



DOI: 10.22363/2313-2329-2017-25-4-510-517

УДК 331.556.4

THE PROBLEMS OF “BRAIN DRAIN” IN RUSSIA AND MEMBER STATES OF THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION (EAEU)

V.A. Iontsev, N.S. Zimova, A.A. Subbotin

Lomonosov Moscow State University
1-51, Lenin Hills, Moscow, Russia, 119992

Abstract. Among many problems that determine current international migration of population, those that are associated with the phenomenon of “brain drain” are of particular importance and topicality. The authors express a fundamental disagreement with those who try to present this phenomenon as a “mutually beneficial process for all countries”, as well as with those Russian authors who identify “brain drain” with “internal transition of people from scientific sphere to real production, business and social sphere” indicating this transition as “internal brain drain”. Particular attention is paid to two modern features, namely: “brain drain” under conditions of demographic crisis and “brain drain” between member states of the EAEU.

Key words: non-return migration, return intellectual migration, “brain drain”, migration policy, demographic crisis, EAEU

Introduction

This year the world community is celebrating some sort of a jubilee — 55 years since international scientific and political debate on non-return migration of highly-skilled specialists started. In the early 1960s this issue was entitled “brain drain” by British journalists, who were troubled by mass exodus of their scientists and engineers to the USA. In Russia this term has been translated in different ways: “brain drain”, “brain theft”, “brain bait”. The problem is not a new one: its distinctive features were shaped in the late 17th — early 18th century, when Peter the Great started a consistent policy of attracting high-skilled specialist to work in Russia. In the beginning of the 20th century V.I. Lenin paid special attention to this phenomenon, making a noteworthy conclusion in his work “Capitalism and workers’ immigration” that “Russia is increasingly lagging behind, giving foreign countries a part of the best workers, while America is moving forward faster, taking from all over the world the most energetic, capable population”. It was written in 1913, but can be easily applied to the present times. Moreover, it does not only concern Russia, but also a lot of other countries positioned far behind developed nations, which is to a large extent defined by the outflow of highly qualified specialists.

With this in mind, it should be noted that in the mid-1960s, when a new immigration law was adopted in the United States, which replaced the system of quotas with that of preferences, the policy of attracting foreign minds was elevated to the level of state policy, which was aimed at all countries. And it is since this time that less developed and developing

countries of the world became the main objects of developed countries' policy in terms of attracting specialists.

However, the relevance and significance of “brain drain” for the modern development of any state has immeasurably increased. At the same time, the understanding of this phenomenon remains rather ambiguous and contradictory, compromise on many methodological aspects has not been achieved so far, despite the fact that non-return migration of highly-skilled specialists has become a global phenomenon.

Theory and methodology of the study

From the theoretical point of view, of great interest to “brain drain” are the theory of human capital (Sjaastad, 1962), the theory of “pull-push” migration factors (Lee, 1966) and the concept of the demographic transition (Van de Kaa, 1987; Coleman, 2006; Iontsev, 2010). It should be emphasized that the demographic factor acquires special significance from the point of view of reproduction of highly-qualified human capital, in fact, one of the modern features of “brain drain”, which will be covered in more detail in the section “Results of the study”.

As for the theory of human capital, it was developed within the framework of the neoclassical theory in the micro-level perspective. Migrations are considered at this level as investment in “human capital” aimed at raising the level of education, income, transition to a higher social level, etc. And migration of highly-skilled specialists can both enrich the total human capital of the receiving country and impoverish it in the country of departure (Iontsev V.A., Magamedova A.G., 2015).

In the context of the “pull-push” theory, migration is often regarded as a function of relative attractiveness of departure and entrance countries, while the presence of obstacles, whose number grows along with the distance between these countries, is considered to limit migration flows. At the same time, for emigration countries, as a rule, one defines the role of “push” factors, which are thought to determine migration movement, while the situation is opposite for immigration countries, where a similar role is assigned to “attracting” factors. And it can be argued that as far as “brain drain” is concerned, the latter factors turn out to be defining due primarily to the policy of attracting specialists. There are numerous examples of this when specialists immigrated to the United States, Israel and other countries at their own risk but could not find a job corresponding to their high level of qualifications¹.

This research offers the definition of “brain drain” as “non-return migration of highly-skilled specialists including potential specialists (students, postgraduates, and trainees) who are purposefully targeted by immigration countries in order to attract them” [Iontsev, 1996; Iontsev, 2010].

