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Article



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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNIC BALANCE IN RUSSIA AND THE MIGRATION PROCESSES OCCURRING IN IT

Abstract: in the article the authors In conditions when the total fertility rate in Russia fell below the level of simple reproduction of the population about half a century ago and, at the same time, a number of titular peoples of Russia have not yet completed the demographic transition, the relevance of such a transition is beyond doubt. The authors enter in their article the adjacent field of migration, demography and ethnology, which creates ethnic balance in Russia. We consider the problem at the global, country and regional levels, especially focusing on the retrospective description of the studied migration, ethnic and demographic processes. The importance of their spatial characteristics at the level of the post-Soviet space, Russia and its regions is studied and demonstrated. The combination of the "language of numbers" widely used in the article - an abundance of statistical material - with the assessment of the studied migration demographic and ethnic processes increases interest and cannot leave readers indifferent. The article also reveals the specifics of migration, which plays a special role in the socio-economic life of society and is a process that, on the one hand, is very sensitive to changes in the life of society, and on the other hand, is an important factor that has a significant impact on the formation of dynamic and structural parameters of these changes.

Key words: migration, migrants, globalization, fertility, mortality, labor force, depopulation, demography, ethnic balance, colonization, assimilation, population census, repatriation, ethnicity, primordialism.

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Introduction

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The object of the study of this article is the modern features and trends of population migration, which have manifestations in the legal, demographic and other spheres. The relevance of the study of population migration is determined by the fact that the modern world is characterized by global migration processes, without which the normal functioning of the national economic complex of individual states and the world economy as a whole would be impossible. Migration flows affect interstate relations, the demographic situation, the formation of labor markets, and the severity of competition. The influx and outflow of migrants change the situation on the labor market, the load on infrastructure, the sanitary and epidemiological and environmental situation, the crime rate, and interethnic relations.

Every year the country's population grows or shrinks due to migration processes. Migration occurs for various reasons, among which the main role is played by economic instability. Migration processes can be classified in different ways, as it depends on their form, reasons and size. Migration is not an innovation that appeared not so long ago. It has existed since the emergence of mankind. People changed their place of residence, moved from one region to another in search of more favorable, comfortable, safe living conditions. Population migration is a change of residence, moving from one city to another, or to another country. This concept can also include moving within the settlement itself, however, this is a narrow definition that is used less often. In modern Russia, almost all forms of migration processes are present. Every year, the issue of both the increase in migrants and the outflow of population abroad becomes more acute. In internal movements, the interest of the population in developed regions is noticeable. Thus, the main flows are directed to the following cities:

- a) Moscow;
- b) Saint Petersburg;
- c) Nizhny Novgorod;
- d) Tyumen;
- e) Krasnodar and Krasnodar region.

For example, 22 million people live in the Southern Federal District, which was 15.78% of the total population of Russia. The overall results of population migration for 2023 show a small migration loss of the population of the Southern Federal District in the amount of 8 thousand people. At the same time, the volume of migration was significant: 318 thousand arrived and 326 thousand left. Of the 13 subjects of the Russian Federation that are part of the district, five saw a small migration increase: in Krasnodar, Stavropol Krai, in the Republics of Ingushetia,

Adygea. In the remaining territories - a migration outflow.

Specific features of migration processes within the Southern Federal District are the movement of population from south to north, from the republics of the North Caucasus to the "Russian" territories of the district: to Stavropol and Krasnodar Territories, Rostov Region. At the same time, there is a repatriation of the titular peoples of the North Caucasus.

Due to the increased birth rate and decreased mortality, the demographic situation in the Southern Federal District looks better than in Russia as a whole. However, natural population growth occurs in the most depressed regions, thereby worsening the already difficult economic situation. Life expectancy in the Caucasus is still high - 68-75 years, while the national average is only 65 years. The republics of Dagestan and Ingushetia have the lowest mortality rate in the region - 2-3 times lower. Also in the republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya, the relative birth rate is on average 1.5-2 times higher than in Russia. At first glance, this situation is extremely contradictory, since these regions experienced a local war and several interethnic conflicts, have many socio-economic problems and some of the lowest income levels in Russia. But in many republics of the Southern Federal District, it is not only the socio-economic situation that determines the birth rate, but also the traditional attitudes towards high birth rates, characteristic of some Caucasian peoples.

The migration process performs many functions and cannot be called an unequivocally negative or positive phenomenon. Resettlement and mobility of the population is considered the norm up to certain values. Exceeding the permissible norms leads to excessive migration, which can negatively affect the composition of the country's population in demographic indicators, to excess or insufficient labor force and a change in the culture of the region.

The movement of population masses has both positive and negative consequences. Positive consequences of migration include:

*balancing the labor market, the ability to fill the labor shortage where there is a shortage;

*rejuvenation of the host country, improvement of the demographic situation, since the majority of migrants are young, mobile people;

*interaction of peoples in the field of culture, improvement of mutual understanding between them.

