any meaningful way to a common set of doctrinal denominators, however limited and rudimentary. At the very most, only two elements may be said to be common to all these versions: Eurasianism everywhere claims to represent some unique synthesis of European and Asian principles, and in the present day, it claims everywhere to be the legitimate heir of the “classical legacy”. Natalia Morozova (2009: 676) writes that in Russia post-Soviet era foreign policy ‘the adherents of “traditionalist” and “modernist” geopolitical camps are mainly preoccupied with the question “how?” – how Russia should act in order to preserve territorial integrity and enhance its international standing. The exponents of “civilisational” geopolitics invoke the intellectual resources of classical post-revolutionary Eurasianism in order to answer the question “what?” – what is Russia in the post-Cold War world order and what its post-Soviet identity can be grounded in’. Marlene Larue (2015: xii, 21–2) points out that today neo-Eurasianism is not as such anti-European, but anti-American, anti-western and anti-liberal. For those supporting the political connotations of Eurasianism, Russia represents the third, conservative way to unite the European and Asian heartlands to resist maritime powers such as the United States.

Putin published several articles; the second, on Russia’s national question (Rossia: natsional’nyi vopros), which is discussed in this chapter, was published in Nezavizimaya Gazeta on 23 January 2012.

This view has been pronounced clearly by US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton. She declared that the intention of the US is to slow down or prevent the birth of the Eurasian Union, which the West holds to be a tool of the great power politics of Putin’s Russia (Lane 2015b: 2). Sakwa attaches the competitive and antagonist features of the rapidly advanced Eurasian Union to his claim that the current stage of the situation comes as a result of the ‘failure of Western leaders in the first two post-communist decades’ to respond positively to the dreams and initiatives of Greater European integration. There has not been a proper answer to Mikhail Gorbachev’s vision “Europe our Common Home”, Nikolai Sarkozy’s return to the idea of pan-Europa, and different versions of initiatives of common Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok and free trade zone from the Atlantic to the Pacific suggested...
by Vladimir Putin in the EU–Russia summit in Brussels on 28 January 2014. The result has been that we are facing the development in which there emerges geopolitical contestation to the heart of Europe’ (2015: 22).

13 The Russian political spectrum quite often overlaps with the agenda of European-minded ‘liberal’ forces, although we do not perceive the political programmes of both of these groups as identical. Their variation is quite broad.

14 In 2015, 59 per cent of respondents did not agree with the statement that Ukraine is a foreign country, and disagreement concerning Belorussia as a foreign country was even higher, at 67 per cent. The fact that even 50 per cent did not hold even Georgia as a foreign country says something about the deeply rooted feelings of common regional history and cultural bonds among Russians (Levada Centre 2015b). At the same time, the importance of economic integration with the West was still supported by 64 per cent of respondents in March 2015 (Levada Centre 2015c).

15 One explanatory fact for migrants’ unwillingness to move back to their home countries is that the economic slump has been steeper in Central Asia than in Russia. Vinokurov and Pereboiev (2015: 71) have calculated that a 1 per cent loss of GNP in the originating country increases emigration by around 0.65 to 0.77 per cent.

16 Of the membership, 7 per cent are large businesses, 23 per cent middle-sized businesses, 70 per cent small businesses.


18 http://nostroy.ru/department/folder_obrazovanie/professional_standarty/sovet-po-professionalnym-kvalifikatsiyam/


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