

2. Migration Patterns in the Former Soviet Union

*Zhanna A. Zaionchkovskaya**

Migration patterns are useful indicators of social change. Migratory trends provide a timely insight into the quickly changing eddies and currents of development which are so important in a transitional society such as the former Soviet Union (FSU).

The collapse of the Soviet system caused critical changes in migratory processes. The five chaotic years that have passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union have witnessed the emergence of a new economic system and the creation of new, sovereign political entities from fragments of the FSU. In this chapter, migratory trends in the former Soviet Union from 1990 through 1994 are analyzed in light of these changes. It is necessary to begin with a brief overview of the past.

Historical Background

The conquest of neighboring lands and expansion of the Russian Empire was accompanied by migration from the center to outlying regions. This trend dominated for several centuries, beginning in the sixteenth century, when Russia completely freed itself from Tatar-Mongolian domination. Russians, and later Ukrainians, gradually spread across the territory of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). During the Soviet period, migration toward the outlying areas continued, supported by Stalin's forced, mass relocations.

Preceding and during the breakup of the USSR, it became fashionable to attribute the migratory expansion of Russians and other Slavic peoples (Ukrainians and Belarusians) to Moscow's imperial ambitions. Undoubtedly, imperial and militarist interests were key stimuli of the Russian expansion, and it would be absurd to deny their importance during the Soviet era. However, economic factors were very important. The local populations of the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Moldova did not possess the necessary skills to satisfy the demands of

* Zhanna A. Zaionchkovskaya is director of the Laboratory for Migration Research, Institute of Economic Forecasting, Russian Academy of Sciences.

economic development. In some regions (Latvia and Estonia), the natural growth rate of the population was so low it could not provide the necessary labor force for fast growing cities.

One can argue whether economic growth was too rapid and whether local interests were sufficiently considered. However, it may be argued that sooner or later a strong demand for a skilled labor force would have emerged and become critical in any case, since modern civilization has not yet found any other means of development besides urbanization and industrialization. Development may have been unbalanced in the USSR, where the role of the military complex in industry was certainly exaggerated, but development did occur, complemented and spurred on by Russian and other Slavic migration. Even if the new states into which the USSR divided had developed as independent entities, there very likely would have been a significant flow of immigrants from Russia. This chapter is not aimed at resolving these issues, but it is very important to stress these points in order to better understand the processes now taking place.

Over time, the relationships between the center (Russia) and the periphery (the republics) changed. The demographic resources of the previously developed regions were exhausted, and, by the 1960s, the Central and Northwest regions of Russia themselves experienced labor deficits and became the most attractive areas for relocation. By the late 1970s, migration within the USSR was clearly centripetal. Regions that had previously attracted Russian immigration began to lose Russians: the Trans-Caucasus (from the 1960s), Kazakhstan (from the early 1970s), and Central Asia (from the mid-1970s). Rural to urban migration within these areas, and the increasing emergence of competitive labor markets fueled by a fast-growing contingent of native professionals, promoted a Russian and Slavic exodus from the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Kazakhstan. Beginning in the 1980s, the labor market in Russia became relatively more favorable and promoted migration to Russia and Ukraine not only by Slavs, but also by the titular populations of the non-Slavic republics. For example, during the period of 1979-1988 (the period of the last general census of the USSR) the number of Moldovans in Russia increased by 69 percent, compared to a 10.5 percent increase in their native republic. Similar patterns are observable for Georgians and Armenians (46 percent compared to 10.3 percent and 13.2 percent, respectively); Azerbaijanians (2.2 times compared to 24 percent); Uzbeks and Turkmen (1.8 times compared to 34 percent); Kyrgyz (2.9 times compared to 33 percent); Tajiks (2.1 times compared to 46 percent) and Kazakhs (69 percent compared to 23.5 percent). These types of patterns can be observed for Ukraine, as well. Moldovans, Azerbaijanians and Armenians, whose republics had been intensively urbanized, were more active migrants to Russia and Ukraine because

local cities could not absorb all those wanting to come. Ukrainians and Belarusians migrated to the Baltic area more intensively than to Russia. Until the end of the 1980s, Moldovans relocated even to the Trans-Caucasus and Central Asia, replacing the Russians who had moved out of these areas. In the 1980s their number in Uzbekistan increased by 3.6 times, in Tadjikistan by 2.8 times, and in Armenia by 1.6 times.

The same trend applies to many non-Russian nationalities in Russia itself in the 1960s. Tatars, Bashkirs, Moldovans, Maris, Chuvash, and the ethnic groups of the North Caucasus migrated northward and eastward within Russia and to Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

Thus, in the period preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union, the primary migratory trends in the region were as follows:

- The prevailing trend was migration to Russia (in the 1980s, this comprised nearly three-quarters of the positive net volume of migration¹), and to a lesser extent, to Ukraine (15 percent), and the Baltic states (about 10 percent). These flows came primarily from Central Asia (40 percent of the negative net volume of migration), Kazakhstan (about 30 percent), and the Trans-Caucasus (also about 30 percent).
- Migrants were most drawn to the western and southwestern areas of the FSU, including the Baltic states, Belarus, Ukraine and some Russian *oblasts* (districts) located to the west and southwest of Moscow, as well as the capital itself. The Moscow and St. Petersburg areas were the strongest magnets: in the 1980s only 7 percent of the population of the USSR resided in these areas, but they “absorbed” 45 percent of the migrants. Other areas that migrants found attractive were the northern regions of the North Caucasus, the Asiatic North, the Far East, and, in particular, the northern area of West Siberia, with its strong oil and gas industry. In contrast, a long, steady flow of migrants moved westward from southern Siberia. The areas of the Urals, Volga-Vyatka and Chernozem in Russia lost population to the central and northwestern regions of Russia, the Baltic republics, Ukraine, and Belarus.
- A major trend in all areas was migration from villages to cities. The urbanization of the former USSR is far from complete, although it is nearly over in Estonia, Latvia, and some regions of Russia. The combination of growing urban labor markets and villages able to satisfy them defined

¹ Net migration is the difference between the number of migrants leaving and entering the region. It can be positive, negative, or zero, if the relocation is balanced. Synonymous with this definition are the concepts of net inflow, and net outflow.

migratory directions and trends. The cities with the highest living standards were the most powerful magnets.

- Both Slavic and native peoples emigrated from the non-Slavic republics, except in the Baltic region, where, even in the 1980s, Russian immigration continued and titular nationalities stayed within their borders. The non-Russian population of the Soviet Union began to participate more actively than Russians in the development of the north and northeast. Active territorial expansion occurred among the peoples of the Caucasus, Moldova, and the Volga region, while expansion practically stopped among Slavs.
- After a long moratorium on travel outside the Soviet Union, the Iron Curtain was lifted under Gorbachev. At first, only selective ethnic emigration was permitted—that of Jews, Germans, and Greeks. From 1988 on, however, emigration rapidly expanded, doubling every year and reaching 452,000 in 1990 (compared to 39,000 in 1987).

Changing Determinants of Migration

The breakup of the Soviet socio-economic system caused sharp changes in the determinants of migration. New factors emerged, and existing ones shifted their influence. We can identify four groups of factors influencing contemporary migration within the former USSR.

The first group of factors results directly from the collapse of the USSR. The break-up of the country occurred unexpectedly and was a serious shock to the population. Citizens of a once indivisible country were suddenly divided into “those of our kind” and “outsiders”—natives and immigrants. The latter were not guaranteed citizenship, inheritance, pensions, seniority, or other basic rights, and were subjected to laws requiring use of the native language. This set the stage for mass repatriation, which was accompanied by flows of refugees and forced migrants from areas of armed conflict and bloody nationalist clashes.

The second group of factors is related to the initial stage of the creation of the new economic system. At this time, market levers were not yet in force and the introduction of market reforms brought a deep economic crisis. A significant drop in production was typical for all of Eastern Europe, but in the FSU this was exacerbated by the dissolution of internal administrative relationships (due to the breakup of the Soviet Union) and the separatist bent of the new states during their first years of independence. High inflation, a rapid increase in the cost of living accompanied by a sudden drop in living standards, and growing

unemployment were all results of economic restructuring. These factors also contributed to stress-induced migration.²

The third group of factors results from the development of genuine market relations: privatization, private entrepreneurship and land ownership, the development of commerce, private financing, and a capital market. A new economic landscape is developing within the territory of the FSU, and the people are learning how to benefit from it. The new economic reality has generated some kinds of migration which were unfamiliar in the FSU, such as short-term labor migration, shuttle trade, and other kinds of commercial migration. This third group of factors includes traditional, or “classic,” determinants of migration which have only recently emerged for the people of the FSU with their new freedoms of choice. These factors have a stabilizing impact on peoples’ lives; they ameliorate stress and gradually normalize migration patterns.

The fourth group of factors are those resulting from the liberalization of life in the former Soviet Union and the transition to an “open door” policy. All of the new countries founded on the ruins of the FSU gave people the freedom to enter and exit the country and established systems to allow international migration. Emigration and immigration, educational travel, vacations, work trips, and temporary residence abroad were permitted almost immediately upon the collapse of the Union and quickly became the norm. Under the conditions of a worsening economic crisis, freedom of travel has proved to be an important ameliorating factor.