This definition requires certain important methodological clarification. First of all, the term “brain” (highly-skilled specialists) should be specified. It rather often includes only those who have higher education, hold an academic degree and work in research and educational fields. There is no doubt how important this category of specialists is,

¹ See e.g. Lobas V. Zheltye koroli. M., 1991. This book recites on the fate of our physicist who emigrated from the USSR to the USA and had to work as a taxi driver in New-York and later engaged in literary work.

especially when taking into account the fact that the world community is entering a new technological level of development.

However, firstly, it is more than 30 years that higher education has observed a growing tendency of producing mediocre specialists. A striking example of this was the 1983 federal report entitled “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform” by the US National Commission on Excellence in Education, which said that “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people”¹.

A similar phenomenon has been especially obvious in Russia for the past 25 years. For example, the number of graduated people has greatly increased (especially in the fields of economics and law), while that of highly-skilled specialists (especially in technological area) has decreased, which has undoubtedly been contributed to by the transplantation of Bologna system to Russia with its “pseudocomputations”, “paid education” and so-called “managerism”.

Secondly, middle-level highly-skilled specialists are of no lesser value in the modern world. For instance, many developed countries find it more significant to hire qualified nurses, rather than doctors. This is very important nowadays as, according to the World Bank estimates, for example, “middle rank” specialists in Latin America have a fairly large share in migration flows (Burns, 2008).

A more precise and detailed definition of what the category “highly-skilled migrants” includes is also important in terms of differentiating the factors that determine the scale of “brain drain”. According to R. Appleyard it is possible to distinguish five types of “highly-skilled migrants”: senior managers and executives; engineers and technicians; scientists; entrepreneurs; students (Appleyard, 2002). To this list one could add artists (writers, painters, actors, etc.), i.e. those who can influence people’s state of mind and inspire the youth. If all these groups of specialists are taken into consideration, they will number in the tens and possibly in hundreds of thousands, rather than just thousands (as most often happens).

The most important characteristic of “brain drain” is non-return migration. Surely, the discrimination between non-return and temporary migration is often relative, but nevertheless this division is very important, especially in terms of the difference between such concepts as “brain drain” and “intellectual migration”. The latter is of temporary nature, a purely positive phenomenon, whose spread can become the locomotive of modern progressive development of the world.

And finally, the third important indication of “brain drain” is the purposeful migration policy aimed at attracting (enticing, stealing) highly-skilled specialists by immigration countries. This policy has received state support since the middle of 1960s.

If every separate criterion of our definition is examined, it is impossible to deny the existence of several alternative concepts with slightly different interpretation of “brain drain”. For example, complementing this notion with so-called “inter-sector mobility” or “internal brain drain”, which means transferring specialists from research area to business and entrepreneur area, deviates from our understanding of “brain drain”

¹ A Nation at Risk. The Imperative for Educational Reform // Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education. 1983. URL: <https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>

interpreted as *interstate non-return migration of highly-skilled personnel* (Malakha, 1998). From this point of view one should pay special attention to the transformations of internal labour market, where “mass outflow of personnel from scientific and research organizations to commerce, state institutes and other sectors” takes place or is possible due to a number of factors (Ushkalov, 1999). Therefore, according to some estimates, in the early 1990s in Russia up to 30% (in certain regions up to 50%) of research personnel opted for employment in commercial structures (Valyukov, 1994). However, mass transfer of researchers and artists to business sector and commerce, which in fact implies refusal from genuine scientific activities, is to a greater extent caused by structural shifts in economy and flaws in national labour market, while international migration is a regular process based on the search for better conditions for scientific and research projects (Iontsev, 1998). Apart from that, in the case of “internal brain drain” the damage is mainly of non-material character (waste of scientific potential, decrease of research work prestige in the society, breach of continuity, etc.), whereas immediate losses from underproduction of national product are balanced by directing labour to other sectors.

As to appearance of the notion “internal brain drain” in Russia, it should be emphasized that if in the 1990s it could still be explained, using this term nowadays not only surprises, but also demonstrates that such authors do not understand the idea of “brain drain” and what actually is such complex and diverse phenomenon as international migration of population, to which “brain drain” is inextricably linked. Meanwhile, some of them own doctoral degrees¹, but spread distorted information, which causes great damage to the country. It is a shame that they do not understand this and even worse if this is done intentionally, like it happens in the West, where such terms are more numerous.

For instance, a purely Russian term “internal brain drain”, which misrepresents the true meaning of “brain drain”, is connected with the term “brain waste” interpreted as disuse of labour force or its dissipation inside a state (Taran, 2009).

