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"Name the Republic that was joined to Russia in 2014:" Russia's New Civics and History Test for Migrants

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This article examines Russia's civics and history test, which has been mandatory, since January 2015, for millions of labor migrants applying for a work permit. An analysis of the test's content and of the context in which it was adopted provides a strong case to study how autocracies can use civics tests as instruments of control. Specifically, I argue that the test must be understood in light of Russia's state-sponsored nationalism, latent xenophobic sentiments, and its increasingly restrictive and incoherent migration policy. Not only are many questions irrelevant or disconnected from migrants' everyday concerns: their personal experiences of paying bribes, obtaining fake certificates, or being harassed by the police often contradict the correct answers on the exam. While it is doubtful that this test – along with several other new requirements imposed on migrants – will dissuade foreign laborers to seek employment in Russia, it is bound to make them even more vulnerable to bribes.

Keywords: citizenship test; labor migration; Russia

Introduction

The recent popularity of integration requirements worldwide is emblematic of ongoing debates about immigration and integration. In Western Europe, these tests, which might be used for naturalization or regularization of immigrants, have come under scrutiny because of their potential to discriminate against Muslims (Etzioni 2007; van Oers, Erbøll, and Kostakopoulou 2010), spurring academic interest in this topic.

But what happens when tests are introduced in non-democratic countries, as was recently the case in Russia? Russia's civics and history test is unique in that it is mandatory for foreigners simply applying for a work permit (rather than residency or citizenship) and is therefore affecting millions of individuals.[1] It covers close to 200 topics on civics and Russian history, ranging from the ninth century to the present. Sample questions include for example: "What was the name of the last Russian emperor?," "Who was the main builder of the first Soviet spacecraft?," and "What holiday is celebrated in Russia on June 12?" Along with this test, prospective migrant workers must satisfy many new requirements: a language exam, medical check-ups, and an international passport (citizens from the former Soviet Union used to be able to enter Russia with a national identity card). These and other regulations have created a complex patchwork of rules that many migrants misunderstand or ignore, putting them at the mercy of arbitrary decisions and unscrupulous public officials.

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My paper analyzes Russia's new civics and history test, both in its context and content. A close textual analysis of its questions reveals what topics are covered, emphasized, or entirely omitted. The analysis also considers the test's general accessibility and target audience as well as the broader context in which it was drafted. In particular, I argue that the test must be understood in light of existing xenophobic sentiments and an increasingly patriotic civic discourse in Russia. In addition, the analysis shows that many questions on the test are either irrelevant or disconnected to migrants' concerns and experiences. We can therefore expect these new migration requirements to contribute to the marginalization of foreign workers. They are in line with a migration policy that has created opportunities for bribery and the exploitation of migrants. Moreover, in contrast to most regularization or naturalization tests used worldwide, the new Russian test is also required from individuals who plan to stay in Russia only temporarily; thus, in their case, it does not promote integration. Finally, exemptions conferred to migrants coming from countries that have joined the Eurasian Economic Union demonstrate that the civics test is a political instrument rather than a tool designed to strengthen migrants' knowledge of their rights and obligations. In a nutshell, while immigration and integration tests often serve to control immigration, the Russian variant does so even more overtly.

The first section of the paper reviews the literature on naturalization and regularization tests. I then provide a brief overview of contemporary migratory flows to Russia. The next section analyzes the context in which the Russian test was initiated, highlighting the influence of nationalism and patriotism in Russia's current political culture and the increasingly restrictive nature of its migration policy. Finally, the paper examines the test's questions in detail and concludes with three observations.

Literature review

Civics and language tests linked to regularization or naturalization are still relatively uncommon worldwide but they became more popular in the 1990s, especially in Western Europe (Löweneim and Gazit 2009; Wright 2008). Such tests are required for naturalization in roughly half of the 38 countries covered by the Migrant Integration Policy Index.[2] They are part of a panoply of requirements – including mandatory courses, contracts, ceremonies, and oaths – increasingly used by liberal democracies (Goodman 2010). In a few European nations, such as the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark, they are sometimes mandatory before entry (Goodman 2010), usually for applicants for family reunification (van Oers, Erbøll, and Kostakopoulou 2010). Officially, their goals are to facilitate the acquisition of basic citizenship skills among newcomers, to ease their integration in the host society, and, in some cases, to encourage their political participation (see Mason 2014).