It is paradoxical that crossing the external border of the FSU is significantly easier than relocating within the CIS, which is still to some extent limited.

Nevertheless, the member states of the CIS are now exhibiting a strong desire to function as a united migratory entity with free internal borders. We can assume, then, that free labor markets and free travel will gradually overcome any remaining holdovers from the collapsed system.

Naturally, no group of factors influencing migration can be isolated or assumed to be in force at only one particular point in time. From 1990 through 1992, however, stress factors were by far the most powerful determinants of migration in the former USSR. From 1993 on, the impact of economic factors prevailed. The shock and confusion which the population experienced due to the collapse of

² Here we distinguish between stress-induced and forced migrations. By stress-induced, we mean migration caused by panic behavior, confusion, fear, threats, social discomfort, etc. Forced migration is also of a stressful nature, but the main cause of forced migration is objective, observable coercion. Stress-induced migration can be caused by an inadequate assessment of the actual situation.

the USSR is gradually waning. The majority of the population has accepted the idea that the Union is long past and has to some degree adapted to the new economic realities. Feelings of hopelessness and fear are being replaced with sensible attitudes toward the events taking place now. Migratory trends reflected this singularly important shift well before any other indicators of mass behavior. We will try to illustrate this below.

Quality of Data

In the USSR, assignment to (*propiska*) or release from (*vypiska*) a place of residence was registered by passport and recorded as statistical data on migration. In the cities, there was virtually complete compliance with registration regulations due to strict requirements that applicants present valid residence permits when applying for a job, social services or medical services. In rural areas, however, the level of registration was significantly lower.

Liberalization of the rules and increased freedom of travel relaxed the rigid residence permit regime. More precisely, the formal requirements did not change much,³ but enforcement of the rules has weakened. Now many business people, representatives of private companies, young people seeking to avoid compulsory military duty in regions of armed conflict, and forced migrants who do not intend to change their citizenship but wish to stay in their places of asylum, are living in new places without registration. Foreign citizens who are in the CIS without official registration should be added to that list. This explains why the registration statistics show fewer migrants than the actual numbers.

In countries where armed conflicts have taken place (Tadjikistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova), registration is simply impossible as a practical matter, while in many other regions (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan) the accuracy of data has rapidly deteriorated due to lack of funds and specialists. Therefore, data compiled by different countries very often vary.⁴ The increasing inaccuracy in immigration statistics should always be kept in mind while analyzing recent migratory trends in the CIS. Contemporary statistics may reflect general trends, but a healthy dose of skepticism is advisable.

³ In Russia, the permit requirement is now formally deferred, and is substituted by registration of place of residence. However, due to the fact the registration limitations are still preserved almost everywhere, this has not eased the restrictions very much.

⁴ For example, in 1994, net migration from Ukraine to Russia, by the estimates of Goskomstat (State Committee of Statistics) of Russia, amounted to 139,000 people, while the Ukrainian Statistics Authorities estimated the total to be 124,000 people. Estimates of the numbers of refugees compiled by different countries also do not match.

As statistics from Russia are much more extensive than those of other countries of the CIS, we will primarily use Russian data in what follows.

Migration Between the Countries of the CIS and the Baltics

The population of the former Soviet Union responded to the deteriorating socio-economic situation and the breakup of the Union by reducing migration. The volume of migration decreased rapidly after 1989, in response to the first ethnic conflicts, the Turk-Meskhetian *pogrom* in Fergana and the Armenian *pogrom* in Baku (1990). This tendency can be easily seen in Figure 2.1, showing data for cities where this trend is most visible.

Between 1988 and 1990, the total migratory flow decreased by nearly 20 percent. Internal migration in Russia showed a twofold reduction, while in other countries of NIS the reduction was even higher. In Armenia alone, for example, from 1990–1993, the number of those relocating to cities fell by four times and in Azerbaijan, by three. Emigration from these countries declined: the number of total departures fell by 60 percent over three years. Thus, reality contradicts the widespread opinion that migration in the former USSR and Russia has increased sharply in recent years. People tend to prefer to wait out times of trouble in familiar places. A sharp reduction in migratory activity is evidence of shock. With that in mind, it appears that those who were in their own ethnic republics stayed home, while the mobility of non-natives increased, with most returning to their homelands either voluntarily or as “forced migrants.”

The former republics of the USSR were clearly divided into two categories, those gaining and those losing people, with the division along ethnic lines. The Slavic republics took in people and the non-Slavic republics lost people. Such a division was observed previously in connection with the outflow of Russians, but with some differences: the Baltic republics and Russia were previously countries of in-migration, while Belarus was among those losing people. Beginning in 1991, a population outflow from the Baltic republics also began (Table 2.1).

As before *perestroika*, relocation to Russia is a major migratory trend in the post-Soviet world. But in 1991–1992, Ukraine showed itself to be as strong a magnet as Russia, while Russia itself provided about 40 percent of the net migratory flow to Ukraine. The flow into Russia from non-Slavic countries was 4.1 times higher than into Ukraine (compared to an almost threefold difference in population).

Net migration into Russia and Ukraine from the non-Slavic states was fairly equal in 1992, when the flow to Ukraine was at its peak (see Table 2.2). A

significant difference can be noted only in the percentages from Kazakhstan and Moldova. The countries of Central Asia provided an overwhelming share of the flow. It is interesting that the coefficient of migration fluctuated very little by group of countries (for Russia, in the range of 5.8-6.8 per thousand; for Moldova, 2.3-3.9; for Ukraine, from 1.3 to 1.7). This indicates that the relocation of populations from non-Slavic republics is evenly distributed.

Table 2.1
Net Migration For the CIS and the Baltic Countries (in thousands)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Russia	164	52	176	430	810
Ukraine	79	148	288	49	-143
Belarus	-32	3	54	32	-3
Moldova	-30	-34	-37	-15	-15
Trans-Caucasus:					
- Azerbaijan	-86	-40	-61	-58	-49
- Armenia	1	20	28	-12	-14
- Georgia	-39	-44	-45	-30	-32
Central Asia:					
- Kyrgyzstan	-41	-37	-77	-120	-51
- Tadjikistan	-60	19	-142	-2	-41
- Turkmenistan	-7	-5	-14	8	-9
- Uzbekistan	-180	-96	-75	-54	-139
- Kazakhstan	-131	-49	-179	-203	-409
Baltics:					
- Latvia	-1	-11	-47	-28	-19
- Lithuania	12	-5	-22	-13	-3
- Estonia	3	0	-34	-14	-
Total former USSR	-348	-79	-187	-30	-117*

NOTE: *Excluding Estonia

SOURCES: Statistics Committee of the CIS, Demographic Yearbook, 1995, and national statistics for each Baltic country.

After 1993, the situation began to change, with only Russia continuing to receive people. National differences in economic growth and reforms are reflected in these trends. Variations in economic conditions and living standards between these CIS countries began to increasingly impact migration patterns.

Table 2.2
Net Migration From Non-Slavic Countries To Russia and Ukraine, 1992

Countries or Region	Thousands of people		Percent	
	Russia	Ukraine	Russia	Ukraine
Trans-Caucasus	108.9	24.7	22.4	21.0
Central Asia	214.9	44.0	44.1	37.4
Kazakhstan	96.9	16.3	19.9	13.9
Moldova	9.9	17.1	2.0	14.6
Baltics	56.7	15.4	11.6	13.1
Total	487.3	117.5	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: State Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation, and State Statistics Committee of Ukraine.

Net immigration into Russia has rapidly increased. Russia has progressed farther on the road to a market economy than the other countries of the CIS. Russia's currency is strongest and is the standard to which other CIS currencies are linked. Russia also has noticeable advantages in standards of living and business conditions. The populations of the other former Soviet republics hope to take advantage of the new possibilities for employment and growth which are so visible in Russia.

A different situation is evident in Ukraine, where the economic crisis deepened just as new evidence of stabilization appeared in Russia. Migrants immediately reacted to the new conditions. After the breakup of the Union, many Ukrainians hurried home, and Russia showed a negative migratory balance with Ukraine. For the period of 1991–1992, the balance was 176,000 people in favor of Ukraine. In 1993, the exchange evened out, and by 1994 it shifted in favor of Russia, which received a net flow of 139,000 persons from Ukraine.

Non-Slavic migratory flows were also reoriented, and net migration out of those countries to Russia also increased (Table 2.1).

Table 2.3
Net Migration From Non-Slavic Countries, 1992–1994 (in thousands)

Year	To Russia	To Ukraine	Total
1992	487.3	117.5	604.8
1993	556.7	77.2	633.9
1994	760.0	35.4	795.4

SOURCE: State Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation, and State Statistics Committee of Ukraine.