Surely, over the past years the world has considerably changed, including the sphere of international migration and “brain drain” as its separate area. What have not changed are its negative consequences for the growth of many developing countries, Russia and other post-Soviet states, which have become the main suppliers of “talents” to the developed countries of the West.

This has led to appearance of such definitions as “reverse transfer of technologies”, “brain gain” (Segal, 2007), “intellectual migration”, “diaspora model” (Bhagwati, 2004), and others. Of no coincidence is also the fact that the most significant feature of “brain drain”, namely its non-return character, is misrepresented. For instance, Khadria tries to prove that “the difference between return and non-return migration has lost its importance” (Khadria, 2001). If it is so, “brain drain” is nothing more than just migration

¹ See e.g. Dezhina I. G. “Brain drain” from Russia: myths and reality // Demoskop Weekly. № 59—60. March 18—31 2002.

Yurevich A.V., Tsapenko I.P. *Nuzhny li Rossii uchenie? [Does Russia need researchers?]. “Brain drain” problem.* Moscow: LIBROCOM. 2009.

Ivakhnyuk I.V. *Migration in Russia: economic aspects. Training materials.* Moscow: Spetskniga. 2015. 56 p.

Malakha I.A. *Preface to the Second Edition. Preface // «Brain Drain» — Scale, Reasons, Consequences.* Moscow: LIBROKOM. 2016. P. 5—12.

of specialists, or as stated above “intellectual migration”, which seems to be totally wrong. All mentioned notions are different in terms of consequences and how intensely specialists get transferred, both of which are used in order to present “brain drain” as a mutually beneficial phenomenon¹.

Results of the Study

As to the current features of “brain drain” and its negative consequences for the countries of emigration, it is necessary to pay attention to the role of the demographic factor, especially for those countries facing demographic crisis. As research has shown, in Russia, where this phenomenon has been around since the end of the 1980s, the situation with “brain drain” has only deteriorated. Even though the scale of this phenomenon has reduced, negative consequences are intensified due to negative demographic changes, primarily those of qualitative nature, which in fact characterize such concept as a demographic crisis. The natural decline, which is also typical for it, has been observed in the country for more than 20 years and that, in turn, leads to a decrease in the reproduction of highly-skilled human capital. And it should be taken into account that at the same time there are qualitative negative changes related, in particular, to high-quality professional education (as discussed above).

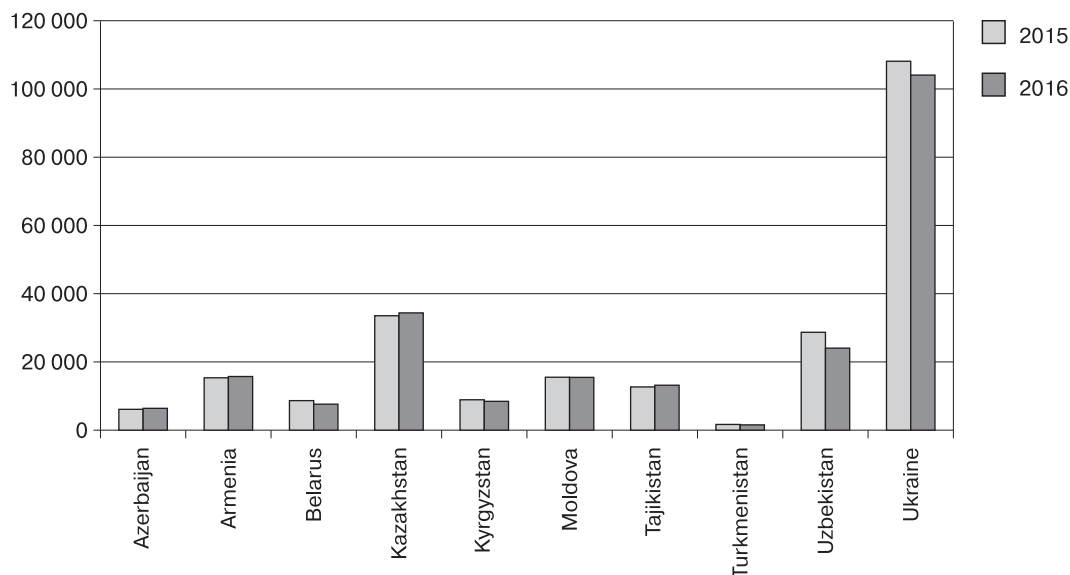


Figure. Immigration of qualified specialists to Russia, people (Federal State Statistics Service)