Scholars have shown that these tests are typically introduced or revised during crises or periods of political change, such as during an economic downturn, following increased migratory flows, or after a traumatizing event (such as the assassination of the film maker Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands or the 2005 terrorist attacks in London) (Wright 2008). In many Western countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the Netherlands, concerns about the ability of migrants to assimilate have also led lawmakers to draft or revise tests that essentially restrict access to membership (Fozdar and Spittles 2009, 500; see also Etzioni 2007). In the United Kingdom, a citizenship test was introduced in 2015 as part of a broader effort to redefine citizenship and emphasize civic values (Gray and Griffin 2014). Pressures from abroad can also play a role. For example, fearing Russia's attempts to influence its "Near-Abroad," Latvia initially

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adopted a difficult citizenship test, although questions have been simplified over time (Kruma 2010).

For their critics, tests are often a governmental response to anti-immigrant outlooks, even in democratic, European nations (Löweneim and Gazit 2009; Wright 2008). As observed by Etzioni (2007, 353) "Citizenship tests, rather than establishing qualifications for citizenship, are instead very often used as a tool to control the level and composition of immigration." Etzioni argues that this is made clear by the fact that these tests are only required of immigrants (not citizens), and that questions are typically introduced or revised following shifts in public opinion regarding migration. In the same vein, an analysis of the Dutch citizenship test concluded that it contributed to excluding unwelcomed individuals (Schneidhofer 2008, 55).

Analysis of civics tests must consider their accessibility; this includes costs, level of difficulty (and resulting passing rates), languages in which they are offered, retake options, and finally, whether courses are offered to help applicants. For example, the success rate of naturalization tests is only about 50% in the Netherlands (van Oers 2009), but 73% in the UK, and almost 100% in Germany and in the United States (Klekowski von Koppenfels 2010). Passing rates often vary according to applicants' background such as their country of origin, creating additional inequities (certain categories of newcomers may also be exempt according to their country of origin or professional qualifications).

The composition and structure of civics tests also vary tremendously from one country to the next. Michalowski (2009) estimates that 50% of the questions on the American, Austrian, and German citizenship tests relate strictly to politics – as opposed to only 12% in the Netherlands – suggesting that the later focuses more on cultural topics. Furthermore, the specific questions themselves matter; there is, as argued by Joppke (2010, 3), "a thin line that separates the regulation of behavior from the control of beliefs." Particularly concerning are tests that may exclude certain groups (Fozdar and Spittles 2009; Hansen 2010), for example, by asking ideologically charged questions or by challenging test-takers' personal beliefs (Orgad 2010). The Dutch citizenship test is often provided as a case in point because it contains material on homosexuality and nudity. Even the seemingly neutral questions of the US citizenship test have been critiqued as revealing "deep-seated assumptions about citizenship: who can be citizens, who is excluded, what the applicant acquires and must give up in becoming a U.S. citizen, and what historical legacy citizens share" (Park 2008, 1002).

Critical analyses of civics tests point out questions that can be considered arbitrary, for example, about The Beatles in the UK (Harnett 2013) or about cricket in Australia (Rice-Oxley 2008). Equally revealing are the questions *not* included on a test. Often, tests reinforce the power of the majority while minorities' voices are barely heard (Gray and Griffin 2014). As noted by Fozdar and Spittles (2009), the extent to which indigenous populations and non-Western immigrants have shaped Australian culture was mostly ignored in the Australian test until its revision in 2008. Similarly, until it was revamped in 2007, the American citizenship test did not feature questions about Native Americans; it still says little about the role of immigrants and non-White citizens in the constitution of the country (Park 2008).

Labor migration to Russia

Scope of migration

With roughly 11 million migrants, Russia is today the second largest receiving country in the world after the United States. Precise statistics on immigration to Russia are

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hard to come by: many laborers are working there without proper documentation, because they fail to obtain a work permit within one month of arrival (this period has recently been shortened from three months) or because they have been "blacklisted" by public officials – this was the case of 180,000 Armenian workers in the spring of 2015 (Grigoryan 2015).

