

Georgia as an Attractive Country for the Asian Immigrants (on the Example of Chinese Workers and Indian Students)

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Abstract

The paper examines and discusses the socio-economic aspects of the migration of Chinese workers and Indian students to Georgia. It outlines the reasons why Chinese workers immigrate to the country in search of work at the time when Georgian citizens become labor migrants themselves. The paper highlights what attracts them and how they feel in the far-away foreign country such as Georgia. As for the Indians, the labor market of Georgia does not attract them, since usually, the are youngsters interested in Georgian educational space, especially in medical programs.

The hypothesis of the study is as follows: the impact of labor and educational migration on Georgia's socio-economic sphere.

The study mainly uses an analysis method based on the study of the modern situation, documents and empirical material. The basis of source – scientific articles, the press materials and documents published on official websites in the field of cultural policy.

Key Words: Migration, Education, Labour, China, India, Georgia.

Chinese Workers in Georgia

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Over the years, Georgia has had a relatively liberal visa regime, which enabled citizens of more than 100 countries to come, live, work and study in the country without the need to obtain a visa or residence permit(State Commission on Migration Issues Georgia's 2016-2020).

According to the Georgian legislation, an alien has no right to become a member of political organizations operating in Georgia, to participate in their activities or to establish them; and of course to take part in the elections. However, a foreigner, like a citizen of Georgia, may join public associations, trade unions, scientific, cultural, sports and other similar organizations; also has the right to assembly and manifestation(State Commission on Migration Issues Georgia's 2016-2020).

The flows of migrants coming to Georgia are quite diverse - immigrants come from different countries and mainly represent the working-age population. Temporary residence permit data shows that immigrants are involved in a variety of activities, be it education, business, or work.

In terms of global development, international labor migration has a positive contribution to the development of the world economy. It is a well know theory that the world labor market is created by the shift of labor resources from countries where they are abundant, to countries where there is a demand for the additional labor force. The functioning of this market ensures the development of world production and the growth of world co-product.

Labor resources are actively involved in public production through international migration. They find work in other countries if the employment opportunities in their own country are limited. We have to say that often migrant workers contribute to the development of several industries in foreign countries.

Georgia, as a member of the South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEECA) region, is affected by the trends that are characteristic of the region as a whole,



but the immigration processes here have their specifics. In particular, the high dynamics of growth in the number of foreign students and the influx of foreign workers associated with large foreign investment.

Among the recipients of the residence permit for work in Georgia are the Chinese citizens, as well as the citizens of Iran, Turkey, India, and Egypt: the table below shows the number of migrants and its trend (State Commission on Migration Issues, 2015).

Table 1. The Tendency of Foreign Mygrants by Years

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
China	765	1,529	1,803	1,416	954	6,467
Turkey	736	977	806	736	1,363	4,618
Iran	91	786	822	312	211	2,222
India	585	483	396	328	364	2,156
Egypt	16	23	359	348	96	842

Source: Public Service Development Agency

The history of China-Georgia relations began before our era and is connected to the Great Silk Road. It was a transcontinental trade-shipping route, linking China to the shores of the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Our country has historically been linked to China in this way (Zviadadze, 1989).

Georgia started official bilateral diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1992. And for the 28 years, bilateral relations have gradually deepened. However, we have