The breakup of the USSR promoted the relocation of peoples from former Soviet republics, but not as much as is generally thought. During 1990-1993, the

number of migrants coming to Russia remained virtually constant (except in 1991, when it was lower). Contrary to conventional opinion, net migration to Russia increased more due to the reduction in numbers leaving Russia than to an increase in immigration. Emigration from Russia decreased, with a sharp fall from 1993. In 1994 and 1995, emigration from Russia was nearly three times lower than in 1990 (Figure 2.2). In 1990, the flow out of Russia into the former republics was 69 percent of the total migratory flow, but in 1994, it was only 20 percent. As we can see, migration within the post-Soviet territory flowed in one direction—into Russia. As a result, from 1991-1995, Russia received a significantly higher influx of people than ever before at the expense of the other former Soviet republics (Figure 2.3).

In 1995, the flow of immigrants coming into Russia noticeably decreased. There is no doubt that the civil war in Chechnya strongly influenced this trend, as young men at or near the draft age (and their families) gave up any plans to relocate to Russia.

Figure 2.3 shows how deeply the migratory trends of Russia are rooted in the past. The disintegration of the USSR did not reverse former tendencies but, instead, very much strengthened them. Migration to Russia, in fact, is greater than the statistics show. Due to difficulties with registration and high taxes on temporary residents in Russia, there are many non-registered immigrants. These non-registered immigrants are not only forced migrants with no status (or wish to be there), but are also immigrants from other CIS countries who are engaged in business and commerce without residence permits.

The fast growth of migration for temporary employment and the continuing improvement of related regulatory measures by state institutions testifies to the pace of stabilization in Russia. In 1995, 141,217 immigrants from CIS countries worked with licenses from Russia, with two-thirds of that number from Ukraine. The number of unregistered immigrant workers was several times higher.

Thanks to better economic conditions, Russia can attract trained, qualified labor from other CIS countries, thereby compensating for its own “brain drain.” In 1993, for example, 5,492 employees from nuclear power stations moved to Russia from Ukraine.⁵ Among the Russians who applied to the Russian embassy in Uzbekistan for relocation in the first quarter of 1994, 38 percent were engineers, technicians, technologists, and software programmers; 17 percent were highly trained industrial and construction workers; and another 28 percent were teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, scientific researchers, artists, architects, etc. Of

⁵*Izvestia*, 11/30/94.

all those who applied to emigrate to Russia, 40 percent had higher education, and 36 percent had special vocational training. At the same time, opportunities to attract a cheap labor force decreased, slowing growth in economic sectors such as coal and construction, where many temporary workers are employed.

We will now review how the overall picture of migration changed for each country of the former Soviet Union (Table 2.4). The direction of migration changed only for the Baltic countries, while the strengthening of previous trends is observable for the other countries of the region.⁶ Data for the urban population shows that all three Slavic countries have a positive migration balance with all the other countries.⁷ The country-level data in Table 2.4 do not balance out due to the differences in emigration beyond the borders of the former USSR. Unfortunately, complete data on migration within the boundaries of the former USSR for CIS countries does not exist.

Table 2.4
Net Migration For the CIS and Baltic Countries Before and During Reforms
(in thousands)

	1981-1985	1986-1990	1991-1994
Russia	926.4	782.9	1468
Ukraine	41.3	198.9	342
Belarus	-7.9	-10.1	86
Moldova	-27.2	-59.4	-101
Trans-Caucasus:			
– Azerbaijan	-120.2	-276.0	-208
– Armenia	-141.2	-133.3	22
– Georgia	-44.6	-52.1	-151
Central Asia:			
– Kyrgyzstan	-76.5	-105.9	-285
– Tadjikistan	-45.5	-113.0	-166
– Turkmenistan	-42.3	-39.1	-20
– Uzbekistan	-205.4	-478.5	-364
– Kazakhstan	-403.3	-481.5	-840
Baltics:			
– Latvia	43.7	33.0	-105
– Lithuania	49.3	48.1	-43
– Estonia	27.9	18.0	-48*
Total former USSR	-25.5	-668.0	-413**

NOTE: *1990-1993; **1994 without Estonia.

SOURCES: 1991–1985, and 1986–1990—Goskomstat of the USSR (State Statistics Committee); 1991–1994—Statistics Committee of the CIS, Demographic Yearbook, 1995; Baltic states—national statistics for each country.

⁶ An exception is Armenia, where a great number of refugees from Azerbaijan in 1991-1994 influenced the overall picture.

⁷ There is no data available for Georgia.

Together with the general trend of movement to Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, an intensive population exchange is occurring in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Thus, Armenia receives population from Georgia and Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan from Georgia. Kazakhstan receives immigrants from all Central Asian countries. This influx amounts to 5,700 net immigrants (1993 urban migration into Kazakhstan from Central Asia), in comparison to, for example, 7,400 net migrants lost in the exchange between Kazakh cities and Ukraine. The most intense flows into Uzbekistan are from Kyrgyzstan and Tadjikistan, but people also emigrate from Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan into Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

Total net migratory losses (the difference between those leaving and entering) of the non-Slavic republics of the former USSR (including the Baltic countries) for the 5 years from 1990–1994 can be estimated at approximately 4 million people. Out of this number, 1 million crossed the borders of the former USSR, and more than 3 million went to Slavic republics within the former Soviet region, including 2.2 million to Russia.

Repatriation

Though the disintegration of the USSR did not cause major changes in the direction of migration flows, the nature of these flows has changed radically. The seriousness of contemporary migratory problems stems not from the growth of migration as from the fact that a significant percentage of migrants are now forced migrants and refugees leaving neighboring states under threat of violence or because of discrimination.

The collapse of the USSR provoked large-scale repatriation, affecting all Soviet successor states. Repatriation was spurred by fears of losing the ability to return to one's motherland, of being left stranded without citizenship, and of being trapped across a border from one's family members and friends.

Families divided by new state borders faced serious difficulties. Increased transportation costs and the enforcement of new visa regulations in some states (particularly the Baltics), and dangerous situations in others (the countries of the Trans-Caucasus, Tadjikistan, and Moldova) limited their ability to communicate. The breakup of the formerly unified currency system limited peoples' ability to provide financial support to family members living in other states.

The most massive repatriation has been that of Russians who were forced to relocate due to war, threats, social stress, and restrictions on rights. The Russian issue is analyzed in detail in other chapters of this book. Here we will only

discuss the overall scope of the phenomenon. Repatriation of Russians varies based on the relative social and political situation. Rapidly, and literally in droves, Russians relocated from regions of armed conflict. During 1990–1994, 1.7 million Russians from non-Slavic republics, or 14 percent of Russians residing in those countries moved to Russia. The numbers from areas of armed conflicts are significantly higher: 42 percent of Russian residents left Tadjikistan (the total loss from Central Asia was 21 percent), and 37 percent left the Trans-Caucasian countries. Against such a backdrop, other losses look quite moderate: the Baltic countries and Kazakhstan each lost 5 percent of their Russians, and Moldova lost 4 percent.

The better economic situation in Russia in comparison with most of the CIS countries has undoubtedly encouraged the repatriation of Russians (Table 2.5). In 1994, repatriation decreased somewhat from the countries with military conflicts (possibly due to the fact that most Russians had already left) but sharply increased from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The rate of increase in people relocating from Kazakhstan in comparison to other republics remains, as usual, the most gradual (4 percent in 1994). However, even a relatively small increase caused a significant growth in absolute numbers of emigrants from Kazakhstan: from 82,000 in 1992 to 234,000 in 1994 (net migration). Thus, even a minor deterioration of the situation in Kazakhstan is liable to turn into an enormous problem due to a huge potential increase in numbers of forced migrants.

The flow of Russians from Lithuania and Estonia has stopped, and it has not increased from Latvia, either, reflecting a shift toward normalization in those countries. More than three-quarters of the Russians who left those republics have relocated to Russia, and one-fifth to Ukraine.

Table 2.5
Ethnic Composition Of Migratory Flows From the CIS Countries and the Baltics to Russia (net migration)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Russians	199.9	117.7	360.1	419.4	612.4
Ukrainians	22.0	-25.9	-64.3	11.0	79.2
Belarusians	19.4	-0.9	-10.6	-5.9	10.1
Moldovans	-2.1	-2.0	-3.0	-	3.2
Lithuanians	-0.75	-0.8	-0.1	0.2	0.4
Latvians	-0.4	-0.3	-	0.3	0.5
Estonians	-0.03	-0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3
Georgians	-2.75	-3.1	0.4	6.1	12.5
Azerbaijanians	-3.9	-3.8	-2.9	4.7	13.1
Armenians	16.1	10.5	23.6	42.7	60.7
Uzbeks	-3.2	-4.5	-2.9	0.3	3.7
Kyrgyz	-1.5	-2.1	-2.1	-1.0	0.1
Tadjiks	-0.4	-0.6	0.5	2.9	3.9
Turkmenis	-0.5	-1.6	-2.1	-1.2	-
Kazakhs	-2.9	-6.6	-10.8	-6.8	1.1
Others	49.3	29.0	69.7	80.8	113.4
Total	288.3	104.9	355.7	553.8	914.6

SOURCE: State Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation.

