

DEMOGRAPHIC AND POLITICAL CHARACTERISTIC OF THE FAR NORTH AND THE ARCTIC ZONE ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SAKHA (YAKUTIA)

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Abstract

In 1990s, the dissolution of the USSR, transformation of economic and social development had very serious and long-lasting negative consequences in the devolution of these spheres. This resulted in a declining population, losing traditions and in weakening of bounds. Does the development policy of the Northern regions of Russia correspond to the needs of the population? The study *hypothesis* is that the existing way of managing the Northern regions of Russia does not meet the needs of the country's population. The study *objective* is to analyse in detail the demographic situation in the North of Russia. The analysis used official data sources and standardized and validated methods of statistical data processing. Data sources contain a representative sample. Therefore, the results can be considered statistically significant. Article gives natural-climatic, socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the region and deals with problems of sustainable development of the territory, ensuring growth of living standards in difficult climatic conditions, migratory nature of the weak interaction of local communities and the state, environmental protection and the traditional foundations of economic and lifestyle of indigenous peoples of the far north, suggests ways to solve these problems.

Key words: Far North, Yakutia, demographic processes, development of demographic zones

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Introduction

The indigenous northerners' relationship to Russia changed over time – from initial encounters in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with merchants, cossacks, and administrators to the enlightenment images of redeemable backwardness and on into a nineteenth century dominated by romanticism and nationalism (Slezkine, 1994). In the 1990s of the 20th century the transformation of the economy and the social sphere had serious and long-lasting negative consequences in the development of the economy and social life of the population. To protect the traditional foundations of management and the way of life of indigenous and minority

peoples of the Far North in modern conditions, it is necessary to take into account the natural and climatic conditions for people's living conditions.

Today, the extreme North is extremely necessary for Russia, in many ways the future of the country depends on it. However, modern state policy does not contribute to the development of the North, and in some cases adversely affects it. As an example, the withdrawal of capital from the regions of the Far North of Russia, where significant amounts of oil, natural gas and diamonds are produced. Revenues generated abroad in the 1990s of the twentieth century and the early 2000s from the Far North amounted to about 3 trillion dollars (Lazhentsev, 2012).

Russia urgently requires a well-considered state policy on the Far North which would address the following problems: ensuring sustainable development of the Far North, ensuring the growth of living standards in difficult climatic conditions, activation of interaction between local communities and the state, ensuring the protection of the environment and traditional way of life of the indigenous peoples. More than 100 scientific research organisations are engaged in northern issues and problems in Russia and abroad. Unfortunately, the standard of living here differs from the level and quality of life of the population of foreign Arctic territories (Crate & Mason, 2003). What the reasons are for these differences will be discussed further.

1 Administrative and territorial structure

Russia is the largest „Arctic“ state geographically and an important regional and global actor in energy markets that are increasingly looking northwards. Today the Arctic produces about 1/10 of the world's crude oil and a quarter of its gas (Wilson, 2015; Danko, 2016). The northern regions of the Russian Federation are characterised by the predominant development of the mining industry in the extraction and the sale of unique minerals abroad (oil and natural gas). These are very attractive territories from the point of view of the future development of the country, but the very notion of the regions of the Far North is quite extensive. In this regard, there is a need for a new regionalisation of the northern territories and equated areas to the regions of the Far North. However, the current legislation ignores the criteria and requirements for the territories and weakens the resolve of permanent state protection to the regions of the Far North. The high-latitude part of Russia's vast territory can be conditionally divided into three groups, taking into account severe natural and climatic conditions for people's living:

- the territories remote from the central industrial centers of the country and thereby causing large transport costs, attracting additional labor resources for the production of goods and

services (the so-called "eternal cost factors" of development, therefore the regions of the Far North and the equated areas are defined as districts with year-round delivery of goods);

- the territories of increased labor costs in the mining industry and the development of traditional sectors of the national economy of the North;
- according to objective complex conditions, specific criteria are required to ensure the vital activity and livelihood of population, and especially of indigenous and minority peoples.