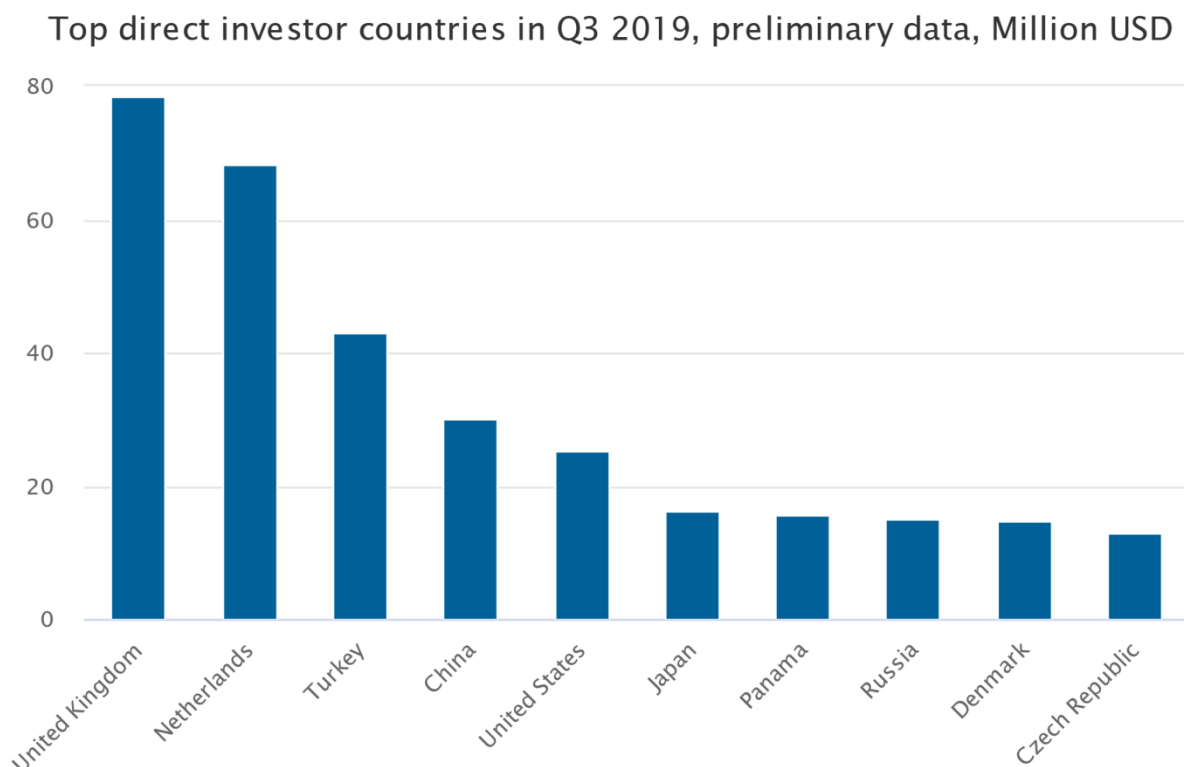
to highlight that this co-operation is limited to economic relations and the main focus is on investment and trade. Bilateral trade has grown significantly since the establishment of trade relations in 1992 and especially in 2010(Larsen, 2017).

The first influx of Chinese eco-migrants to Georgia began around 2003, and most of them had no connection with their fellow large businesses. They mainly flowed from the provinces of Fujian and Zhejiang. The first Chinese stores were opened in Georgia, facilitating the chain migration of the Chinese, with the opening of two shopping malls in 2006 - the Chinese Goods and Lilo Chinese Market, where 100 Chinese service personnel worked. Zhao Zhou, who studies the issue of Chinese migrants in Georgia, said that by 2007, there were more than 700 Chinese in Georgia, 200 of them from Zhejiang. In the same year, they formed the Association of Zhejiang Villagers. The purpose of the association was to strengthen the ties and cultural self-reliance of the Zhejiang natives to help its members integrate into Georgian society, and to advance China and their native province(Zhou,2012). The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia demands that foreign contractors should use at least 70% of the local population while the rest should be foreign immigrants. To follow and implement these policy officials from the above-mentioned ministry from time to time visit and check the working places. Until 2010, Chinese businessmen went to Western countries, as to Georgia it did not attract educated people with strong financial capabilities. Chinese migrants arrive in Georgia due to the existed in their country poverty, here they were satisfied even by minor salary and conditions, the only purpose was to send a small amount of money to their families. From the European Centre for Minority Issues(ECMI's)54 work reports, we find information about the lives of Chinese eco-migrants which say that Chinese lives in Georgia vary, it depends on what they do, whether they are they businessmen or company employees, economic migrants or construction workers. According to their point of view and vulnerability, for example, most of the economic migrants are not interested in integration; they almost do not know Georgian, they know just as much as they need for customer-to-



business relationships. Many find it very difficult to get used to Georgian cuisine and prepare Chinese food for themselves. Chinese families living abroad develop a kind of rule: they send their children born in Georgia to China to be brought by their elderly relatives and raised according to their customs. Most of the 25 Chinese companies operating in Georgia are integrated into sectors such as construction, roads, infrastructure, energy, banking. The Georgian-Chinese strategic relationship has some prospects, but it also reveals the importance and role of sentiments in today's population. Today there is the widespread fear among the Georgian population for the sale/alienation of their land to the foreigners. Here we have to highlight that they are not against the Chinese projects, business, etc. The problem is largely related not to the entry of non-profit foreign companies, but the possibilities of acquisition of their land by the foreigners. The purchase of land without problems for foreigners resulted in the sale of large quantities of land in 2011-2012 (Grigolashvili, 2016). According to the information by data taken from the official website of the National Statistics Office, which is shown in table 2, we can say that despite hindering factors, China occupies the 4th place in a direct foreign investment in Georgia, and it means that country faces a great influx of Chinese workers and capitals as well.