The overwhelming majority of Russians resided in capitals and large cities, where they occupied a professional niche which the untrained local population could not fill. In time, however, improved education for the native population began to shrink this niche and the Russians were squeezed out. In Central Asia, for example, from the mid-1960s onward, practically all labor market demands in education, culture, and health were met by the native populations. Kyrgyzstan is a vivid example of this; in 1989, of every 10,000 new hires, the shares of Russians and Kyrgyz in the following categories were: scientific researchers and college professors—197 Kyrgyz versus 105 Russians; literature and the arts—129 versus 67; physicians—205 versus 98; lawyers—38 versus 16.⁸ Gradually, employment opportunities for Russians were increasingly limited to industry and construction. Russians continued to maintain leading positions in engineering and in high-level professional fields, so that 60 percent of engineers, and 57 percent of machine tool operators in Kyrgystan in 1989 were Russians. Even in these fields, however, the proportions of natives, for example, steadily increased.

⁸ *Russians in the New Abroad*, 1993, p. 35.

Thus, the exodus of Russians, as well as other “foreigners,” from overpopulated regions was, to a large extent, caused by objective forces, and should be recognized as a rational response to economic demands. This is why a significant percentage of Russians from Central Asia and the Caucasus have relocated and will relocate, even if there is no ongoing war in the region. The question is not whether, but when?

Under normal circumstances, the replacement of “aliens” in the workforce by natives would have taken place through layoffs, resignations, promotions, and death. The repatriation of Russians was encouraged by favorable employment conditions and low competition in colleges and universities in Russia. Precisely because these were “natural” mechanisms, however, the emigration of Russians took place without much fanfare, although it was rapid. The outflow of Russians would have been even higher, if residence permits (*propiska*) were easily obtained in Russian cities and if real estate could have been bought and sold.

The breakup of the USSR and the upsurge of nationalism among the local elite created a situation in which the native population saw still more opportunities to push foreigners out of prestigious positions and in which Russians did not want to stay, even when livelihoods were not threatened.

In 1990–1992, an abrupt change in ethnic migrations took place; all titular nationalities began to leave Russia for their respective homelands, while in the 1980s, it had been the other way around. In the early 1990s, repatriation became the norm in the territory of the former USSR and was not limited to Russians. This is clearly apparent from the data in Table 2.5. In 1993, however, the pattern shifted again in response to new circumstances. Non-Russian populations again migrated toward Russia, so that by 1994 Russia had already attained a positive migratory exchange with every other former Soviet nation. While virtually the entire net migratory increase in Russia in 1992 was provided by Russians, by 1993 Russians accounted for only 70 percent of the increase, and by 1994, 47 percent of the increase was provided by other nationalities. Russians comprised 77 percent of the net migratory influx in 1992, and only 63 percent in 1993 and 1994. Besides Russians and the titular peoples of the newly independent states, many other nationalities relocated to Russia. For example, due to migration, in 1994, Russia’s population increased by 44,400 Tatars, along with 19,000 people from the Volga region, 11,000 from the North Caucasus, and 15,200 Germans (virtually all from Kazakhstan and Central Asia).

These trends may be viewed as evidence of normalization as ethnic motivations for migration become less prominent. Despite the apparent trend toward

normalization of the situation, however, forced migration remains a very acute problem for the CIS.

Rural-Urban Migration

The most striking reaction of the population in response to the collapse of the USSR was the reversal of prevailing patterns of rural-urban migration. This was demonstrated in Russia, where, in 1989, the established migration trajectory turned in the opposite direction and, by 1992, rural areas showed positive net migration from cities (Figure 2.4). But this crisis quickly passed and, by 1994-1995, urban areas increased their population through migration even more than before. The rural areas had mostly gained their increases through forced migrations. This is the primary difference between the situation in the early 1990s and that of the 1980s. Although forced migration is particularly complicated and expensive, from 1990-1994, underpopulated rural regions in Russia gained about 1.2 million additional people in the labor force thanks to migration, which could be a positive factor in rural development.

During 1990-1992, the most vivid symptom of the stressful times after the collapse of the USSR and the price shock was urban stagnation. In 1993-1994, however, an urban revival and an increase in population migration to urban areas demonstrated that, against the backdrop of unemployment in the state sector of the economy, alternative employment opportunities had successfully developed in Russia's labor market.

The stagnation of urbanization and the reversal of urban-rural migratory patterns were common phenomena in the other CIS countries. This is indirectly evidenced by the data showing decreases in urban populations in many CIS countries.

A Migratory Map of Russia

Since the majority of migratory exchanges in the CIS are with the Russian Federation, an understanding of changes in Russia's internal and external (in relation to the republics of the former Soviet Union) migratory patterns is essential.

Migratory changes touched all regions of Russia (Table 2.6). The Volga-Vyatskiy, Central-Chernozem (both beginning in the last century), and Urals (since the 1950s) regions were traditional areas of emigration. In the early 1990s, however, these regions began to receive migratory influxes, mainly to rural regions. This

trend can be observed in all Russian regions except the north and Far East. The magnetic pull of the North Caucasus increased, especially from Krasnodar and Stavropol *krays* (territories), where flows of forced migrants from the Trans-Caucasus and the unstable autonomous republics of Russia converged. As in the 1960s, eastern Siberia again lost population. West Siberia, after a three-year interval, received an influx of migrants. In contrast, both the northern and southern areas of the Far East appeared to be very stable zones of migration outflow. In 1993–1994, as in the 1980s, the Central region ranked first in the number of immigrants.

Table 2.6
Net Migration In Russia By Economic Regions (in thousands)

Economic Region	1979-1988 Annual Average	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Russia	176.7	164.0	51.6	176.1	430.1	810.0
North	4.0	-13.2	-39.2	-45.6	-37.5	-40.8
Northwest	44.3	19.1	-6.6	-3.9	7.4	47.8
Central	98.5	70.8	8.7	61.6	113.2	216.2
Volga-Vyatskiy	-22.5	-1.5	4.6	22.1	26.0	50.8
Central Black Earth	-14.2	23.2	26.3	80.1	91.8	102.4
Volga	-2.1	40.1	33.4	104.4	131.2	167.2
North Caucasus	5.1	78.6	149.5	103.1	143.0	167.3
Urals	-55.8	-23.1	-4.1	36.6	41.3	123.6
West Siberia	81.2	-2.2	-32.0	-8.2	26.3	112.2
East Siberia	4.2	-24.5	-28.6	-36.2	-22.6	-7.3
Far East	33.3	-9.6	-66.1	-150.4	-101.1	-147.8

SOURCE: State Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation.

In short, Russia was divided into two zones—those receiving and those losing population (Figure 2.5). The areas experiencing the heaviest migratory pressure are the southern border zone of European Russia and the Urals, the Central region, and West Siberia. The northern and eastern regions are losing population. One of the most visible changes in the migratory patterns of the Russian population has been the exodus of people from the north. This pattern was observable at the very beginning of *perestroika*, but it gradually increased, with a sharp upturn in 1991.

The northern population had grown quite rapidly and reached 10 million people, distributed more or less evenly between European and Asian areas. There were many inducements attracting migrants to the region, primarily high salaries paid from the state budget. In the new market economy, the highly subsidized enterprises in the north were no longer viable. It was inevitable that such enterprises would have to shed excess workers. In fact, the north lost population very quickly. During 1993-1994, Chukotka lost 22 percent of its population; Magadan, 15 percent; the Koryak, Evensk, and Nenetz autonomous areas, about 10 percent; the Kamchatka and Timyr regions, 7 percent each; the Sakhalin region, 5 percent; and Murmansk and the Komi republic, about 4 percent. All in all, in 1990–1994, the Russian Far North and neighboring areas lost 770,000 people (about 8 percent of the population). Significant population growth was maintained only in the northern region of West Siberia.

The attraction of former places of residence for internal migrants in Russia was apparent during the crisis period. Furthermore, a preference for the southern region of the country, where the living conditions are the most comfortable in European Russia, is illustrated in Figure 2.6.

It is interesting to note the differences between the autonomous republics of the Russian Federation. The republics of Tataria and Bashkiria are the most attractive areas for migrants. Considering the complexity of the nationality issue in Russia, one may conclude that these republics attract Tatars and Bashkirs not only from the other CIS countries but from other regions of Russia. Similarly, the North Caucasus has been losing population due to a Russian exodus, but has been attracting inflows of titular peoples. However, these ethnic-based processes did not affect the republics of the Volga, where the titular populations do not have such a strong preference for their “own” republics.

Russia’s pattern of net migration exchange with the republics of the CIS is fundamentally different from the map of internal migration in the Russian Federation (Figure 2.7). All the regions of Russia, with the exception of the Far Northeast and Sakhalin, increased their populations at the expense of other newly independent states. Nevertheless, preferences for the western and southern, central, and west Siberian regions are clear. By way of contrast, the Moscow and Leningrad (St. Petersburg) regions show an insignificant increase in population. The most important factors in migration flows to Moscow and St. Petersburg, however, are not issues of preference; instead, difficulties in finding employment and obtaining residence permits prevail. As a result, there is a huge number of unregistered immigrants in these cities.

On the whole, Figure 2.7 demonstrates the difficulties which migrants from the CIS face in finding a new place of residence in Russia. They are ready to move anywhere, to any region, even to the north. A possible factor here is lack of information regarding the economic situations in major crisis areas. In any case, the migratory exchange with the other newly independent states partially compensates for the population losses in the east and north of Russia from internal migration. Additionally, it is only at the expense of these migrants from the near abroad that rural regions of Russia receive an increase of professional and highly educated people.