The specificity of the vast territory and its impact on the quality of life of the northern population, especially the ancient indigenous and minority peoples of the North, is that they have convincingly proven their ability to survive throughout their centuries-old history in extremely harsh and unforgiving living conditions. For centuries, they have protected and settled as much as was possible of the vast territorial space of the north of Russia. The territory of Yakutia is 18% of the country's territory. Russia has 11 time zones, Yakutia is within the boundaries of three time zones. The area of many districts here is much larger than the area of any of the regions within the Russian Federation and even individual countries. Almost half of the territory of Yakutia is located in the Arctic zone and there is a need for adaptation to the severe unique natural, climatic and natural-geological conditions of the territory.

2 Assessment of the demographic situation in the territory

2.1 Ethnogeographic composition of the population

Preservation and development of the gene pool of indigenous and minority peoples, in many respects depended on their selfless labour, on joint food production, on competent management of traditional sectors of the economy, on maintenance of social experience and lifestyles of generations, on traditional methods of preparation and consumption of natural products to supply power. In the harsh conditions of the environment of the Far North and the Arctic zone, people try to live in harmony and honesty.

The indigenous peoples of the republic traditionally freely speak Russian, Yakut, foreign (English, German or French) and their native languages of the minority peoples of the North. Among the students of the Financial and Economic Institute of the North-Eastern Federal University M.K. Ammosov about 80% speak English, about 10% - German and 5% - French and other languages. Recently, young people began to learn Chinese and Japanese. This is a very positive trend towards the expansion of the intellectual and educational environment and language space in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

2.2 Migration processes and outflows of the population

During the 74 years of Soviet power, in the North, there has been a steady growth of the population due to the influx of people from other regions, territories, republics (Heleniak, 2009). It was connected with the primary development of health education and the formation of new branches of the mining industry, the development of infrastructure industries: energy, transport, construction, trade, catering, and other branches of the national economy. Over 70% of the total working population is employed in the leading sectors of the national economy, which determine and ensure the level of development of industry, construction, transport, communications, social services, trade and production, energy, transport and social infrastructure. Specific features of preservation and maintenance of population growth in regions of the Far North and the Arctic zone always leads to strengthening creative activity of people and tolerant relations between peoples. The average duration of the forthcoming life of the population in the North lags behind the average for the country.

In 2014 the average life expectancy of the population in our republic was 69.8 years and according to the forecasted data by 2019, it will be 70.4 years. By comparison: in 1938-1939 the average life expectancy of the population of Yakutia was 44.8 years, and for the USSR – 47 years. In the 1990's of the 20th century the average life expectancy of the population was 66.2 years, and in 1994 – 61.9 years (Yakutia 2015). Until the 1990s the population of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) was 1119.0 thousand people. This was the maximum population of Yakutia for over 100 years since the census of 1897.

Tab. 1: Population

Years	Population, people	including men	including women	men, percent	women, percent
2000	962 507	473 541	488 966	49,2	50,8
2005	953 170	465 531	487 639	48,8	51,2
2010	958 338	466 138	492 200	48,6	51,4
2011	958 258	465 704	492 554	48,6	51,4
2012	955 859	464 599	491 260	48,6	51,4
2013	955 580	464 145	491 435	48,6	51,4
2014	954 803	463 454	491 349	48,5	51,5
2015	956 896	464 570	492 326	48,5	51,5

Source: the data of Territorial Federal Service of State Statistics on Republic Sakha (Yakutia) at the beginning of 2005-2010 the population estimate was carried out taking into account the results of the 2010 GP.

In the history of Yakutia for the first time in the 1990's of the 20th century, there was a sharp decline in the population as a result of privatisation and closure of enterprises, unemployment, inflation, rising prices and deteriorating living conditions of the population.

Historically, the growth of the population of Yakutia has been and remains a barometer of the stability of the social and economic development of the republic. However, the transformation of the economy and the social sphere in the interests of large private owners caused an inverse intensive migration process with an outflow of population from the Far North and the Arctic zone to the central regions (Heleniak et al., 2011).