The vast majority of labor migrants in Russia come from former Soviet republics. Most sources estimate that between 500,000 and one million Kyrgyzstanis, at least one million Tajikistanis and up to three million Uzbekistanis work in Russia today. To them must be added over one million Armenians, one million Ukrainians, 600,000 Azerbaijanis, 700,000 Moldovans, and between 300,000 and one million Georgians.

Remittances sent by labor migrants have become a substantial contribution to their home countries' economies, although the depreciation of the Russian ruble starting in late 2014 has negatively impacted both the volume and the value of remittance flows (Trilling and Toktonaliev 2014). According to World Bank data,[3] Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are in fact the top two remittance-dependent countries in the world: remittances correspond to roughly one-third of their respective GDP. Remittances also represent 25% of the GDP in Moldova, 21% in Armenia, and 12% in both Georgia and Uzbekistan. Ukraine and Azerbaijan also receive high volumes of remittances although they only represent about 5% and 2.4% of their respective GDP.

High volumes of remittances expose these countries' dependency on Russia, a phenomenon that Laruelle (2007) calls the "diasporization of the state." As argued by Central Asian reporter David Trilling, "If Russia encounters resistance in negotiations, it can always threaten to send those millions of young men home to their corrupt, jobless native lands" (2015a). Russia has already used that leverage to pressure Kyrgyzstan and Armenia to enter the Eurasian Economic Union. Thus, thousands of Kyrgyz migrants were removed from the "black list" (the list of foreigners barred entry on the Russian territory) after Kyrgyzstan joined the economic union. Russia has also used access to citizenship as a foreign policy tool. Two examples are a 2014 fast-track naturalization procedure available to residents of the former Soviet Union who speak Russian fluently (and who have to renounce their current citizenship) and a 2014 measure allowing foreign nationals to serve in the Russian army. Both policies have been greeted with much skepticism outside Russia, as it is feared that they will accelerate brain drain and cement Russia's influence on its "Near-Abroad" (Kalybekova 2014).

The push factors of migration consist primarily of widespread poverty and high unemployment rates in the home countries. Political factors matter as well especially episodic political crises, such as the 1992–1997 Tajik Civil War (Justino and Shemyakina 2010) or Kyrgyzstan's 2005 "Tulip revolution" uprising and 2010 inter-ethnic clashes (Ibraimov 2011; Ismailbekova 2013). Pull factors from Russia include its demographic crisis, as well as a construction boom fueled by oil revenues (at least until the mid-2010s), both creating a strong need for unskilled migrants to work on constructions sites, in trade, and in the service industry. The imperatives of migration for Russia's economy are well understood as "even representatives of Russian officialdom and the president himself have expressed their belief in migration as a means for Russia to escape serious economic losses from the present crises" (Myhre 2012, 14).

Yet, despite the need for foreign labor, Russia is placing more and more hurdles in migrants' way. The next section examines the context in which the civics and history test was drafted, including growing nationalism and xenophobia (Janmaat and Piattoeva 2007; Laruelle 2015; Schenk 2013) and an incoherent migration policy (Malakhov 2014).

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Russian nationalism

In the last two decades, patriotism and nationalism have become potent ideologies in Russia. In particular, separatist conflicts of the 1990s and growing concerns about the dilution of national identity have thrust patriotism to the top of the political agenda (Janmaat and Piattoeva 2007, 545). Citizenship education programs started emphasizing a "patriotic upbringing," attachment to the Motherland and the teaching of national state symbols and of patriotic values (Janmaat and Piattoeva 2007; Rapoport 2010). According to Laruelle (2012), the Kremlin views the promotion of state-sponsored nationalism among youth as a condition of political stability.[4] President Vladimir Putin also frequently mentions the "Russian soul" and the "heroism and self-sacrifice" that set Russians apart from others (Aron 2014).