Attempts to explain migratory trends in Russia by the varying geography of declines in production and rises in unemployment yield no visible connection. Thus, the correlation coefficient between positive net migration and unemployment is only 0.22 percent. Moreover, in many cases there is a reverse link. At the same time, a connection between migration and the level of development of the private sector of the economy is obvious. The southwestern part of Russia, particularly along the border, differs sharply from the rest of the country in that it has a more developed private sector (Figure 2.8). It is obvious that there are better opportunities there for making a profit and developing entrepreneurship. It is also clear that migrants moving to the North and East are more likely to become dependent upon the state, and on average, have fewer options for making a living.

Migration From the CIS

The transition to an “open door” policy quickly stimulated migration between the CIS and the rest of the world. But there was no huge increase of emigration from the CIS, as many experts had feared. Over the last five years, officially recorded emigration from Russia has remained constant at a fairly low level, and for many other CIS countries it has noticeably decreased (Table 2.7). Since many CIS migrants obtain education and live abroad for extended periods without registering their formal departure from Russia, official data understate the true picture. But it is clear, nevertheless, that there has been no emigration explosion from the CIS.

Table 2.7
Emigration From the CIS Countries Outside the Borders Of the Former USSR
(in thousands)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Russia	103.6	88.3	102.9	113.7	105.2
Ukraine	95.4	69.0	44.4	48.0	58.7
Belarus	34.1	22.0	9.7	6.9	-
Moldova	21.0	18.2	7.1	6.4	6.5
Trans-Caucasus:					
- Azerbaijan	12.1	6.5	2.9	2.4	2.6
- Armenia	5.2	8.1	7.7	2.2	2.2
- Georgia	6.4	-	-	-	-
Central Asia:					
- Kyrgyzstan	18.0	13.9	14.3	13.5	11.9
- Tadjikistan	12.5	8.6	5.3	2.6	3.4
- Turkmenistan	0.3	0.2	0.8	-	-
- Uzbekistan	41.9	15.5	16.3	18.3	12.3
- Kazakhstan	92.3	78.0	110.1	70.3	113.2

SOURCES: The Economy of the CIS in 1994, Statistics Committee of the CIS, 1995, p. 66; for Ukraine, 1992-1994—State Statistics Committee of Ukraine.

Emigrants who formally declare their intent to emigrate tend to go to either Germany or Israel, and to a lesser extent, to Greece and the United States. In other words, ethnic emigration from the CIS is still strong. The trends in emigration are illustrated in Table 2.8. The table shows that Germans move to Germany from Kazakhstan and Central Asia; people from Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Belarus are oriented to Israel; those from Russia and Tadjikistan move to Israel and Germany; and those from Armenia move to the United States and Germany.

Table 2.8
Migration Flows From NIS Countries, 1990–1993

	Total	Germany	Israel	Greece	USA
Russia	100.0	49.7	34.8	2.4	10.1
Ukraine	100.0	14.5	63.8	-	21.1
Belarus	100.0	1.6	73.9	-	21.9
Moldova	100.0	7.2	76.5	-	14.6
Trans-Caucasus:					
- Azerbaijan	100.0	0.4	80.3	0.4	18.0
- Armenia	100.0	-	4.2	11.3	76.9
- Georgia	100.0	-	-	-	-
Central Asia:					
- Kyrgyzstan	100.0	90.5	5.5	1.3	0.8
- Tadjikistan	100.0	53.4	40.3	0.3	4.8
- Turkmenistan*	100.0	34.5	50.3	2.6	3.9
- Uzbekistan**	100.0	16.9	68.2	3.0	11.6
- Kazakhstan	100.0	91.4	2.1	6.0	-

NOTE: * 1990; ** 1990-1992

SOURCE: Statistics Committee of the CIS.

The populations of the CIS countries may in time get used to the idea of emigration, but free emigration outside the borders of the former USSR is still a new phenomenon for them. However, since the rejection of totalitarianism and the collapse of the USSR, the geopolitical situation for Russia has radically changed, and this has greatly affected *immigration*.

Immigrants are coming to the CIS from countries of Asia and Africa. Three major influxes of immigrants can be noted, differentiated by their goals in coming to the CIS.

- Economic immigrants, looking for income opportunities and employment. These are mainly Chinese and Vietnamese, who stayed after their contracts, signed during the Soviet era, had expired.
- Refugees and individuals seeking asylum from war and other stressful situations, mainly Afghans and residents of countries in Africa, such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Angola, etc. (including university and graduate students who came from these countries to study and are unwilling to return home).
- Transit migrants who are trying to use Russia as a conduit to western countries. Most immigrants to CIS countries do not have residence permits.

These new flows of immigration have raised cautious concern in the CIS countries. Registration of immigrants has not yet been systematized. According

to estimates for the CIS countries, immigration is higher than emigration, but not by enough to cause worry or alarm, despite popular fears of economic competition, increased crime, new, unknown infectious diseases, etc.

Given that the increase in external immigration is taking place concurrently with an unchecked flood of forced migrants from other former Soviet republics into Russia, Russia faces a real problem. Countries which cannot take care of their “own” cannot possibly create normal conditions for immigrants from the rest of the world. But this should not overshadow the positive effects of immigration—the stimulation of communications and business, the enrichment of cultural exchanges, the increase in the market of affordable, mass-produced consumer goods, etc.

Conclusion

Significant changes have occurred in migratory processes during the period of transition to a new social and political system in the former USSR. Migration trends have been subjected to contradictory influences and reflect the complexity of the times. Here we will attempt to summarize these conflicting impacts.

Reactions to the collapse of the Soviet Union are revealed in sharp distortions of migratory processes, disruptions, and even reversals of evolutionary trends, evidencing the enormity of the social shock to which the population of the former USSR was subjected. Indications of these distortions include:

- a sharp decrease in the geographical mobility of the population and in the numbers of migrants;
- stagnation of urbanization and resulting reversal of rural-urban migration;
- accelerated repatriation, reversing many earlier ethno-migratory trends and creating a priority concern for the countries of the CIS;
- expansion of forced migration; and
- asymmetric migratory flows, and prevalent one-directional flows.

The crisis was most vividly revealed in migratory processes in 1990-1992 (with all of the features mentioned above). On the whole, for that three-year period, migration flows became intensively oriented towards returning to one’s native region or titular republic. Opposing migratory flows were asymmetrical, primarily due to this nationalistic orientation. Thus, migration during this period spurred and intensified the disintegration of a previously indivisible labor market of the former USSR.

In contrast, *reassuring trends* illustrating the beginning of normalization of the situation include:

- increasing population mobility;
- re-establishment of previous rural-urban migratory trends;
- a renewed influx of titular populations of other CIS countries to Russia, and a decrease of repatriation from Russia;
- more freedom of movement among the CIS countries and their external neighbors;
- the emergence of temporary employment migration; and
- the strengthening of economic factors as determinants of migration.

The stabilization indicated by the above trends is still quite vulnerable, however. First, these “reassuring trends,” as we call them, can be identified only in Russia at this time, and not in the other CIS countries. Asymmetrical flows still exist and have even increased between Russia and the countries of the Trans-Caucasus and Central Asia. Sharp asymmetry is unusual in normal migratory exchanges between neighboring countries and, as such, speaks to the extraordinary nature of the situation in the CIS. As before, forced migration remains an important problem. All of these issues are evidence of the difficult situation in the CIS, and indicate that the deteriorating conditions in the region may yet worsen.

The CIS countries vary widely in their levels of natural population increase and in labor resources. In Russia and Ukraine, both the overall (natural) and working-age populations are in decline, while the population in the countries of Central Asia is increasing very rapidly. Considering these differences, the resulting migration trends correspond to objective demographic conditions in that people are leaving countries with high population growth to go to Russia, where the potential for natural population growth is very low. Thanks to migration, the rate of population growth in the countries of Central Asia and the Trans-Caucasus has slowed. In a number of countries migratory losses have even exceeded natural increases, causing an overall population decrease. Between 1990 and 1996, the population of Georgia decreased by 7 percent, of whom 11 percent were of working age; in Kazakhstan, the figures were 2.7 percent and 2.9 percent, respectively. A slight increase of 2.1 percent is seen in Kyrgyzstan, of whom only 1 percent were workforce entrants. In Russia, migration compensated for 70 percent of the natural decrease in the population and even provided an increase in the potential labor force of 0.3 percent. Thus, migratory trends in recent years have offset some potential demographic imbalances in the countries of the CIS. However, the effect of these processes

cannot be considered from only one perspective. Other potential, far-reaching consequences should also be considered.