Between the years of 1991-2000, the indicators of the natural movement of the republic's population have deteriorated significantly: a decrease in the birth rate was observed with an increase in mortality. This is evident from the data of the All Russia Population Census of 2010. The population in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) as of January 1, 2016 was 959.7 thousand people (0.7% of the population of the country), population density – 0.31 people per 1 sq. km, the birth rate (the number of births per 1000 population) was 14.4 pro mil. The population of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) under the age of 30 in 2000 was 50.7%, and in 2016 – 45.7% and tends to decrease in all age groups. Since 1996, men have prevailed in the migration process and are leaving to seek work outside the republic. Migration of the population had a negative impact on the demographic situation in the republic. In 1985 the birth rate was 22,823 children. As a result of the transformation of the economy and the social sphere of the republic, the birth rate of children was declining every year until 2000.

2.3 Social problems of the territory

Additionally, today, these territories face a number of social problems, among which migration is the largest. Negative demographic process intensifies the degradation of society in the regions of the Far North and the Arctic zone. Therefore, in this situation, the regional demographic policy should be aimed primarily at equalising the territories. (Lazhentsev, 2012). Although birth rates remain higher than death rates, the average life expectancy for indigenous peoples is about 18 years less than the Russian average (Dallmann, 2009).

One of the main reasons for the increase in the death rate of the population is in the health and health insurance system itself. In the years of transformation of the economy and social life of the society, health care has not been viewed as compulsory humanitarian medical care by the state services, but to some extent as a kind of business. The cost of medicine for many people was not available and for some types of diseases, in the absence of advanced methods of treatment, there are virtually no attempts to provide medical services.

Since the 1990's there has been a negative balance of migration in Yakutia (the number of departures exceeded the number of arrivals). In the severe natural and climatic conditions of

the Far North with the continuous increase of unemployment, it is almost impossible to support a family and especially to bring up children on one unemployment benefit. Migration of population occurs as a result of the curtailment of activities and the closure of a number of enterprises, geological parties, the liquidation of state farms and other state enterprises, settlements and rural settlements. In the countryside, there appeared to be little or no employment opportunities which caused uncontrolled migration of the population. The main reason for the migration of young people to the cities was associated with the desire to get a professional education, find work and improve social conditions.

From 1990 to 2012 the population in the boundaries of the territory of the city of Yakutsk grew from 191.8 thousand people at the beginning of 1990 to 278.4 thousand people at the beginning of 2012 or an increase of 68.9%. The growth of the population of the city occurred solely at the expense of intra-republic migration and insignificant natural population growth. Almost a third of the population of the republic are residents of its capital. As of January 1, 2012, the population of Yakutsk was 304.5 thousand people or 31.9% of the total population in the Republic. Internal migration led to a significant increase in the population of the city of Yakutsk with its subordinate settlements (from 1990 to 2003 the population increased by 28 thousand people or by 12.5%), mainly due to migration and influx of people from rural areas of the republic and due to natural population growth (Parente et al., 2012). The city has the highest population density and performs large republican functions. Its subordinate settlements are located in an area of about 3,6 thousand square km. and occupying 0.1% of the territory.

Results

The identified factors of population growth in Yakutsk are related to the presence of the North-Eastern Federal University named after M.K. Ammosov, Yakut State Agricultural Academy with branches of many central universities of the country and secondary special educational institutions. The capital became the center of attraction for intellectuals and youth. However, there were other objective and subjective reasons for the outflow of people from rural areas. As a result of the implementation of the policy of "shock therapy" in the 1990s of the 20th century, through the free privatisation of state property during the transition to "wild capitalism", many enterprises and more than ten settlements in gold mining areas were closed, fully functioning state farms, agricultural machinery enterprises, consumer services and other state agricultural enterprises in the regions of the republic were liquidated.

In the age structure of the city's population 66.9% are people of working age and 20.3% are children. A high proportion of children distinguishes the city in comparison with other cities of republic. The peculiarity of the age and sex structure of the population of the city is that the prevalence of female population is traced, although there is an over abundance of young men.

The demographic development of the urban district is characterised by positive dynamics in the indicators of population reproduction. The population of Yakutsk is characterised by a high proportion of young people, so the average age of a Yakutsk resident is less than the average for the republic, which according to the 2010 census was 32.7 years in the urban area of the republic and 33 years in the country, men younger than women, the average age of men is 31.0 and of women is 34.3 years.