It is beyond the scope of this article to define Russia's nationalism (see Rutland 2010) or to assess the power of anti-immigrant groups (see Tipaldou and Katrin 2014). What is clear is that xenophobia has infiltrated the public discourse on national identity (Laruelle 2015). Anti-immigrant messages are also propagated by the media and by political parties, most of which have platforms or messages that contain at least "traces of nationalistic discourse" (Verkhovsky 2007, 135).

What is more, racially motivated attacks against labor migrants are not uncommon in Russia (Berman 2013). Individuals from Central Asia and the Caucasus are especially targeted because of their religious and ethnic backgrounds. Summarizing its 2014 report, the Sova Center in Moscow argued for example that "The results of 2013[1] are extremely disappointing for the Russian society as a whole, and only nationalists have reasons to feel optimistic." The report's authors noted that there had been a "notable surge in ethnic violence, evident even to casual observers" and that "a real persecution was unleashed against migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus" (Yudina and Alperovich 2014). Although the number of attacks against migrants declined in 2015 according to the same organization, economic hardship in Russia might renew ethnic tensions in the country ("Russia: Attack on Migrants" 2016).

Russia's migration policy

Russia's migration policy is pulled in two different directions: an economic imperative, on the one hand, and strong anti-immigrant sentiments, on the other (Schenk 2013, 1445). The result is constant changes in both legislation and institutional structures (Malakhov 2014) which open the door to abuses and arbitrary decisions. It follows that "the labyrinth of Russia's laws and bureaucratic procedures is not easy for even educated and informed Russian citizens to negotiate" (Dave 2014, 6). Thus, to remain legal, migrants routinely pay bribes and engage in other illegal activities such as hiring intermediaries (Dave 2014) or acquiring fake documents (Azattyk 2016). In particular, strict quotas enacted between 2007 and 2011, by not aligning with labor needs in Russia, have forced many migrants to work illegally. They also fuel a system of bribery involving middlemen, civil servants, and local oligarchs (Schenk 2013). The system perversely benefits businesses (which can exploit undocumented workers), organized crime, and a bureaucracy that is inefficient and reluctant to changes (Malakhov 2014). Preying on migrants has become so commonplace that "it would not be an overstatement to claim that corruption is the main factor determining current immigration politics in Russia" (Malakhov 2014, 1075).

In recent years, migrants to Russia have had to contend with many new regulations in addition to the new test. Russian authorities started enforcing a "black list" of foreigners who are prohibited from re-entering Russian territory, usually because they did not

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comply with a migration rule. Except for citizens of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, whose countries recently joined the Eurasian Economic Union, labor migrants can only enter Russia if they possess an international passport (Daly 2014). Finally, a work authorization now costs three times as much as it did in 2014 for citizens from countries not belonging to the Eurasian Economic Union (Lelik 2015). Russia has simultaneously increased the rate of expulsions; yet, expulsions are not always pursued, leaving even more migrants vulnerable to bribes (Dave 2014).

Analysis of the test

Context and target audience

The Russian language, civics, and history test for migrants was initiated in May 2012 by a presidential decree. A bill was then introduced in the Russian lower house, the Duma, in 2012, and was signed into law by President Vladimir Putin in April 2014. The test was drafted by the Ministry of Education and Science, which will also be in charge of revising it in the future. The actual implementation of the test, however, has been delegated to the Russian regions resulting in a lack of uniform standards across the country, for example, regarding cost and processing time.[5] As stated in the Concept of the State Migration Policy in the Russian Federation (Vyacheslavovna and Sergeevna 2015), the test's objectives are officially to improve inter-ethnic relations, migrants' knowledge of their rights, migrants' integration, and even to "protect them from exploitation" (Najibullah and Bobomatov 2014). Official documents also mention the isolation of migrants and negative attitudes against them as further justifications for implementing the test (Vyacheslavovna and Sergeevna 2015).

The test is mandatory for migrants applying for a work permit or for a permanent residency permit (with different requirements). Highly qualified workers or those earning over two million rubles a year are exempted, as are citizens from countries belonging to the Eurasian Economic Union such as Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan (Tétrault-Farber 2014). There is also a separate Russian language test, but citizens from areas where Russian has the status of state language are exempted – this includes primarily individuals from Belarus, South Ossetia, and Transnistria ("Migranty ... " 2015). Individuals from the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine are also exempted from the Russian language test. Applicants for Russian citizenship must pass a more difficult Russian language test; they are not, however, subjected to history and civics modules.