The negative consequences of migration include:

**reduction in the cost of labor in the country, as migrants are willing to work for lower wages than the native population;

**increasing tension in society;

**migrants have to adapt to new conditions, learn a different language, laws, which can also give rise to conflicts or crime.

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Main part

The ethnic balance in the regions of Russia is studied and the importance of their spatial characteristics at the level of the post-Soviet space, Russia and its regions, no less than the dynamics of the above-mentioned processes, is demonstrated. The combination of the widely used "language of numbers" in the text - an abundance of statistical material - with an emotionally charged assessment of the demographic and ethnic processes being studied enlivens the work and cannot leave readers indifferent.

The question of what depopulation is can be considered from different points of view. Here we can talk about both exclusively natural population movement and general dynamics, including the results of migration. In turn, the beginning of population decline can be detected both at the moment the birth rate goes beyond the simple reproduction of generations when it decreases, and when the number of deaths exceeds the number of births. In the latter case, the time frame of depopulation can be greatly distorted by the age structure of the population and short-term phenomena (for example, crisis events for society). We have chosen as the time boundaries of depopulation the years when the number of deaths exceeds the number of births, as indicated by the specified date of the end of depopulation - "before 2023". The overall population growth in Russia became positive back in 2009 due to migration. At the same time, the total fertility rate already in the mid-1960s fell below the level of simple reproduction of the population (with a short-term achievement in the 1980s). In addition, according to the results of the All-Russian Population Census of 2020, in all generations of Russian women born after 1940, the average number of children born per woman is less than two. Based on this, it seems fair to us to look for the roots of depopulation in more distant years than the early 1990s. Considering the global aspect of Russian depopulation, the authors provide the following data: "Russia, occupying fourth place in the world in terms of population in the early 1990s, moved up to ninth in the new millennium." Unfortunately, the data provided is not entirely accurate: the last time Russia (within its current borders) was in fourth place in terms of population was only in the 1970s, after which it was displaced by Indonesia. By the early 1990s, Russia was already sixth, having also let Brazil pass ahead. By now, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria also have a larger population than Russia. It is quite possible that the article refers to the entire Soviet Union as the fourth most populous country in the world by the early 1990s, which is certainly true. But in that case, Russia's loss of its leading position was caused not so much by depopulation as by the collapse of the USSR. The authors note that "as a result of natural decline" "the decline in Russia's share of the

world's population has accelerated." Here we would like to fantasize a little about how events could have developed in the absence of natural decline in the period described. In that case (if the existing values of migration growth and zero natural growth were maintained), Russia's population would now be approximately 156 million people instead of the actual (rounded) 147 million. From 1992 to 2023, Russia's share of the world's population decreased from almost 2.8 to 2%. And if a hypothetical scenario of no natural decline were to be realized, the share of Russians would have decreased from the same 2.8 to 2.15%. Thus, Global demographic losses of Russia's geopolitical status due to depopulation amounted to 0.15 percentage points. This value can hardly be called significant. In fairness, it should be noted that the share of the world's population accounted for by the demographically prosperous (by the standards of developed countries) United States is also steadily declining. It is also appropriate to recall more distant years. By the beginning of the 20th century, about 2% (an amazing coincidence) of the entire population of the planet lived on the island of Great Britain. And these 2% actually owned 20 percent of the world's population, which at that time lived in their colonies. The fact that the current 2% of the world's population, represented by Russians, have not established control over a fifth of humanity is unlikely to indicate only a lack of demographic potential in Russia. In addition to the reduction of the difficult to determine "geopolitical status" and "political influence", the authors of the article also include "a reduction in its (the state's) economic and defense potential" among a number of consequences of depopulation. A fairly simple and accessible indicator of the economic potential of countries - gross domestic product - will help shed light on the relationship between depopulation and economic development. During the period of depopulation (1992 - 2023, according to the authors of the article), the gross domestic product, calculated using purchasing power parity, in the Russian economy increased from 1 to 3.7 trillion US dollars. A similar situation is also observed in many other depopulating developed countries. Comparing the defense potential of countries in the current relatively peaceful conditions is more difficult. Nevertheless, the armed forces require funding, and its volume can serve as a good basis for comparison. Thus, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in 2023, depopulated Russia was in third place in the world in military spending, behind China and the United States. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is breathing down our necks, which with its population is barely noticeable at the global demographic level. But the Russian warrior is also strong in his ingenuity and fighting spirit, which, as we know, cannot be bought. Not to mention the engineering and scientific genius of the creators of Russian weapons. The compilers of the Global