The second feature to be paid attention to is connected with the fact that since 2010 Russian migration policy has incorporated a separate direction related to attracting highly-skilled specialists to Russia. But this feature is linked to another important issue in terms of equal relations with the countries of the Eurasian space. What is happening now is inevitably a worrying trend, judged by geopolitical and friendly relations with these

¹ See in detail Iontsev V.A., Mogilat A. Contemporary «brain Drain»: Mutually Beneficial Exchange or Highly Skilled Workers or the Process, Increasing Inequality between the Countries // International Migration of Population: Russia and the Contemporary World. 23. 2010.

countries. If the policy of enticing highly-qualified specialists, including potential specialists (students, post-graduate students and partially migrant workers) is continued, it will lead to the situation when Central Asian countries will be drained of resources in the long run and may eventually become easy prey for the Western powers and Turkey, which is in fact already happening.

Therefore, as far as migration of highly-skilled specialists between Russia and the countries of the Eurasian space is concerned, it makes sense to encourage temporary intellectual migration, which will be mutually beneficial for these states.

The creation of the Eurasian Economic Union can aid in developing not only labor migration, but also temporary migration of highly-skilled specialists. As to more distant countries, Russia should pursue a more active policy of attracting specialists from these states. It may refer, in particular, to our former compatriots who have earlier immigrated to distant countries.

Conclusion

Despite numerous attempts to present “brain drain” as a mutually beneficial process, it remains in fact extremely negative, which hampers the development of countries that supply highly-skilled specialists.

The policy of immigration countries acquires an even more pronounced state-led character in stimulating the attraction of foreign minds who play a crucial role in their further development, especially given the negative demographic trends that exist in these countries.

Considering the fact that the system of highly-skilled personnel training is deteriorating, while the demographic crisis is building up, on the one hand, dependence of developed countries on attracting foreign minds grows, on the other hand, the burden of negative consequences for the states that supply their specialists in these conditions is sharply increasing, even if the scale of “brain drain” decreases.

A real counterbalance to “brain drain” may be the expansion of the volume of intellectual migration, which is becoming even more important for the development of the world in the 21st century.

REFERENCES

- Appleyard R. T.* (2002) Skilled Migration in a Globalized World // In: World in the Mirror of International Migration. Scientific Series “International Migration of Population: Russia and the Contemporary World”. Volume 10. Moscow, MAX-Press.
- Bhagwati J.* (2004) In Defense of Globalization // Oxford University Press.
- Burns A., Mohapatra S.* (2008) International Migration and Technological Progress // Migration and Development Brief 4. Development Prospects Group, Migration and Remittances Team. World Bank.
- Coleman D.A.* (2006). Immigration and ethnic change in low-fertility countries: a third demographic transition. *Population and Development Review* 32 (3): 401—446.
- Federal State Statistics Service.*
- Iontsev V.A.* (1996) “Brain Drain” from Russia (methodological aspects of studying) // *Vestnik MGU. Series “Economics”*. No. 5.

- Iontsev V.A., Kamenski A.N.* (1998) Russia and International Migration of Population // International Migration of Population: Russia and the Contemporary World. Issue 1.
- Iontsev V.A., Magomedova A.G.* (2015) Demographic aspects of the development of human capital in Russia and its regions // R-Economy. No. 3. P. 466—477.
- Iontsev V.A., Mogilat A.* (2010) “Contemporary “brain Drain”: Mutually Beneficial Exchange or Highly Skilled Workers or the Process, Increasing Inequality between the Countries”. International Migration of Population: Russia and the Contemporary World. 23.
- Khadria B.* (2001) Shifting Paradigms of Globalization: The twenty first Century Transition towards Generics in Skilled Migration from India // International Migration. No. 39.
- Lee E.S.* (1966) A Theory of Migration // Demography. No. 3. Pp. 47—57.
- Malakha I.A.* (1998) “Brain Drain” in the Central and Eastern Europe: state and regulation policy // International Migration of Population: Russia and the Contemporary World. Issue 1.
- Segal U.* (2007) United States’ Immigration // In: Migration and Development: Collection of papers of session chairs and key speakers of the International Conference “Migration and Development”, Moscow, 13—15 September 2007: Scientific Series “International Migration of Population: Russia and the Contemporary World”. Volume 20. Moscow, BL Print (in Russian and in English).
- Sjaastad L.* (1962). e Costs and Returns of Human Migration. In: T.W. Schultz (Ed.), Investment in Human Beings. Supplement to the Journal of Political Economy, 70(5), 2.
- Stalker P.* (1995) The Work of Strangers: A Survey of International Labour Migration. Geneva. ILO.
- Taran P., ed.* (2009) Economic migration social cohesion and development: towards an integrated approach. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg Cedex.
- Ushkalov I.G.* (1999) Emigration and Immigration: A Russian Phenomenon // In: International Migration of Population: Russia and the Contemporary World. Volume 2. Moscow.
- Valyukov V.V.* (1994) “Brain Drain” from Russia: problems and ways of regulation // Migration of Russian specialists: reasons, consequences, estimates.
- Van de Kaa D.J.* (1987). Europe’s Second Demographic Transition. Population Bulletin. Washington, e Population Reference Bureau, 42 (1).