Accessibility

For foreign workers, the test costs 4900 rubles ($86) for a work permit application and 5300 rubles ($94) for a residency application, which are significant sums for migrants. There is a discount rate ($44) for individuals from Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine. According to an online media source, proof of passing the test can already be purchased for 16,000 to 22,000 rubles ($240 to $330) (Trilling 2015b). The test's accessibility is further reduced by a huge backlog in Russia's testing centers (Calderone 2015).[6] According to local news stories, it is not uncommon for applicants to wait for hours at processing centers.[7]

The overall test includes close to 200 questions divided into two sections (history and civics). During their 15 minute examination, applicants must answer a sample of 20 multiple-choice questions and pass 50% (or 75% for those applying for permanent residency) (Tétrault-Farber 2014). Sample questions (and sometimes answers) are available online although not generally in their multiple-choice format. In addition, online versions of the

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test are not always up-to-date, as it was revised a few months after it was introduced; a few questions (on national holidays and Crimea) were added and 16 were deleted such as "What ancient tribes from Eastern Europe in the 10th century were the ancestors of modern Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians?," "What is the most famous literary work of ancient Russia?," and "Under which Czar did printing appear in Russia"? ("Migranty ... " 2015).

Up to 100 centers have been set up across Russia to help migrants prepare for the exam. There are also resources online, including a free phone application to study the Russian language called "Russia for all."[8] In sending countries, textbooks and manuals have also appeared, such as "History of Russia for those who love Russia" in Tajikistan ("V Tadzhikistane ... " 2015).

Although it is too early to have data on passing rates, news stories report that up to 30% of applicants may be failing the exam (Stroganov 2015). There are apparently no limits on how many times a migrant can take the test although s/he has to pay fees each time. Given the total number of possible questions and the breath of topics they cover, one can assume that most migrants need to study before taking the test, or, if unable to take time off work or to pay for a preparatory course, pay bribes to obtain their certificate. Incidents of corruption at test-taking centers have already been reported in the media (Demirjian 2015; Najibullah and Bobomatov 2014; Stroganov 2015).

Topics

An analysis of the topics covered by the test reveals some interesting patterns.[9] Patriotism transpires through the historical section. The drafters of the test incorporated 13 sample questions about famous Russian (or Soviet) inventors, writers, musicians, or cosmonauts,[10] two about the Olympic Games (Moscow 1980 and Sochi 2014), and three about famous Russian monuments. More than 15 potential questions in the history section relate to Russia's territorial development, six refer to specific military heroes, and five questions are about Russia's military victories: against the Golden Horde in the thirteenth century, the Tatars in the sixteenth century, the Poles in the seventh century, the War of 1812, and World War II.[11] There is only one question about World War I. The test also includes three potential questions on Crimea (but not a single one about Chechnya).[12] The rationale behind the Crimea questions, especially the one added after the test was revised ("Name the Republic that was joined to Russia in 2014"), is rather obvious. As underlined by a Washington Post journalist, the test "fits with the Kremlin's far-reaching efforts to promote its narrative on the events in Ukraine" (Demirjian 2015).

Both the history and civics modules also emphasize religion (there are six sample questions about the Russian Orthodox Church or Christianity in general[13]) and national holidays (a total of eight questions). There is also a token question about Islam.[14] In addition, the section on contemporary Russia comprises four basic civics items (about national language, the capital city, the main square, and the ethnic composition of the country[15]). Beyond these, however, there are overall relatively few topics related to lifestyles and everyday cultural practices; exceptions include: "Where in Russia is it allowed to smoke?," "What is the expiration date?" (of a commercial product), and "What currency can one use for purchases in stores in Russia?"