Over the long-term, Russia will show a rapid decrease of labor resources, which forecasts indicate will probably begin after the year 2005. Before that, natural increases in the population will be limited to the North Caucasus, the Volga regions and North Tyumen. As Russia experiences a steady growth in production and investment, it will feel the pinch of insufficient labor resources. It should be noted that all the West European countries face labor shortages, and none of their economies can grow based only on their own populations. All of these countries have, therefore, implemented active immigration policies. Russia will not escape this either. Therefore, the inflow of people to Russia is undoubtedly a blessing and will help to maintain the labor pool. From the long-term perspective, the outflow of people from the countries of the CIS into Russia should be considered a positive phenomenon. The only exception is Ukraine, where the natural decline of labor resources is expected to be more severe than in Russia and where there is no compensatory inflow of migrants. Thus, from the point of view of demographic conditions, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus on the one hand, and countries of the Trans-Caucasus, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, and Moldova on the other, complement each other perfectly. This is a fundamental fact which points to the formation of a united labor market in the territory of the CIS. Russia needs partners in the CIS as sources of labor no less than the CIS needs Russia as a market for its labor.

In forming migration policy, its link to the creation of a labor market within the CIS should be taken into account, even though during the present crisis period the relationship is not immediately obvious. This means that it is important even now to support free movement of labor within the boundaries of the CIS. Institutions regulating population movement should be considering not only customs controls and limits on immigration, but also reworking the regulations that affect the movement of labor. To this end, it is very important to implement a system-wide network of residency permits for different time periods and purposes.

From the point of view of the immediate future, the situation appears somewhat different. Increases in immigration to Russia are taking place against the background of a prolonged and deep economic crisis and a high level of unemployment. Although some highly educated professionals and qualified, hard-working immigrants are coming to Russia, most immigrants are forced migrants suffering from horrible financial and emotional traumas and needing state assistance. Additionally, migrants from the CIS are concentrating in the European, Ural, and West Siberian regions of Russia. Hordes of internal

migrants from the north are headed there, as well. The resulting heavy migratory pressure in those areas increases competition in the labor and housing markets.

With respect to the transitional period, labor and migration legislation should be flexible, and the right to work should not be strictly tied to requirements of citizenship or licenses. Limitations on hiring, just like limitations on residence permits (*propiska*) have turned out to be an obstacle to developing an efficient labor market and have slowed the development of the real estate market, forcing many migrants to live and work illegally.

The countries of the CIS with high emigration are losing the most qualified members of their labor forces: scientific and technical professionals, and highly skilled workers. These losses cannot be quickly compensated by the native populations. These countries will need to lure professionals into their labor forces, including those from Russia, on a contractual basis. Furthermore, easing titular language requirements and liberalizing provisions for obtaining education in one's native language would probably stop or significantly slow the exodus of the Russian-speaking population. The policy of restricting the use of the Russian language contradicts the goal of attracting a skilled and professional labor force. For some professions the only way to get an education is through the Russian system, and without knowledge of the language this is virtually impossible. Poor knowledge of the Russian language will limit options for the local youth to find jobs in Russia in the future and effectively reduce the mobility of the native labor force. This could cause an increase in social tensions, intertribal conflicts, and a deepening of the economic crises in those countries. Clearly, migratory policies in the CIS can and must be developed as a very important component of the overall integration and economic transformation process.

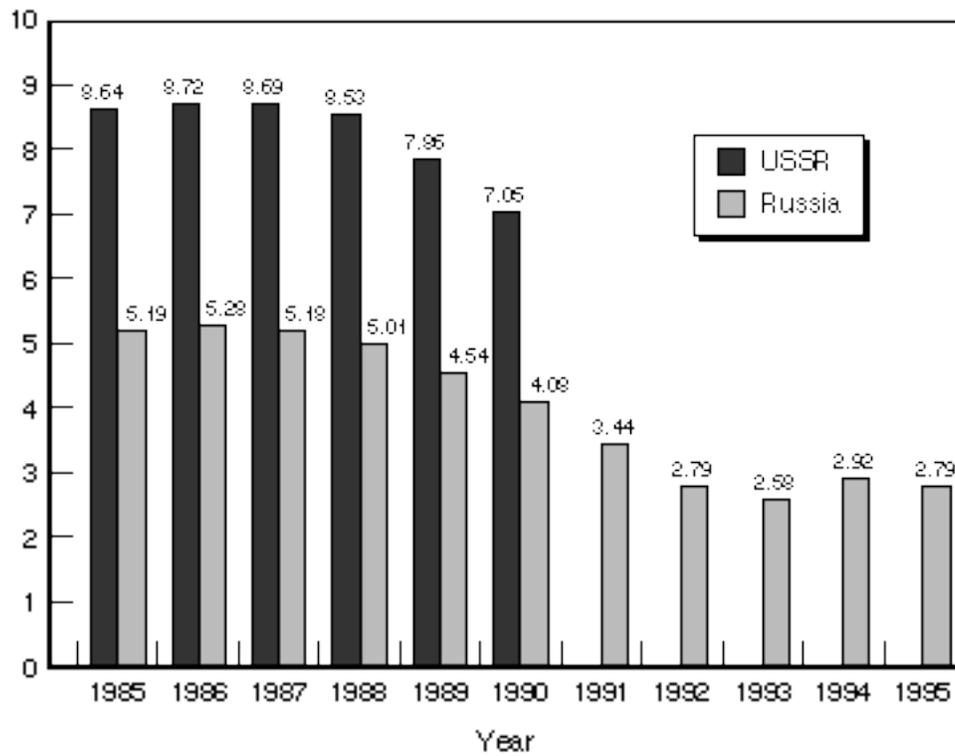


Figure 2.1—Migration To the Cities Of the USSR and Russia
(millions of people)

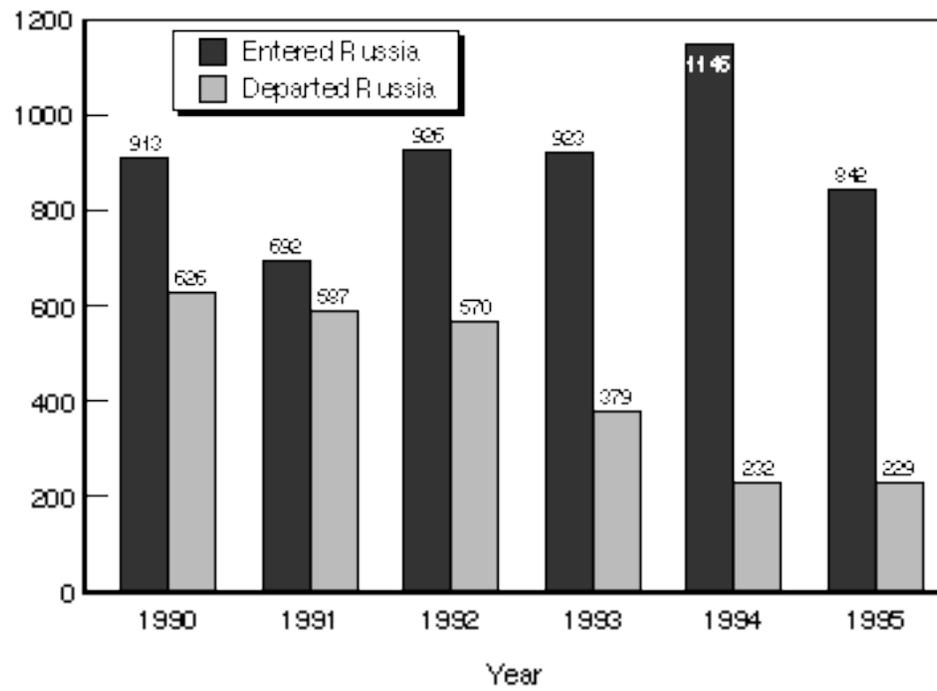


Figure 2.2—Migration Between Russia and the Former USSR Republics
(in thousands)

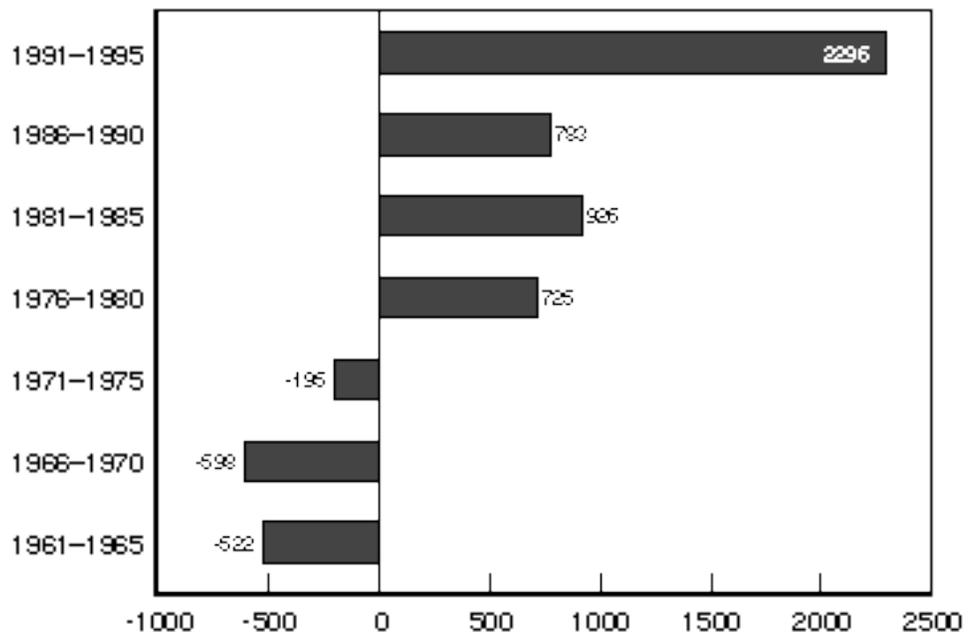


Figure 2.3—Net Migration Into Russia From the Former USSR Republics
(in thousands)

