



Evolving migration narratives in Russia

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During a relatively brief period following the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991, Russia evolved from one of the most isolated countries in the world to the centre of Eurasia, one of the four largest immigration systems on the planet (along with those in Western Europe, North America and the Persian Gulf). This shift marked the reversal of centuries-old migration narratives in Russia and Central Eurasia that were based on the country's general isolation and the massive movement of ethnic Russians (both the commoners and the elites) to the ethnic periphery. By the end of the Soviet period, more than 25 million Russians lived outside the Russian Federation. This talk examines Russia's changing migration narrative since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which resulted in a swift reversal of historical narratives. Initially, the new narrative was related to the permanent, primarily politically and ethnically motivated return migration of ethnic Russians to the Federation. It was soon replaced by a new narrative: the massive, mostly temporary labour migration to Russia of citizens from newly formed states in the former imperial ethnic periphery. Meanwhile, Russia experienced the parallel emergence of a third narrative related to a significant flow of elite emigration primarily to Europe and North America. The pandemic and the ongoing invasion of Ukraine since February 2022 could be impacting those narratives, slowing down migration to Russia and leading to the intensification of the elite and other types of emigration (youth, male) as well as the change in the direction of migration flows, including the formation of principally new ones (to a number of post-Soviet states and Global South countries).