The transformation of the economy of the Republic and especially of agriculture substantially worsened the demographic processes. In the 1990's a significant amount of migration outflow of the population is explained by the fact that compared to natural demographic processes, the migration movement is more quickly influenced by such factors as deterioration or improvement of living conditions compared to other cities and regions.

In the conditions of transformation of the economy, highly qualified specialists and production managers who arrived in their youth, worked all their life in the North, and, reaching pension and retirement age, left for the central regions with more favorable climatic and socio-economic conditions. There was a transformation of the family institute from four people according to the 1989 census to three people. The North has long needed permanent residents with decent living conditions, labour, wages and vigorous professionally competent specialists.

Conclusion

It is objectively difficult to realise the territorial, economic, social, infrastructure criteria for the location and development of productive forces, taking into account the natural and climatic conditions for the population to live in the extreme regions of the Far North. This was to some extent possible in a systematically and proportionally organised society. Under capitalism, the interests of private owners do not always help the rational allocation of the country's productive forces. The huge differentiation between the monetary incomes of the population combined with the opposing interests of the rich and poor do not contribute to the realisation and resolution of the present very topical problem as to the rational allocation of the productive forces of the country (Aleksić, 2016). Therefore, in the absolutely harsh and uncomfortable conditions that the population is required to live, it is necessary to work out a new state northern policy for the development of the regions of the Far North and the Arctic zone.

This policy must take into account scientifically sound strategy, with a concept of development for the period up to 2030 in the target areas until 2050. The existing deficit of an economically active population may be exacerbated by the imbalance in the supply and demand of labour in the various sectors, professions and regions. Thus, in the future, the European North will again, as in the initial period of development, need external labour resources.

Proceeding from the urgency of the demographic problems of the European North, it is expedient to formulate the most important tasks of state policy in this sphere. In our opinion, the state policy of the Far North and the Arctic zone should be guided by the demographic potential of the northern regions. Intra-Russian migration plays a dominant role in the total volume of movements in the European North. The state and business should use the potential of internal migration by more fully taking into account of the specifics of the region in wages, the cost of reproduction of labour, modernisation of the system of guarantees and compensation. It is necessary to consolidate the responsibility of employers for ensuring northern guarantees and compensation regardless of the form of ownership of enterprises and organisations.

To reduce the outflow of population from the regions of the Far North, it is necessary to solve a set of problems related to the revision of the concept of the development of the North of Russia as applied to modern conditions: this territory should not remain a predominantly source of raw materials for the economy (Lindholt & Glomsrød, 2012). An important task of the state policy is the reindustrialisation of the economy of the Far North and the Arctic zone by creating a network of special territories for advanced development, which means creating a dialogue of investors for the development of this region (Staun, 2017).

Reindustrialisation of the regional economy should become the basis for the development of social infrastructure, medicine, education and labour market in the regions of the North. The formation of a state policy for the development of the Far North should promote the creation of comfortable living conditions in areas with extreme natural and climatic conditions, which will help to consolidate the population adapted to the harsh external environment and reduce the negative consequences of migration (Lindholt & Glomsrød, 2012).

With a view to radically improve the efficiency of state management of this macroregion, the President of the Russian Federation established the State Commission for the Development of the Arctic (Presidential Decree, 2015), numbering 9 working groups on such issues as national security, socio-economic development, development of education and science, systems, development of energy, development of international cooperation, development of industry and technology, ensuring environmental safety, rational use of natural resources and implementation of state policy on indigenous peoples living in the Arctic zone,

as well as two interim working groups: the establishment of integrated database on the situation in the Arctic region and the improvement of the regulatory framework for the Arctic shelf (Sakhuja & Narula, 2016; Wilson, 2016).

The State Commission for the Development of the Arctic, according to the Regulations, is the coordinating body ensuring interaction between federal executive bodies, executive authorities of the subjects of the Russian Federation, other state bodies, local governments and organisations in addressing socio-economic and other tasks related to the development of the Arctic zone of the Russia and ensuring national security in the face of a changing geopolitical situation and global climate change (Hamilton et al., 2016). The commission has been working for a year, but the current situation in the North of the Russian Federation, according to Federal State Statistics Service, continues to be characterised by destructive processes in the social and economic system of the macro-region against the background of small positive changes.

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