Table 2. Foreign Direct Investments by Countries

Source: www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/191/foreign-direct-investments

Chinese workers employed by Chinese companies face several problems, such as late paid salaries, 20% tax-paying, overtime, etc. Worst of all is the fact that Chinese immigrants sign a work contract before they get real information about working conditions. All these mean that labor rights are not protected as well. Economic reforms in Georgia over the past decade, along with political stability and security, have contributed to increased immigration flows. As we know the immigration has pull and push factors and Georgian pull factors can be count as the relative ease and business-oriented support for foreign investors.



As for the foreigners working in terms of market access regulation, foreigners in Georgia have equal conditions as the local citizens; the only requirement for local employers by the Labor, Health and Social Affairs of social service agency is to give to immigrant workers proper information about in employment in Georgia. It is important to say that foreigners with a permanent residence permit in Georgia also have access to the employment support program and vocational training courses of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

Indian Students in Georgia

The onset of educational migration originates from the development of modern economics, and accordingly, provide adequate illumination of the competitiveness of the labor market. Educational Migration presents a proprietary form of migration, the distinctive meaning of which is the ability of any individual to live in a defined, voluntary, short-term, predetermined time of departure.

Most important is the fact that Georgia became a part of the European educational space after joining the Bologna Declaration countries. At the Bergen Summit in 2005, Georgia officially joined the Bologna Process, thus applying all the standards and requirements of the European educational space to the European space (Sartania, 2016).

The number of Indian students studying in Georgia is increasing every year, and there is a growing competition among students from developing countries for more accessible and relevant curricula. Today it can be argued that the market for Georgian educational services has been established and the highest volume of services in this regard will be provided by higher education organizations.

It is they who contribute to the formation of important streams of educational migration. Competition in this field is increasing, and this is an important role played by the international ranking of universities. However, this alone does not affect the choice of young people.



Besides, other factors, such as the study language, are very important; Quality of education; Tuition fees; Host country immigration policy; Curriculum flexibility; Historical, geographical, cultural and trade relations between countries; Job prospects for graduates in the labor market, etc.

The majority of educational residence permits issued in Georgia over the last three years come to Indian citizens, the table reflects the interest of Indian students in the Georgian educational market for the past three years:

Table 3. The Number of Foreign Students per Year

Country	2016წ.	2017წ.	2018წ.
India	1,449	2,556	4,486
Nigeria	409	254	268
Iraq	386	327	78

Source: Migration Issues Government Commission 2019

Georgian educational space is an area of interest for Indian students. Particularly in the medical sector due to low tuition fees, low cost of living, recognition of the international diploma market, Georgia's participation in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). These are key aspects of the interest of Indian students in the Georgian Medical University. As a rule, getting medical education in other countries is much more expensive than in Georgia, so this area is most popular with foreign and Indian students each year.

Of the foreign students studying in Georgia, one particular group of Indian students was selected in terms of research, as India is geographically distant from Georgia, so the



question arises: How do Indian students get information about Georgia and the universities? Why do they choose medical universities?

The Georgian press often publishes articles in which Indian students value living and learning in Georgia. For example, an interview with an Indian student, Rahulservi:

Why do you choose Georgia?

There are many firms in India which are engaged in so called “student business”, they help students to enroll in foreign universities. When I graduated from school, I also visited one of these firm. I asked which country was good and showed me four or five countries. I had the chance to study in Russia, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines or Ukraine, but I chose Georgia.

Why Georgia?

I saw on the internet that the crime rate was low here. Also, the country was very beautiful. When choosing universities, I stopped at the University of Batumi. In the photos, I saw the university which is at the sea side. I read that Batumi was an attractive city for tourists and thought that there would be no racism or discrimination in a city where many tourists come. I want to add that I am a student only for university, as for people outside the university, they think that I'm a tourist.

Did you have any incidents when you felt discriminated against?

I have been living in Batumi for already three years and nothing has been like that. I haven't heard from my friends either. Very good people live here. What I see Indians are loved here.

According to them, the profession of a doctor in India is a simple and demanding job opportunity. The annual fee for a medical university in India is \$ 3300. At the same time, due to a large number of population, the number of applicants to universities is so high that



they decide to continue their studies abroad. The most important is that they do not have to pass the entrance exams in Georgia, only submitting an education certificate recognized by the National Center for Education Quality.

And most importantly, they did not feel discriminated against even though public relations are very difficult due to language barriers. At the beginning they do not have Georgian friends. They say that it is because only foreigners attend the lectures and do not have active contact with Georgians. The attitude of the lecturers toward the foreign students is also positive. As from a professional view, