Public attitudes to immigrants in the Russian regions

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The "Russian march"

Photo: Denis Vyshinsky (ITAR TASS)
Anti-immigrant sentiment in Russia

Anti-immigrant riots: Biryulevo in Moscow (October 2013), Pugachev (July 2013), Manezhnaya square in Moscow (December 2010), Kondopoga (September 2006)

"Russian marches" in Moscow and other cities; a strong nationalist movement

Migration is perhaps one of the most important issues for the Russian media and politicians
Plan of the talk

- Brief introduction to immigration to Russia
- Anti-immigrant attitudes in Russia and other European countries
- Theories of anti-immigrant attitudes
- My questions, data and methods
- Results
Labour migrants mainly come from CIS countries, the top three being Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Tajikistan.

As of 18 Oct 2013, there were about 2.6 m nationals of Uzbekistan in Russia, 40% of them men aged 18 to 29 (official data from the Federal Migration Office). Population of Uzbekistan is about 30 m (although the census was last conducted in 1989).

Ukraine: 1.6 m (19% male aged 18 to 29)

Tajikistan: 1.2 m (43% male aged 18 to 29); the population is 7.5 m (2010 census)

Kyrgyzstan: 0.6 m; Azerbaijan: 0.6 m; Kazakhstan: 0.6 m; Moldova: 0.6 m (population 3.5 mln)
Some other countries

- China: 239,000
- Vietnam: 61,000
- Germany: 335,000 (38% aged over 60)
- USA: 216,000 (52% aged over 60)
- UK: 166,000 (60% aged over 60)
Visa-free regime

- Russia has a visa free regime with most former USSR countries (except Baltic states, Georgia and Turkmenistan)
- Therefore, crossing the border illegally is unnecessary
- Nationals of CIS countries can legally stay in Russia for up to 90 days (and they have to register within 7 days)
- They cannot be employed without a work permit, a patent or a HQS visa (the national quota for work permits in 2013 was 1.7 mln)
- Many are employed illegally
- Mostly employed in unskilled occupations in construction, sales, agriculture, etc.
Who is an immigrant?

- In the USA and Europe: an immigrant if foreign-born; a second-generation immigrant if has foreign-born parents (or moved to the country before age 5)
- These definitions do not work in Russia
- On one hand, many Ukrainian nationals are not perceived as immigrants
- On the other hand, non-Slavic population from the North Caucasus, and to a lesser extent from the Volga region and Siberia, can be perceived as immigrants in the ethnically Russian regions
Immigration to Russia and other European countries

- In terms of immigration and the attitude to immigrants, Russia faces similar problems as other European countries.
- In the UK, about 60% of people believe that there are "too many immigrants" in the country, and about 70% think that immigration is a problem rather than an opportunity ("UK Public Opinion toward Immigration", Oxford Migration Observatory 2012).

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Attitudes to immigrants in Russia
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"Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?"

A scale from 0 (worse place to live) to 10 (better place to live)

Country averages:
- Most welcoming for immigrants: Sweden (6.5), Poland (5.9), Denmark (5.8)
- Least welcoming for immigrants: Greece (2.8), Russia (3.5), Cyprus (3.9)
- UK: 4.5; France: 4.6; Germany: 4.9

(We know that some people lie when they reply to this kind of questions: social desirability bias)
Why negative attitudes to immigrants?

- Formation of stereotypes: nonconscious detection of covariation; illusory correlation; self-fulfilling prophecies; out-group homogeneity (Hilton & Hippel 1996)
- Social psychology: social dominance theory
- In the social sciences, there are two main explanations of the attitudes to immigrants:
  - Economic competition
  - Cultural threat
- The effect of the number of immigrants
  - Negative: cultural threat
  - Positive: the contact theory (Allport), assuming "equal group status within the situation; common goals; intergroup cooperation; and the support of authorities, law, or custom" (Pettigrew 1998)
Ways to separate economic and cultural effects

- Ethnicity and race: should not be important for economic competition, but clearly is important for cultural threat
- Macro-level predictors: the unemployment rate and economic conditions
- Recent experimental research in political science (Hainmuller, Hiscox)
Individual predictors of the attitudes to immigrants in Europe

- There are many studies that look at the attitudes to immigrants in Europe (usually with the Eurobarometer or ESS data). Ceobanu and Escandell (2010) provide a review.
- Sex: men might be slightly more negative towards immigrants (not stable).
- Age: older people more likely to hold anti-immigrants views (not stable).
- Education: more educated people are less negative towards immigrants (strong effect).
- Labour force status: unemployed and unskilled hold more negative views.
- Income: negative effect of lower income (not stable).
- Location: more negative views in the countryside compared to cities (not stable).
Country-level predictors of the attitudes to immigrants in Europe

- Larger number of immigrants (especially from outside Europe) is associated with worse attitudes
- Harsher economic conditions are associated with worse attitudes
- Problems: small n, impossible to infer causality
- Recently: studies conducted at the regional level (Markaki and Longhi: larger population of non-European immigrants and higher unemployment rates among immigrants are associated with more negative attitudes)
Alexseev (2010): surveys in four Russian regions in 2005-07; Russians more xenophobic than non-Russians, but there is also some animosity between minorities

Gorodzeisky et al. (2014): ESS data, both economic competition and cultural threat theories do not work in Russia

Herrera and Kraus (2013): survey by Gerber and Mendelson (11,000 individuals, 43 regions). Separate models for attitudes towards different ethnic groups; no regional level predictors
Questions:
- What are the attitudes to immigrants by region? Do they vary by ethnic group?
- What are individual-level predictors of the attitudes?
- What are region-level predictors of the attitudes?
- Economic competition or cultural threat or both?
- Does the contact theory work?
Data

- A GeoRating survey conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation in October/November 2011
- 49 regions (out of 83), 500 respondents in each -> 24,500 respondents
- Represent 77% of the population of Russia aged over 15
- North Caucasus and many Siberian regions missing
- A large battery of questions on attitudes to immigration and immigrants
- Social and economic variables: sex, age, education, income, occupation and employment status, location, ethnicity
- Can be merged with regional data from the Russian Statistical Office (population size, unemployment, number of immigrants, etc.)
Statistical methods

- Descriptive statistics
- Multilevel modelling
"What would be your attitude if an ordinary family of immigrants from [...] settled near your place?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% with negative or rather negative attitude</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Caucasus</td>
<td>60 (Dagestani, Chechen, Cherkessian, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>58 (Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tajik)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia</td>
<td>58 (Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasus</td>
<td>52 (Azerbaijani, Armenian, Georgian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>15</td>
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</table>
"Do you agree that we need to stop accepting immigrants for permanent settlement?"

- From other regions of our country: 44% agree
- From other countries: 53% agree
"What do you think about the skinhead attacks on people from the Caucasus and Central Asia?"

- Completely support or rather support: 5%
- Rather do not support: 13%; totally do not support: 67%
"There is an opinion that immigrants take jobs from the local people. Do you think there is such a problem in your region?"

- Yes: 50%
- Economic explanation?
"Would you agree that most immigrants are different from locals in their culture and habits?"

- "Yes, and this creates problems for the locals as immigrants try to make us live by their customs": 35%
- "Yes, but this creates problems mainly for the immigrants themselves": 39%
- "No, there are immigrants like this, but they are minority": 14%
- "No, we have the same culture": 2%

Cultural explanation?
"With which of the following four statements would you agree most?"

- "Russia must be for Russians only": 11%
- "Russia is a multiethnic country, but Russians must have some advantages": 35%
- "Russia is a multiethnic country, and all ethnic groups must have equal rights": 34%
- "It is important to protect individual rights, not the rights of ethnic groups": 18%
Dependent variable: index of anti-immigrant attitudes

- Average attitude towards immigrants from different countries (excluding respondent’s own country)
- Multiple imputation applied to fill in missing values
- Ranges from 1 (very positive attitude) to 5 (very negative attitude); mean 3.3
- Cronbach’s alpha 0.97 (very high)
Mean index by region (the darker the more negative)
Three regions with the most negative attitudes: Leningrad oblast, Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod oblast

Three regions with the most positive attitudes: Omsk oblast, Krasnodar kray, Khabarovsk kray
Individual-level effects

- Sex: no effect
- Age: a very small effect (older people have somewhat more positive attitudes, 20 years of age are associated with the change of mean index by 0.04)
- Education: stronger effect (higher/PhD: 0.12 compared to secondary or less)
- Income: virtually no effect (apart from people without income who are somewhat more xenophobic)
Individual-level effects: ethnicity

- Bashkirs, Chuvashs, Mari, Mordva, Udmurts more xenophobic than Russians (by about 0.15)
- Ukrainians and Tatars about as xenophobic as Russians
- People from Caucasus and Central Asia considerably less xenophobic than Russians (0.8-0.9)
Individual-level effects

- Employment status: small effects; students and non-manual workers less xenophobic than manual workers (0.1)
- Location: people living in smaller cities and in the countryside less xenophobic than people living in big cities (0.15-0.2)
- Migration status: those who migrated themselves (mostly within Russia) are less hostile
The effect of a contact with immigrants

- Those who reported hiring immigrants for different kinds of jobs (8% of the sample) have more positive attitudes (0.15), controlling for all other factors.
- Selection or influence?
Summary of results

- Generally similar results to Europe, excluding the effect of location.
- The predictive power of the model is very low ($R^2 = 0.03$); ethnicity is by far the most important predictor.
Regional-level predictors

- **Economic:**
  - Unemployment level (2011)
  - Income-to-subsistence wage ratio (2011)

- **"Cultural":**
  - Proportion of Russians in the region
  - Number of immigrants (work permits issued in 2011)
  - % with higher education, % urban

- Coefficients from a multilevel model (accounting for all individual-level predictors)
Income-to-subsistence wage ratio

![Graph showing the income-to-subsistence wage ratio with a scatter plot and a line of best fit. The plot includes a point labeled 'Moscow' and a note 'p=0.61'.]
Percent unemployed

- Leningrad region
- Moscow
- St. Petersburg

\[ p = 0.07 \]
Percent with higher education

![Scatter plot showing the percentage of people with higher education in Moscow and St. Petersburg.](image)

- Moscow
- St. Petersburg

$p = 0.046$
Percent urban

![Graph showing the relationship between Regional intercept and % urban, with points indicating Moscow and St. Petersburg.](image)

- Regional intercept vs % urban
- Moscow point
- St. Petersburg point
- p-value: 0.047
Percent ethnic Russians

$p=0.049$

- Chuvashiya
- Bashkiriya
- Mari El
- Tatarstan

% ethnic Russians

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Percent of labour migrants

![Graph showing percent of labor migrants with work permits in different cities. The graph includes points for Moscow, Kaluga, and St. Petersburg. The correlation coefficient is indicated as p=0.01.]
Interpretation of regional predictors

- Economic variables do not seem to be important
- Percent of labour immigrants shows a stable effect in the expected direction
- Percent of labour immigrants only shows significant association with the attitudes to immigrants from Caucasus, Central Asia and South-East Asia, but not Ukraine or Moldova
- ICC in an empty model is 0.02, i.e. only 2% of the variance is accounted by regional differences
- Models with random intercept do not significantly improve the model
- No significant cross-level interactions
Conclusion

- Individual level: mostly the same predictors as in Europe, but low predictive power
- Regional level: number of immigrants has a significant association with anti-immigrant attitudes, but causality unclear
- Generally, cultural factors seem to be more important than economic