The 93 sample questions included in the civics portion of the test focus heavily on bureaucratic procedures. Surprisingly, only a handful are about institutions per se (there is only one question about the constitution) although three tackle Russian federalism.[16] Sample tests also always feature a question about the Russian flag, coat of arms, and currency (applicants have to identify the correct ones from three images of each).[17] The subject

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of political parties does not specifically appear on the list of topics to study but a practice test posted on the site of Tiumen State University includes this question: "After the collapse of the USSR, Russia has developed … " with three possible answers ("a one-party system," "a two-party system," and "a multi-party system"). On the other hand, over 60 study questions relate to migrants' obligations, their relations toward the Russian administration, or legal concerns. Thus, over 10 questions are devoted to travel documentation, registration, and residency permits, and 15 address work authorization and employment contracts. The section entitled "Migrants' Rights" features 13 questions but few specific rights are actually referenced. Many questions are very general (for example: "Do men and women have equal rights in the field of health care?"), one is about rights that migrants do not actually have (voting and running for office), and another is about military service (for which migrants cannot be called but can volunteer).

A section on migrants' duties contains 12 questions related mostly to taxes, liabilities, and expulsions; there is also a question on drugs ("Is it allowed in Russia to produce and distribute drugs?"). A section on the Federal Migration Services (FMS) consists of nine questions ranging from "What powers does the FMS have?" to "Where can I find the working hours of the local office of the FMS?" The following section comprises eight questions addressing migrants' relations to other public authorities (the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the police). Sample questions include: "What type of documentation does a migration officer have the right to check?," "Can a police officer refuse to register a crime reported by a foreign citizen?,"[18] "What is the purpose of the police?," and "What are the powers of the police in Russia?" Finally, there are eight questions about marriage law. The last section of the test addresses migrants' relations to their consular services.

Discussion and conclusion

Three observations emerge from this analysis of the Russian history and civics test.

First, many topics covered in the test come across as largely irrelevant to their target audience. The first portion of the test requires migrants to memorize a multitude of facts going back to the ninth century, such as "Who was Aleksandr Nevsky?," "When were the Russian lands unified around Moscow?," or "Which artist completed the famous 15th century icon, 'Trinity?'" Yet, most of these facts matter little to foreign workers, the majority of whom plan to stay in Russia only temporarily. In the same vein, most of the civics test is composed of questions related to the legal and administrative intricacies of coming to and working in Russia. But many of the questions and answers may seem ironic to migrants whose personal experiences of paying bribes, obtaining fake certificates, or being harassed by the police contradict the correct answers. Examples include "Can foreigners travel freely to Russia on the basis of legally issued and properly executed documents?" or "Does Russia's right to liberty and security apply to foreign nationals?"[19]

Second, the test underlines Russian nationalism. Compared to the Dutch civics test, the Russian exam does not feature questions of "character" and values reflecting prejudices against migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus. This confirms the hypothesis that Russian leaders want to dissociate themselves from openly xenophobic segments of civil society (Tipaldou and Katrin 2014). But the test also presents a polished, uncritical version of Russia's history. Compared to the French civic pact (which states that the Vichy Regime "collaborated with Nazi Germany and bears some responsibility for the deportation of Jews") or the US civics test (where the topic of slavery is mentioned in four separate questions), there is no mention in the Russian test of past crimes or illegitimate conquests. Central Asia was simply "added" to Russia. Chechnya is never mentioned and

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neither is the Soviet war in Afghanistan. The Soviet era is summarized through industrialization, collectivization, universal primary education, space programs, the Olympic Game, and victory in World War II.[20] This is in line with the ways in which civic education is taught in Russia where the content of history textbooks is vetted by the government to remove any critical content (Rapoport 2010) and where the curriculum is infused with "patriotic, military, and to some extent nationalistic components" (Rapoport 2010, 4).[21]

Furthermore, the implementation of the test has political undertones. Citizens from countries that agreed to join the Eurasian Economic Union are exempted from it, while individuals from the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine are spared the Russian language test and benefit from a discounted rate for the civic and history modules. Geographical preferences are practiced elsewhere (in Western Europe, for example, being from another European Union country often simplifies naturalization procedures)[22] but not generally based on an applicant's city of origin nor overtly used as a bargaining chip to entice a country to join a supranational organization.

Finally, to the extent that it adds to the list of restrictions detailed above, the test illustrates Etzioni's hypothesis that civics tests are often used as instruments of migration control (Etzioni 2007). In fact, an entire section of the test is devoted to the police and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.[23] There are also several questions about migrants' liability and about procedures of expulsion. ("In general, who pays for the administrative expulsion of a foreign citizen from the Russian Federation?") In addition, the test is not easily accessible to migrants given its price.

In short, the test illustrates Russia's current migration conundrum: nationalist sentiments and rhetoric oppose it, but economic interests and pervasive corruption have kept it profitable. In fact, observers have noted that the new requirements are a clear financial benefit for the Russian budget since they are mandatory for millions of migrants ("Testirovanie" 2016). Crucially, they can serve to reassure public opinion that the issue of migration is taken seriously by the authorities. They thus follow a similar logic to the quotas enacted in 2007; both can be viewed as the Kremlin's effort to maintain "a guise of strict formal order" (Schenk 2013, 1461).

Debates about integration tests in Western Europe have focused on their compatibility with liberalism (Michalowski 2009; Rainer and Joppke 2010; van Oers 2009). For their supporters, civics tests strengthen citizenship and empower newcomers (Turner 2014). Critics have, however, suggested that they should instead be understood as "disciplinary tools" (Löweneim and Gazit 2009), that they expose the state's efforts to subjugate individuals (Perchining 2010), and that they generate mistrust (Mason 2014, 152). Scholars have argued, for example, that the new language and integration requirements implemented throughout Europe are used to select and exclude (Ersbøll 2010; van Oers, Erbøll, and Kostakopoulou 2010) and that their introduction might be "intended to serve the often-concealed aim of controlling the level and type of migration" (van Oers, Erbøll, and Kostakopoulou 2010, 325).

Such critiques apply even more in a non-democratic regime like Russia where corruption is rampant and political liberalism non-existent. Given the current political climate in Russia, the test is unlikely to help migrants feel empowered or to promote civic values. Since it is mandatory for all migrants and not a tool for naturalization, it cannot serve to strengthen citizenship. And because it applies to temporary migrants, it is not a tool of integration. Instead, by exempting individuals from countries that joined the Eurasian Economic Union, the Russian authorities are conveying the impression that the test is primarily a political instrument.

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Taken at its face value, the Russian test is not particularly difficult in comparison to those used in other countries: themes and sample questions are available online and there are retake options and a relatively low passing score of 50%. But when other aspects are taken into consideration, it appears very burdensome: it adds to a long list of requirements and restrictions recently placed on foreign workers – many of whom are seasonal workers with limited Russian language skills. Worse, it is implemented in the context of a migration policy that has created opportunism for bribery and the exploitation of foreign workers. Yet, these restrictions have done little so far to deter the bulk of foreign migrants; they simply mean that prospective workers are more likely to be undocumented and to pay bribes.

On the other hand, changing economic conditions in Russia have started to affect migration flows and remittances. The contracting of the Russian economy and depreciation of the ruble starting in 2014 have already negatively impacted remittances both in volume and value (Trilling and Toktonaliev 2014); they are also increasingly discouraging some prospective laborers from looking for employment in Russia.[24] Further research is needed to determine the scale and durability of these changes and to examine their significance for migrants and their families in sending countries.

Future research should also explore, through interviews, the experience of individuals who have studied for, and taken, the history and civics test. This would help evaluate its level of difficulty, whether some questions are asked more often than others, as well as how migrants approach and prepare for the test. Qualitative analysis would also indicate how frequently certificates of completion are purchased rather than obtained by passing the test. Given that migrants from countries that joined the new Eurasian Economic Union will not be subjected to the test, they will constitute a natural control group, providing an ideal setting in which to analyze how migrants are faring with this new requirement.