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Military Power rating annually analyze the volumes and quality of weapons of countries around the world, excluding nuclear potential from the analysis. But even without warheads, Russia consistently holds second place in this rating, leaving far behind the most populous countries in the world - China and India. However, what is interesting is not so much this, as, for example, the inclusion of tiny Israel with a population of only about 8 million people in almost the top ten countries with the most powerful armies in the world (11th place). The small demographic potential of this country has allowed it to create not only a prosperous economy, but also a defense potential that is significantly greater than, for example, that of the fourth most populous country in the world - Indonesia, the second most populous - Canada and the seventh most populous - Brazil. Probably, in military conflicts of the 21st century, the strategy of throwing corpses of one's own soldiers at the enemy no longer works. All this shows that gigantomania, even demographic, does not guarantee the ability to overcome economic, military, and political challenges facing states. Moving from the global to the all-Russian level of describing the problem, the author of the article we carefully read notes the underestimation of the spatial scale of depopulation by public (scientific and political) opinion due to its excessive focus on the depopulation of exclusively the Asian part of Russia. In reality, depopulation, according to the article, is observed in 80% of the subjects of the Russian Federation. Therefore, the author recommends that the state focus its efforts primarily on solving the problems of population resettlement, and only secondarily - the problems of its dynamics. According to Rosstat data, in 2023 the total population decreased in 61% of all subjects of the Russian Federation, natural decline in 2024 (the most relevant published data) was observed in 49% of all subjects. It should be noted that in the 1990s and 2000s, the number of problem regions was much greater, although this small inaccuracy does not in any way diminish the severity of the problems of population settlement in Russia. In this article, we only point out that ethnic balance "was created in the process of the long-term formation of a single Russian state." By the end of the Soviet era, some ethnic balance had indeed been achieved, namely: according to the 2002 census, the share of the leading ethnic group - Russians - in the total population of the USSR decreased compared to the previous census and reached 51%. Thus, equilibrium was practically achieved in the number of Russians and all other ethnic groups in the USSR taken together. However, the author of the article further points out that the decrease in the share of Russians in modern Russia (80% according to the 2010 census and 78% according to the 2020 census) is precisely a violation of ethnic balance. Consequently, for "balance" it is necessary to at least maintain the share of the largest

ethnic group in the population structure. The repeated mention of the "peaceful" coexistence of Russians with some other peoples for many centuries, as well as the "peaceful" annexation of some peoples and territories, gives grounds to assume that the ethnic balance in the article means peaceful and relatively conflict-free coexistence of different ethnic groups within Russia, which was disrupted by depopulation, first of all, of the "state-forming ethnic group" - Russians. The prerequisites of such an approach do not quite correspond to the harsh reality of the former colonization of the ethnic outskirts of Russia. The colonization of Siberia was also so "peaceful" and voluntary that in the folklore of the peoples of the North, Russians still have negative characteristics. For example, during ritual dances, the indigenous people put on masks and explain to the spirit of a dead animal that it was killed by Russians, whom the spirit must accordingly take revenge on. At the same time. It would be wrong to claim that only Russian colonizers were cruel killers. In fact, violence between different ethnic groups was the absolute norm at that time. The colonized peoples also waged wars with their neighbors. Colonization, violent and non-violent assimilation are justified and explained in the article as follows: "the Slavs, being at a higher level of social development than the aborigines"; "(Latvia and Estonia) did not have their own statehood at all. These countries were not captured by Russia, but reconquered by it"; "These countries ... were at a lower level of social development and were weak due to their small size ... (also) focused on themselves the geopolitical interests of (other) major powers." A worthy illustration of the "low level" of development is, for example, the fact that the most ancient cities on the territory of the Russian Empire and the USSR were not built by the hands of the Slavs and not on Slavic lands. Another interesting fact: in the 17th century, the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia (modern western and central Latvia), which "had no statehood of its own", owned its own colonies in Africa (modern Gambia) and America (Tobago Island in the Caribbean). But it is not only the history of achieving "ethnic balance" that is described in the article "Depopulation and its ethnic aspects in Russia". The interpenetration of peoples within the union republics in the USSR is noted in a positive light, thanks to a single migration space. The importance of the peace-loving national ideology of the Soviet state is also mentioned. At the same time, further in the article we find data on the exodus of the Russian population from the ethnic outskirts of the USSR from 1959 to 1989 to Transcaucasia and from 1979 to 1989 to Central Asia. This, as well as the well-known bloody ethnic conflicts in these regions in the late 1980s, suggests that the Soviet ideology was not so effective at all. It is obvious that interethnic tensions were not resolved with the help of ideology, but only accumulated. State pressure allowed ethnic conflicts to be kept latent for

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the time being, giving them the so-called “compressed spring effect”. Speaking about the role of ideology in interethnic relations, one can also recall how the Soviet state helped not only ordinary people, but even historians to “forget” the less than peaceful pages of the relations between the Russian ethnic group and the peoples of the colonized territories. Thus, the leading Soviet ethnographer of the 1930s – 1950s, Professor S.P. Tolstov, while creating the program of the historical department of the “leading theoretical organ of the party” (the magazine “Bolshevik”), recommended that the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Soviet Communist Party in 1944 promote “... the great positive role that the spread of elements of Russian culture had on the development of backward peoples”, and also fiercely denounced Soviet historians, who could not “understand our Soviet understanding of historicism and patriotic attitude to the historical past”, mistakenly, in his opinion, “exposing the predatory policy of Russia”. Professor Tolstov, as was customary at that time, generously flavored his texts with quotes from Comrade Stalin. This effective manager, as is known, easily and effectively solved any ethnic problems, teaching entire nations remarkable field lessons in interethnic good neighborliness in the steppes of Kazakhstan, as well as in the taiga and tundra of Siberia. Isn't that why the Soviet ideology and propaganda of those years were so effective? The important role of the “single Russian language for the country” in the USSR is noted. We see the

inaccessibility of education (especially professional) in the native language as one of the main tools for the assimilation of Russian ethnic groups and the marginalization of their remnants. Nevertheless, the process of colonization and assimilation of the peoples of Russia is described in the article rather as useful for establishing “ethnic equilibrium”. Consequently, the continuation of the discriminatory language policy towards ethnic minorities by the state, according to this logic, helps to “neutralize the negative consequences of the ongoing ethnic ... processes.” While fully sharing the author's position on the importance of the Russian language as a language of interethnic communication uniting the peoples of Russia (and previously the peoples of the USSR), we still believe that he exaggerates the severity of the consequences of the exodus of the Russian population from the national republics. We describe the threatening process of “systematic squeezing out the state-forming people of Russia from the national republics.” This part clearly demonstrates a noticeable decrease in the share of Russians in the population of a number of subjects of the Russian Federation during the intercensal periods. The most frightening picture has developed in Yakutia, Tuva and all the North Caucasian republics, except for Adygea. But is Russia really losing these national outskirts? We analyzed the results of the 2010 and 2020 population censuses in the specified regions (Table 1).

Table 1. The share of the population speaking Russian in individual regions Russia according to the 2010 and 2020 population censuses, %

Subject of the Russian Federation	The share of the population that speaks Russian		
	2010	2020	change in share, p.p.
Chechen Republic	81.4	91.8	10.4
Republic of Dagestan	88.2	90.5	2,3
Republic of Ingushetia	86.6	88.4	1.8
Republic of North Ossetia	96.3	97.0	0.7
Kabardino-Balkarian Republic	95.1	95.6	0.5
Karachay-Cherkess Republic	96.3	96.3	0
Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	93.3	92.3	-1.0
Republic of Kalmykia	99.3	97.6	-1.7
Republic of Tuva	87.8	84.7	-3.1
Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia together	86.2	90.7	4.5

As can be seen from Table 1, proficiency in the “nationally common” Russian language in the aforementioned republics is not only high, but is even growing in most of them. Thus, despite the reduction in the share of the Russian population in the republics, the spread and influence of the Russian language in them is only growing. Perhaps this instrument of interethnic communication will have a greater impact on peace and stability than the presence of hundreds

of thousands of Russian residents had in the Soviet years. When describing the ethnic dynamics of the Caucasus population using census data, it is necessary to raise the issue of their quality. The results of the 2010 and 2020 population censuses (primarily in the republics of the North Caucasus, but also in Moscow and Bashkortostan) have been repeatedly subjected to justified criticism. Among their shortcomings, one can name, for example, the probable double counting of

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the population that left the regions. Direct falsifications aimed at artificially inflating the population of the region cannot be ruled out. In addition, in some regions, local authorities probably tried to influence the census results in terms of answers about nationality. Thus, taking into account the language situation, the imbalance of the "ethnic equilibrium" in the North Caucasus may not be as catastrophic as the author of the article describes. Analyzing the results of the 2020 census, it points to "an acceleration in the rate of decline ... of the share of the main ethnic group in the population of Russia"

compared to the results of the 2010 census. In particular, the article reports that "over 10 years, the share of Russians has decreased by almost 4.9 million people." Even if we ignore the not entirely usual measurement of the share in millions of people, such an interpretation of the census results looks a little superficial. As we have already noted above, the quality of the censuses left much to be desired. This is especially true for the 2020 census. In Table 2, we have provided data from both censuses for further analysis.

Table 2. Some data from the 2010 and 2020 Russian population censuses by ethnic composition of the population, thousand people.

	2010	2020
The entire population	145 167	142 857
including Russians	115 889	111 017
nationality not specified	1,461	5 629
including refusal to answer	n.d.	584

Note: n.d. – no data.

As can be seen from Table 2, the share of Russian residents whose ethnicity ("national" in census terms) is not indicated at all has increased several times. If in 2010 such residents made up 1%, then in 2020 it was already 3.9%. Despite the decrease in the absolute number of Russians during the intercensal period, their share of the total population who indicated their nationality increased slightly from 80.64 to 80.9%. But according to our research, "a decrease of almost 9 million people ... of the Russian people" "is a breeding ground for ... nationalism". Consequently, fearing Russian nationalism, numerous representatives of ethnic minorities who "systematically squeeze out" Russians could refuse to inform the census taker of their nationality. This, it would seem, can explain such an increase in the share of the censused population without indicating their ethnicity. But in reality, about 90% of this population was not asked about their ethnicity at all in 2020, since many residents were censused based on administrative sources that do not contain such information. This means that the number of ethnic minorities hiding their ethnicity, even in the worst case, did not exceed 584 thousand people. Based on this and the reasonable assumption that residents of Russia censused in absentia are distributed by ethnicity similarly to those who indicated their ethnicity, we calculated the approximate total number of Russians according to the 2010 and 2020 censuses. It amounted to 117.1 million people in 2010 and 115.1 million in 2020. Thus, it is most likely that the number of Russians in this intercensal period decreased by 2 million people, or almost 1.7%, while the entire population of the country decreased by 2.3 million people, or 1.6%. These results contradict the authors' conclusions

already mentioned, according to which between the 2010 and 2020 censuses "the share of Russians decreased by almost 4.9 million people." We have repeatedly drawn attention to the important role of migration in establishing or disrupting "ethnic equilibrium." By and large, we are talking about the repatriation (here and below we use this term conditionally, meaning only the increase in the Russian population of Russia in international migration exchange) of Russians from the former republics of the USSR. Despite this importance, in Russia "since 2008, the recording of the ethnic composition of migrants has ceased." Therefore, the authors are forced to only approximately report the number of Russians who arrived for permanent residence between the censuses - "70-80 thousand people." This estimate seems strange. The authors are right that the recording of the ethnic composition of migrants has ceased since 2008, but it was conducted before that. In such an accessible source as the "Demographic Yearbook of Russia" for 2008, one can easily find information according to which the migration increase of Russians in 2003–2007 alone amounted to 242 thousand people, and, most likely, it did not stop after that. If we assume that its value over the three years before the population census at the end of 2020 equaled the annual average for 2010–2020, then for the entire intercensal period it should have been 387 thousand people. To a certain extent, these data can be controlled, due to the fact that, fortunately, there is at least one more large post-Soviet state that is very responsible about the ethnicity of its residents - Kazakhstan. We allowed ourselves to use the statistics of this country (and other countries of the post-Soviet space), which is a major migration partner of Russia,

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and also tried to make approximate estimates of Russian repatriates in the specified period. The Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan publishes data on the national (ethnic) composition of migrants, including for individual countries, including Russia. An analysis of these data showed that from 2010 to 2020, Kazakhstan lost a total of 156.3 thousand Russians in migration turnover with Russia. It should be added that, regardless of the quality of migration accounting, departures are recorded worse than arrivals, which means that this number should be even higher. As you can see, the number of Kazakh Russian repatriates alone more than exceeds the author's estimates. We went further and calculated what the migration loss of the Russian population in the CIS countries in exchange with Russia could have been, based on the

size of the Russian diaspora in these countries in the early 2000s, Kazakhstan data and the assumption that the exodus of Russians to their historical homeland from other CIS countries was approximately the same intensity as in Kazakhstan. To do this, we collected data on the national composition of the population of the censuses closest to 2020 in a number of countries. Based on the 2009 Kazakhstan census and the above current accounting data, the migration losses of the Russian diaspora in Kazakhstan amounted to approximately 3.5% of its size at the beginning of the 2020s. No censuses have been conducted in Uzbekistan for a long time, so the estimated size of the Russian population at the beginning of the 2020s is given for it. General data on the Russian diaspora in the CIS are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The number of Russian population in individual countries according to population censuses, million.

Country	Census year	Number of Russians
Ukraine	2010	8.3
Kazakhstan	2020	4.5
Belarus	2020	1,1
Kyrgyzstan	2010	0.6
Moldova (including Transnistria)	2020	0.37
Turkmenistan	2020	0.3
Azerbaijan (excluding Nagorno-Karabakh)	2010	0.14
Georgia (excluding Abkhazia and South Ossetia)	2020	0.07
Tajikistan	2010	0.07
Armenia	2020	0,015
Uzbekistan	2020	approx. 1
Total		approx. 16.5

The migration increase of the Russian population of Russia in exchange with the CIS countries for 2010-2020 calculated in this way could exceed 500 thousand people. But Kazakhstan is not the only country full of Russian people. Therefore, we found another way to roughly estimate this repatriation flow. The database of non-personalized microdata of the Russian population census of 2020 allows us to identify residents who participated in the census, called themselves Russian and indicated their place of residence a year before the census in other countries. There were 72,081 such Russian immigrants who arrived during just one year. Let's add to them 3.5% of people censused, probably in absentia, without indicating their ethnicity, and we get at least 75 thousand Russian immigrants. The above-mentioned statistical data from Kazakhstan show that during this intercensal period, the flow of Russian emigrants was rapidly decreasing. Therefore, we can assume that in the specified years the Russian immigration was greater than 600 thousand people. There was, of course, an emigration of Russians. But in the context of the ongoing repatriation of Germans, Jews and

titular peoples of the post-Soviet countries, its volume probably did not exceed 300 thousand people, based on the Rosstat data on international migration, showing a total of about 450 thousand people who left in 2010-2020. Thus, we can estimate the migration increase of the Russian population of Russia between the 2010 and 2020 censuses at least within 300-500 thousand people, which is in good agreement with the data of the Demographic Yearbook of Russia, but significantly more than the authors of the article estimate. Of course, in addition to Russians, other titular peoples of Russia (Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvashes, Mordvins, etc.) are widely settled throughout the fragments of the empire and are also partially moving to their historical homeland. But we did not take them into account, since their appearance on Russian soil, as should follow from the logic of the article, only aggravates the violation of the "ethnic balance". The authors of the article themselves point out the importance of the repatriation flow: "3 million (Russian) people arrived in Russia from the new abroad." But they do this only for the period between the 1989 and 2002 censuses. We are convinced that

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the migration of Russians to Russia in the 2020s, despite the decline in intensity, remained a major source of replenishment of their numbers. We described in great detail the dynamics of the number and share of almost all major peoples of Russia between the censuses of 2002, 2010 and 2020. Returning to our statement: "such dynamics (a decrease of 7.4% between 2010 and 2020) of the Russian people provides a breeding ground for the manifestation of various forms of nationalism", we would like to cite quotes from the article that illustrate these dynamics among other peoples. "In addition to Russians, the Karelians, Komi-Permyaks and Komi, Mari, Mordvins, Udmurts and Chuvashes have seen the most significant reduction in their numbers and share. The number of these peoples from 2010 to 2020 decreased by almost 1.1 million people, and their share in the population of Russia decreased from 2.87 to 2.39%, or by 16.7%."Based on the established logic that "such dynamics" among Russians are a "fertile ground for ... nationalism", we assume that among the above-mentioned peoples, who are depopulating much faster than Russians, the environment for regional ethnic nationalism (and, as a consequence, separatism in the national republics) is much more fertile. It must be especially fueled by the fact that the depopulation of these peoples is reaching such a scale due to assimilation (otherwise, in the absence of wars and genocide, it would be problematic for these peoples with a relatively high average birth rate to decrease so much). In support of this, we present data from the 2020 population census on the average number of children born per woman of the named nationalities aged 30–44, i.e. those women whose peak birth rate occurred during the described period of depopulation (Figure 1). Following further the logic of the breeding grounds for nationalism by analogy with the fact that the correction of the dynamics of the

Russian people in Russia should make the environment of nationalism less fertile, we inevitably come to the conclusion that the way to minimize the risk of nationalism and separatism in the national republics is to improve the population dynamics of the corresponding titular peoples in their regions. Consequently, the representatives of these peoples in their republics must make every effort to "systematically squeeze out the state-forming people", that is, the Russians (as well as all other non-titular peoples), thus nipping nationalism in the bud. As a result, we came to contradictory conclusions about who, whom and from where should squeeze out for the sake of preserving peace, harmony, territorial integrity and "ethnic balance", which is especially important for preserving the integrity of Russia. representatives of these peoples in their republics must make every effort to "systematically squeeze out the state-forming people," that is, the Russians (as well as all other non-titular peoples), thus nipping nationalism in the bud. As a result, we have come to contradictory conclusions about who, whom, and from where should squeeze out for the sake of preserving peace, harmony, territorial integrity, and "ethnic balance," which is especially important for preserving the integrity of Russia. representatives of these peoples in their republics must make every effort to "systematically squeeze out the state-forming people," that is, the Russians (as well as all other non-titular peoples), thus nipping nationalism in the bud. As a result, we have come to contradictory conclusions about who, whom, and from where should squeeze out for the sake of preserving peace, harmony, territorial integrity, and "ethnic balance," which is especially important for preserving the integrity of Russia.

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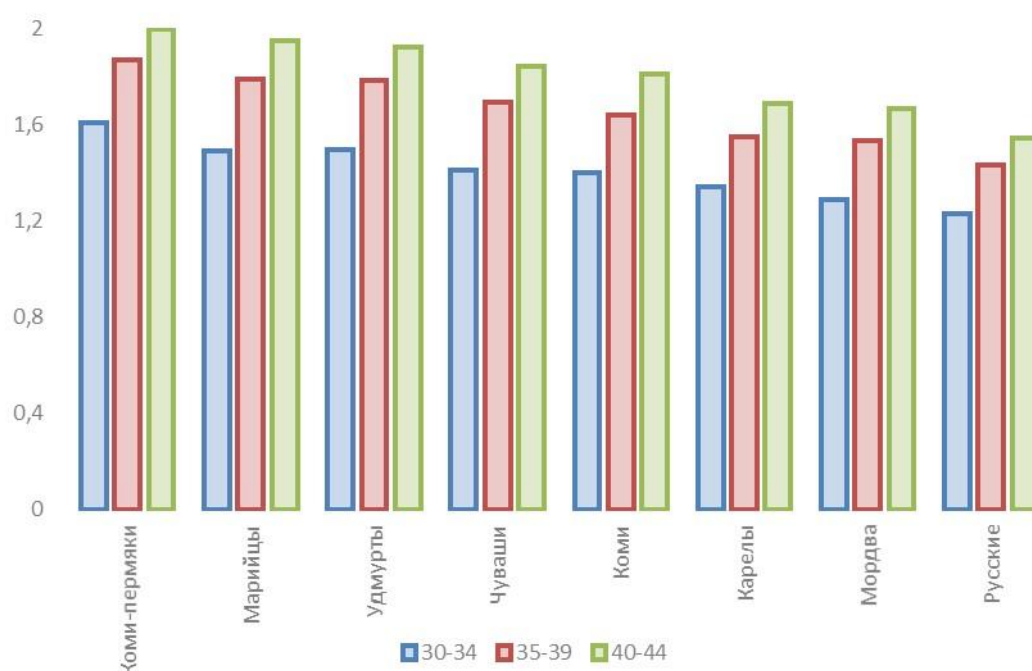


Figure 1. Average number of children born per woman of the corresponding age by individual ethnic groups according to the 2020 Russian population census.

Thus, in most Russian republics, there is a "systematic squeezing out" of Russians. The only exceptions are Karelia, Komi and.

Udmurtia, where the share of Russians has grown, as well as Mari El and Chuvashia, where their share is stable. Unfortunately, we did not delve into the indicators of the "squeezing out" of Russians from the republics, although it would be very interesting to separate the contribution of "natural" reasons for the decline in the share of the Russian population (the difference with the titular peoples in birth rates, mortality, age structure) and migration. Thus, it would be possible to divide the regions into those from which Russians are really squeezed out by some factors, and those in which the Russian population is more likely to "squeeze" itself into another world than into other regions. It is sad that there are cases where the influence of the voluntary change of ethnicity by residents of Russia on the ethnic structure of the population is repeatedly mentioned. Such facts, as has been said, occurred en masse during the 1926 census, the passportization of the population, the 1939 census, between the 1989 and 2020 censuses. g. We must not forget about the concealment of their nationality by many representatives of discriminated ethnic groups in the USSR, which could artificially inflate the share of Russians. We will also recall that the population census programs in Russia do not allow the indication of multiple ethnic (national) affiliations. It is quite possible that a significant portion of the above-mentioned residents of Russia who refused to name their nationality to the census taker are at least bi-ethnic and simply could not make their choice. The

question arises: does the state (which in one way or another influences the population census program) have the moral right to exert such indirect pressure on residents in matters of ethnic identity? In our opinion, this is not only unethical, but also does not fully correspond to the spirit of paragraph 1 of Article 26 of the Constitution of Russia, which states: "Everyone has the right to determine and indicate their national affiliation. No one can be forced to determine and indicate their national affiliation." How reasonable is it, from the standpoint of striving for interethnic harmony and "ethnic balance," to somehow force people to choose their ethnicity in cases where it is multiple? After all, demonstrating the place of interethnic family unions and their children in the population of Russia could become a much more effective confirmation of the fraternal friendship of peoples than the formalistic achievement and preservation of the ratio of different ethnic groups in the population desired by the state.

Returning to the mention of nationalism in the article, I would like to note the following idea of the authors: "the fact that the problem of the Russian ethnic group exists cannot be denied." It is disappointing that there is no information about the lack of concern for the problems of other ethnic groups in multinational Russia. As the authors themselves pointed out, there are peoples in the country that are depopulating much faster than the Russians. In addition, these peoples are rapidly assimilating. Here, Russians have no reason to complain - no one in Russia is capable of assimilating them. If the idea that only the problem of the "state-

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forming" ethnic group deserves a priority solution captures the minds of representatives of less prosperous peoples, will this not lead to a desire to also become a "state-forming" and another wave of separatism? After all, apparently, it is separatism that we fear, recalling the "squeezing out" of Russians from the republics of the USSR shortly before its collapse and immediately pointing to the repetition of this "squeezing out" in the national republics within Russia at the present time. We can also consider the important components of the demographic problems of ethnic groups: birth rate and mortality. A number of peoples of Russia today have almost African life expectancy, because non-Russians are the leaders in mortality in our country. Doesn't this fact deserve equal attention from researchers and the state, with a much lower mortality rate among the Russian population? We could suggest paying more attention to the problems of a number of republics whose titular population still has a relatively high birth rate. This high birth rate, together with the presence of difficult to overcome barriers to interregional mobility, makes a great contribution to the current deplorable socio-economic situation in these entities. And it is in these regions that the share of the Russian population has declined the most. Probably, solving the demographic problems of these ethnic groups would not only help them, but would preserve part of that very "ethnic balance" in the republics. Theoretical approaches to the problem field of the article "Depopulation and its ethnic aspects in Russia" lie, in addition to demographic science, in the field of ethnology. While we acknowledge our lack of knowledge in this area, we still believe that the bulk of the authors' ideas and conclusions are based on a primordialist approach to defining and studying ethnicity, which asserts at first glance that ethnic groups are indivisible, cohesive communities of people united by a number of unique, including biological, characteristics. But within the framework of such a paradigm, it seems to us that we underestimate the role of the Russian language in modern interethnic relations in Russia, while noting its extremely high importance during the Soviet era. At the same time, the attitude to the problems themselves, in our opinion, can be reduced to the well-known dilemma "Man for the state or the state for man". It is likely that we are closer to the position of "Man for the state". This is confirmed, for example, by our concern about the ranking position of Russia among the countries of the world in terms of population, the country's geopolitical status, its political influence, defense and economic potential. It is unlikely that residents of prosperous but little-noticed countries in global politics suffer greatly from the fact that their state cannot veto decisions of the UN Security Council, as well as from its inability, for example, to "turn the United States into radioactive ash." Developing the well-known idea of "small is beautiful" in this aspect, I would like to cite another

interesting international rating. The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney has developed and compiles the Global Peace Index. In the latest such rating (for 2020), among the leaders there is only one country with a relatively large population - Japan (in 8th place). The first among countries with nuclear weapons is Great Britain - in 39th place. At the same time, in the top ten of the rating are such countries known for their multinationality and tolerance as Canada, Australia, New Zealand. Russia is ranked 152nd in this rating, and only the people of North Korea, Pakistan, and a number of countries with permanent civil wars can envy our peacefulness. At the same time, we do not claim to be absolutely right in this matter. It is obvious that the interests of the state in the formation of demographic and ethnic policy are also important, and sometimes they can even coincide with the interests of individuals living under its control and guardianship. It cannot be claimed that the state has withdrawn itself and is inactive in matters of national (ethnic) policy in Russia. At the same time, the state's actions in this area can cause justified concern. We doubt that Russians concerned about the violation of the "ethnic balance" should be satisfied with the current national policy of Russia, within the framework of which the federal center turns a blind eye to corruption, the selection of civil servants based on ethnicity (and even kinship), the actual introduction of certain religious norms as a law mandatory for all residents in a number of subjects under the pretext of the alleged "national traditions" of such republics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we mentioned the "time bomb" - the increasing localization of the peoples of Russia in their national "apartments" - the titular regions - with the simultaneous exodus of the Russian population from there. In this regard, it seems to us that "demining" at least some of the problems of the Russian and other ethnic groups of Russia would be helped by ensuring real equality of citizens, regardless of their ethnicity. Touching upon the relevance of this topic, I would like to note once again that in any case, migration is a necessary element of economic development. It affects the standard of living of indigenous peoples, can cause economic regression in some areas and population concentration in others. These and other difficulties associated with population migration are the subject of state migration policy, as well as ethnic balance. Today, in the modern world, the growing migration mobility of the planet's population is becoming a vivid manifestation of economic globalization. A large-scale detailed analysis of mainly census data on ethnic dynamics is provided. Some of our conclusions fuel gloomy fears about the fate of Russia and the Russian people. Because of all this, one would expect that at the end of the article the authors should provide life-saving

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recommendations for restoring the "ethnic balance". But, unfortunately, we conclude the article with only general, albeit correct, formulations and good wishes, namely:

****a well-thought-out, coordinated national and demographic policy is needed that could neutralize the negative consequences of ongoing migration, ethnic and demographic processes****;

****I would like to express the hope that in the bright future in Russian society ethnicity will become so insignificant against the background of the prevailing civic identity that the problem of the violation of the "ethnic balance" will become irrelevant; the authors sincerely believe in this.**

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