© Iontsev V.A., Zimova N.S., Subbotin A.A., 2017

Acknowledgements:

The article was prepared with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (grant No. 16-06-0048a).

Article history:

Received: 28 October 2017

Revised: 12 December 2017

Accepted: 28 December 2017

For citation:

Iontsev V.A., Zimova N.S., Subbotin A.A. (2017) The Problems of “Brain Drain” in Russia and Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). *RUDN Journal of Economics*, 25 (4), 510—517. DOI: 10.22363/2313-2329-2017-25-4-510-517

Bio Note:

Iontsev Vladimir, Doctor of Economics, Professor, Head of the Demography Department, Higher School of Contemporary Social Sciences (Faculty), Lomonosov Moscow State University. *Contact information:* e-mail: vaiontsev@gmail.com

Zimova Natalia, PhD in sociology, Associate Professor, Higher School of Contemporary Social Sciences (Faculty), Lomonosov Moscow State University. *Contact information*: e-mail: nzimova@mail.ru

Subbotin Alexander, Master's student in Sociology (Master's programme «Social Demography»), Higher School of Contemporary Social Sciences (Faculty), Lomonosov Moscow State University. *Contact information*: e-mail: aasubbotin@yahoo.com

ПРОБЛЕМЫ «УТЕЧКИ УМОВ» В РОССИИ И ГОСУДАРСТВАХ — ЧЛЕНАХ ЕВРАЗИЙСКОГО ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО СОЮЗА

В.А. Ионцев, Н.С. Зимова, А.А. Субботин

Московский государственный университет им. М.В. Ломоносова
Ленинские горы, 1, стр. 51, Москва, Россия, 119992

Среди многих проблем, обуславливающих современную международную миграцию населения, особую значимость и злободневность представляют те, что связаны с таким явлением как «утечка умов». Обосновывается принципиальное несогласие авторов с теми, кто пытается представить это явление как «взаимовыгодный для всех стран процесс», как и с теми российскими авторами, которые отождествляют «утечку умов» с «внутренним переходом людей из научной сферы в реальное производство, бизнес и социальную сферу», обозначая этот переход как «внутреннюю утечку умов». При этом особое внимание уделяется двум современным особенностям, а именно: «утечка умов» в условиях демографического кризиса и «утечка умов» между государствами — членами ЕАЭС.

Ключевые слова: безвозвратная миграция, возвратная интеллектуальная миграция, «утечка умов», миграционная политика, демографический кризис, ЕАЭС

История статьи:

Дата поступления в редакцию: 28 октября 2017

Дата принятия к печати: 28 декабря 2017

Для цитирования:

Ионцев В.А., Зимова Н.С., Субботин А.А. Проблемы «утечки умов» в России и государствах-членах Евразийского Экономического Союза // *Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов*. Серия: Экономика. 2017. Т. 25. № 4. С. 510—517. DOI: 10.22363/2313-2329-2017-25-4-510-517

Сведения об авторах:

Ионцев Владимир Алексеевич, доктор экономических наук, профессор, заведующий кафедрой демографии Высшей школы современных социальных наук (факультета) МГУ им. М.В. Ломоносова. *Контактная информация*: e-mail: vaiontsev@gmail.com

Зимова Наталья Сергеевна, кандидат социологических наук, доцент кафедры социального конструирования Высшей школы современных социальных наук (факультета) МГУ им. М.В. Ломоносова. *Контактная информация*: e-mail: nzimova@mail.ru

Субботин Александр Алексеевич, магистрант программы «Социальная демография» Высшей школы современных социальных наук (факультета) МГУ им. М.В. Ломоносова. *Контактная информация*: e-mail: aasubbotin@yahoo.com