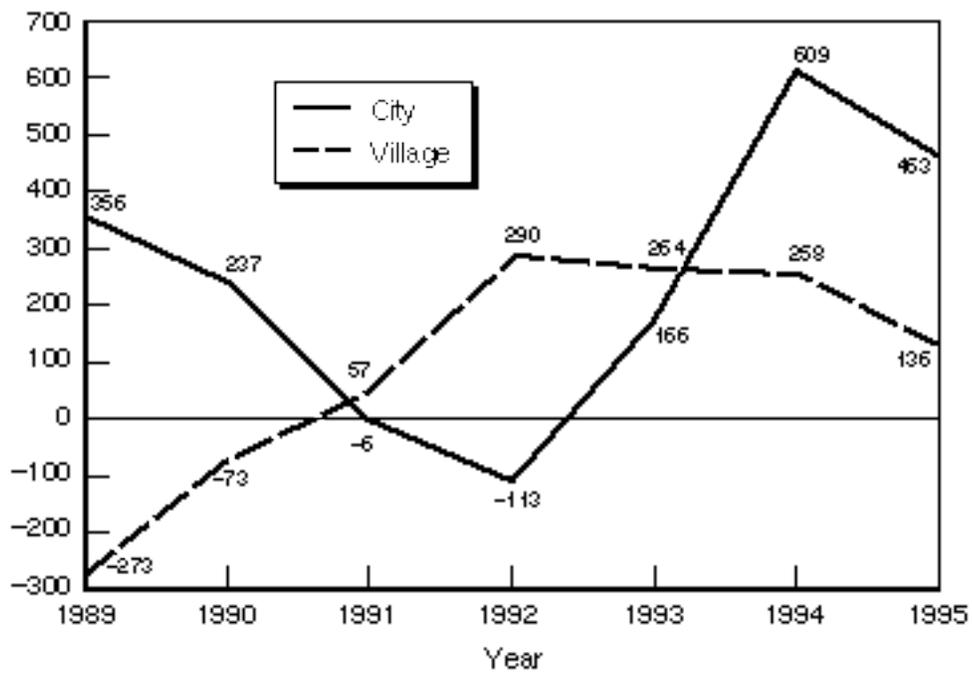


Figure 2.4—Russia: Net Migration To Cities and Villages
(in thousands)

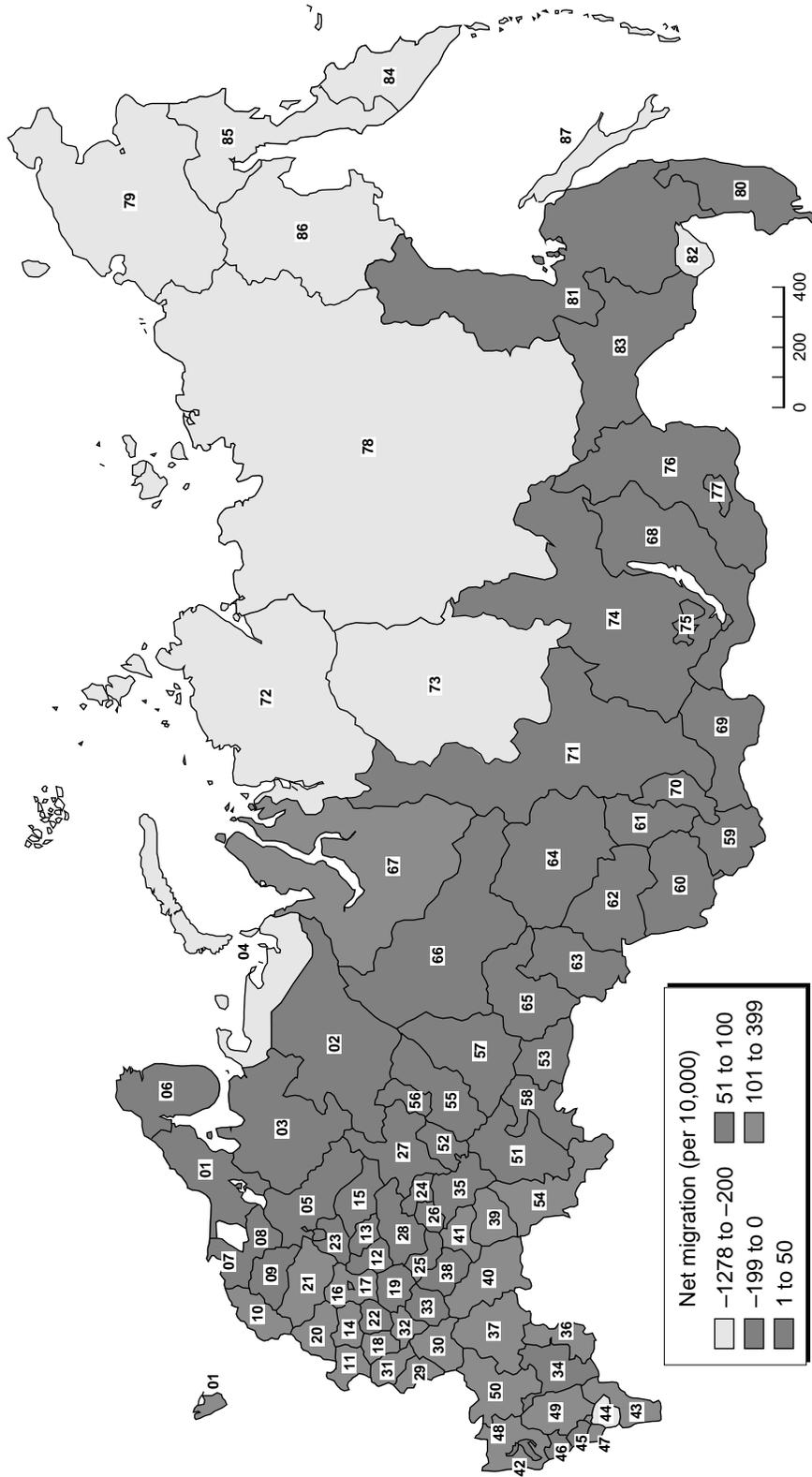
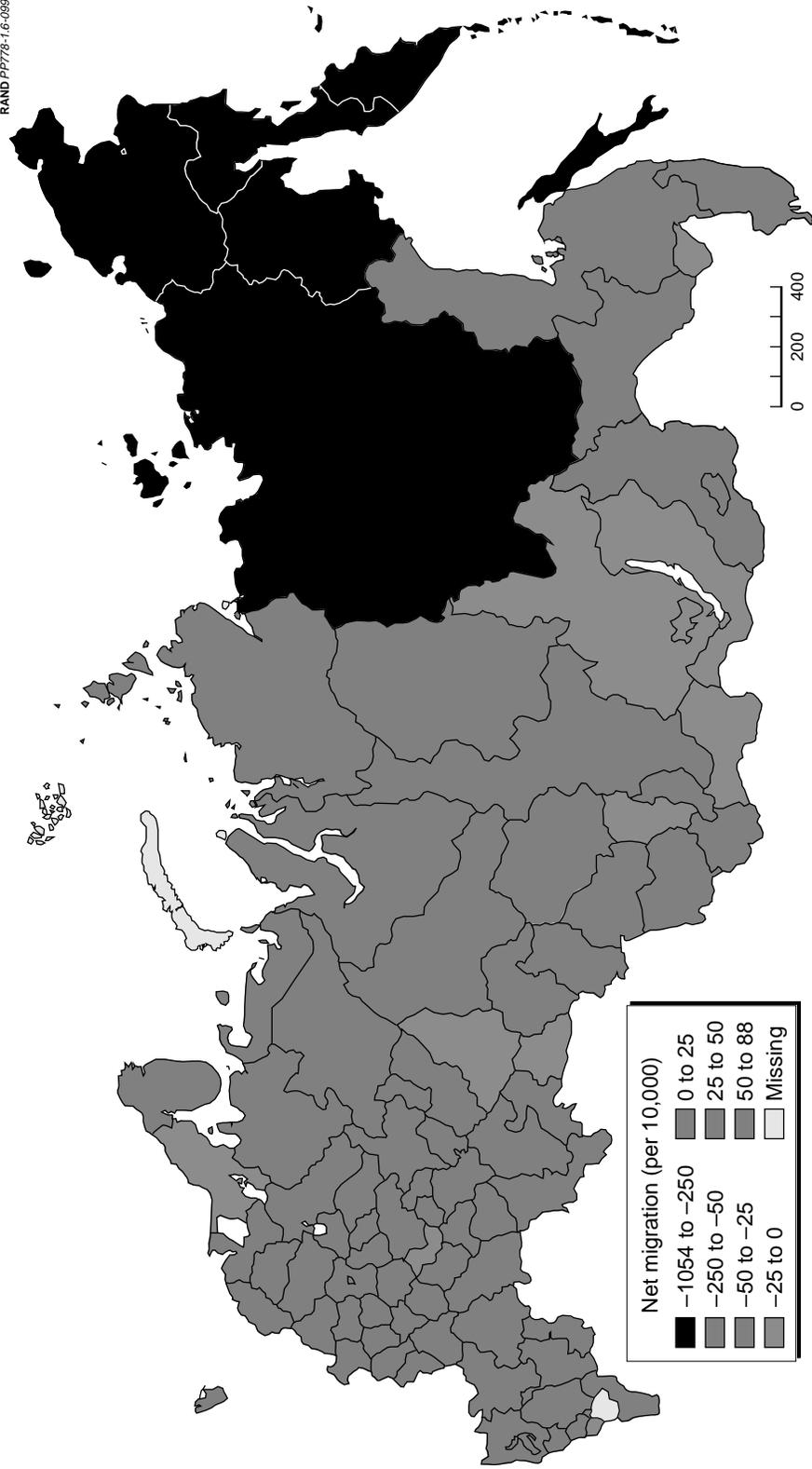


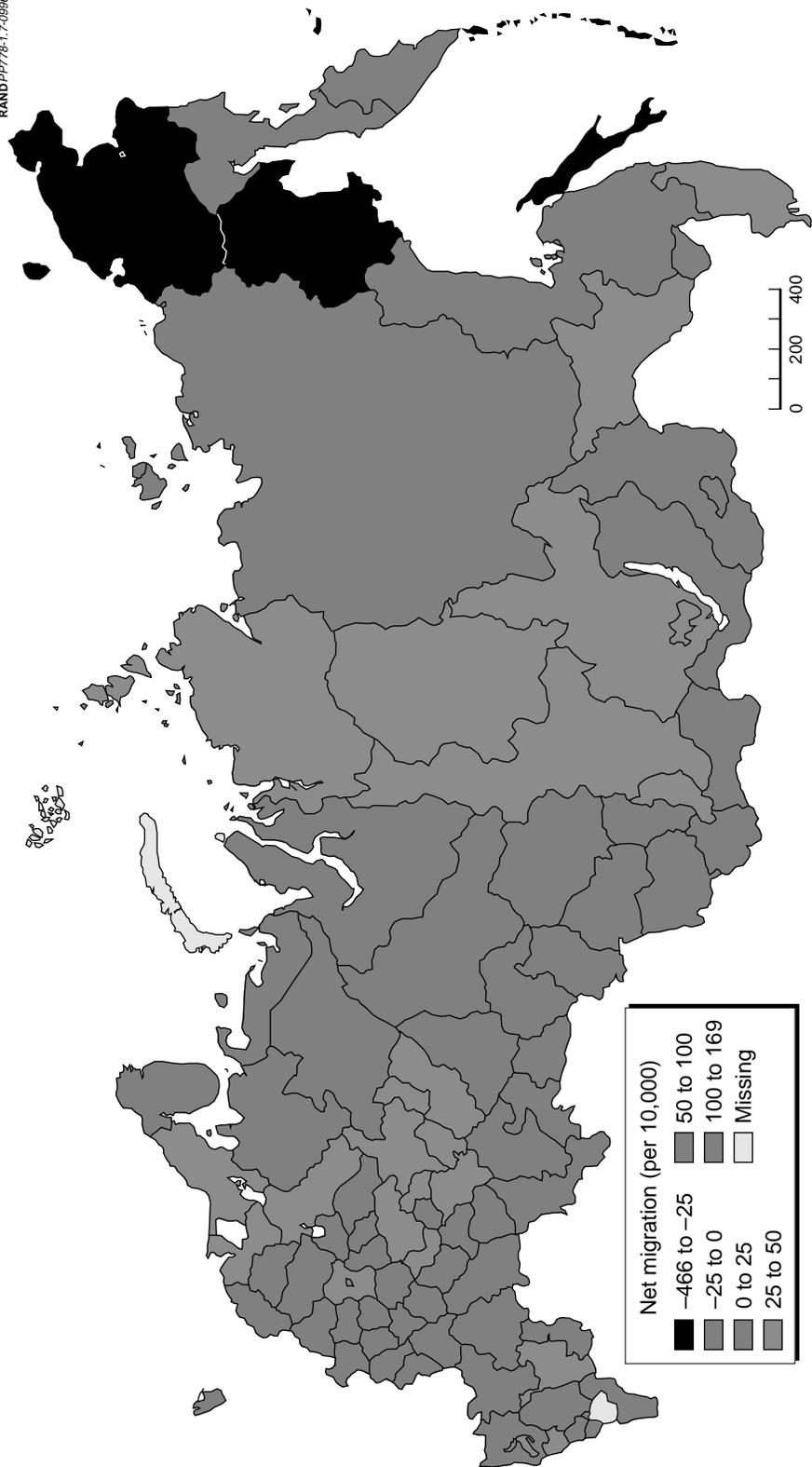
Figure 2.5—Regional Net Migration, 1994, Including Internal Net Migration



SOURCE: Goskomstat RF, 1995

Figure 2.6—Internal Regional Net Migration in Russia, 1994 (Excluding Intra-Regional Migration)

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SOURCE: Goskomstat RF, 1995

Figure 2.7—Regional Net Migration Between Russia and the Republics of the Former USSR, 1994

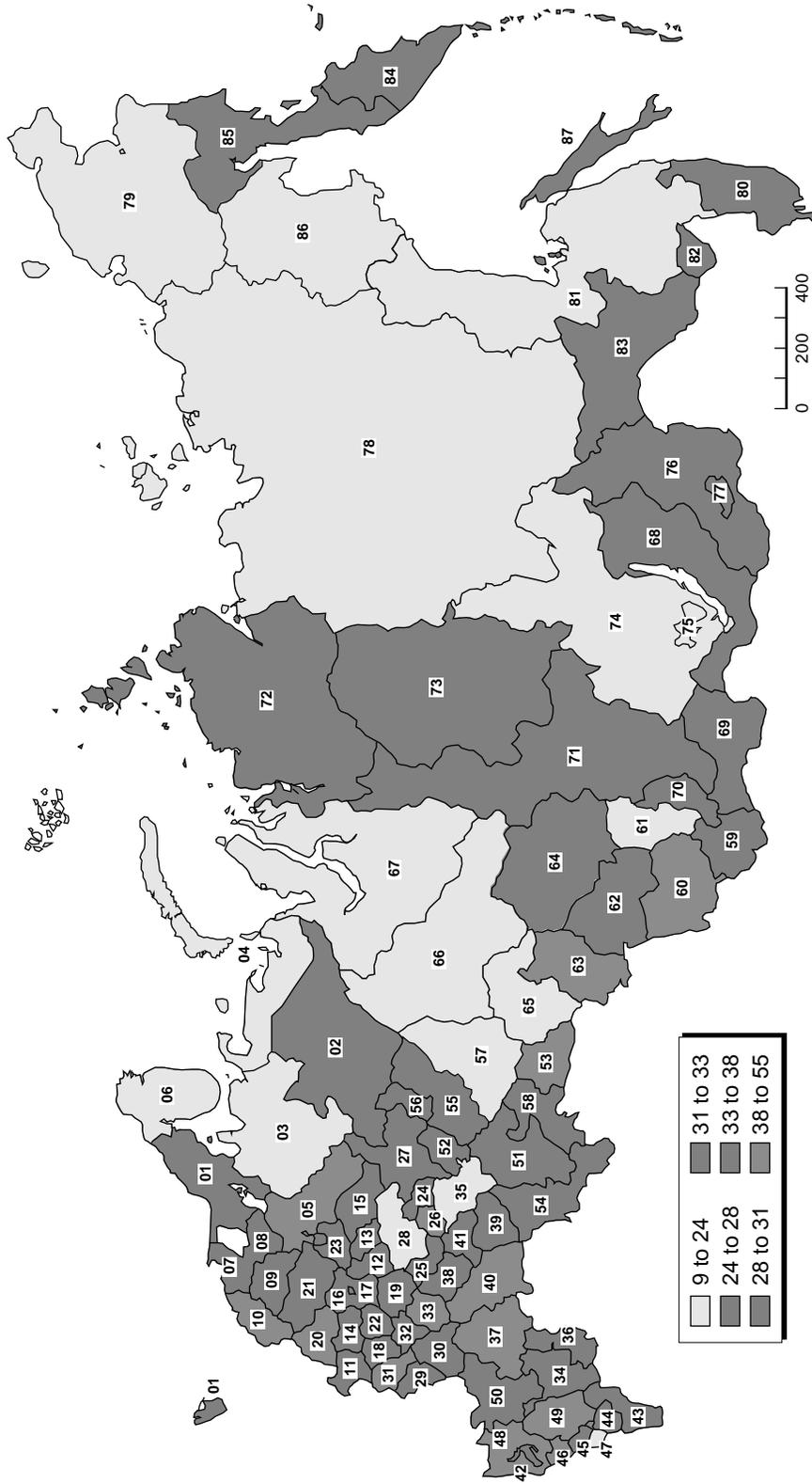


Figure 2.8—The Private Sector as a Share of the Economy, 1994, Percents by Region