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Notes

1. A Russian language test for foreign workers has been in place in Russia since 2012.
2. Migrant Integration Policy Index: http://www.mipex.eu/.
3. See http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS.
4. As argued by Schenk (2012), the Russian government officially promotes inclusion and multiculturalism while indirectly promoting ethnic nationalism in a "passive-aggressive" manner.
5. See, for instance, "Sistemu testirovaniia migrantov raskritikovali v Obshchevennoi palate" (The system of migrant testing was discussed in the Public Chamber), *Izvestiia*, March 17, 2016. http://izvestia.ru/news/606643.
6. See, for example, "Novye pravila pozvoliaiot kachestvenno integrirovat' migrantov v nashi obshchestvo - ekspert" (New rules allow for quality integration of migrants in our society – expert). *Regnum*. March 6, 2015. https://regnum.ru/news/polit/1902586.
7. See "Hope and Fear: Kyrgyz Migrants in Russia." *Irin News*, April 24, 2015. http://www.irinnews.org/report/101398/hope-and-fear-kyrgyz-migrants-russia.

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8. The Russian Orthodox Church also published a textbook in December 2014 to help migrants pass the test with advice such as "don't push in public" and be "chivalrous toward women" (Balmforth 2014).
9. Samples of the Russian language test can be found here: http://www.utmn.ru/upload/medialibrary/d6f/Примерные%20вопросы%20по%20русскому%20языку%20как%20иностранному.pdf.
10. The sample questions refer to: Andrei Rublev, Mikhail Lomonosov, Alexander Pushkin, Dmitrii Mendeleev, Lev Tolstoy, Petr Tchaikovsky, Fedor Dostoyevsky, Anton Chekov, Anton Popov, Sergei Korolov, Yurii Gagarin, Valentina Tereshkova, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn.
11. One topic question asks, "How many Soviet citizens died during the Great Patriotic War?"
12. The questions are: "When and under which empress did the Crimean Peninsula become part of Russia?," "In what year and at whose initiative was Soviet Crimea transferred from the Russian Federation to Ukraine?," and "Name the Republic that was joined to Russia in 2014."
13. For example: "Who is the head of the Russian Orthodox Church?," "When did Russia adopt Christianity?," or "What famous Orthodox churches were built in ancient Russia?"
14. "What is one of the main organizations of Russian Muslims?"
15. The right answer is: "a multinational state."
16. "Are Russia and the Russian Federation equivalent terms?," "What type of territory is Russia?," and "What are the different subjects of the Russian Federation?"
17. An example can be found here: http://gct.msu.ru/docs/Modul_testirovaniya_OSNOVY-ZAKONODATELSTVA-RF.pdf.
18. A practice test posted on the site of the State University of Tiumen gave this specific question about the police:

    > You come to your apartment and find that it was robbed. You call the police to report the robbery, asking when the police will arrive at the crime scene. However, the police officer says he is tired, and asks you to call next week. To what extent is it a legitimate response from the police officer?

19. Further examples from an online practice test include these two questions: "1) In Russia the right to liberty and security of the person extends to: All, including foreigners/Only to permanent residents and citizens/Only to Russian citizens. 2) Foreigners, who have all the necessary documents can: Move freely in Russia/Cannot move freely in Russia/Can move freely only as part of a tour group."
20. An online practice test includes this question about the Soviet Union: "One of the most important achievements of the USSR in the first half of the twentieth century has been: The elimination of illiteracy/The abolition of serfdom/Judicial reform."
21. An analysis of the manifesto of the Pro-Kremlin youth movement Nashi by Laruelle (2012) reached similar conclusions, portraying the 1917 revolution as a positive step in modernizing Russia or claiming that individual freedoms can only be achieved in a sovereign state free from Western influences.
22. Another example is the Dutch oversea integration test which exempts individuals from the European Union, the European Economic Area, Switzerland, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Korea, Japan, and the United States (Human Rights Watch 2008).
23. A sample question is "Which of the following are basic rights and duties of the police? (detaining individuals, having access to premises, checking passport, looking for missing individuals)."
24. See these news stories: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Tajik Service. 2016. "Tajik Official Says Migration To Russia Down." June 22. http://www.rferl.org/content/tajik-official-says-migration-to-russia-down/27873757.html. Pannier, Bruce. 2016. "Down and Out in Central Asia." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. April 9. https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/return±migrants±russia/154005267f62b131. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 2016. "Uzbekistan: Karimov's Successor Faces an Economic Mess." September 1. http://www.eurasianet.org/node/8038.

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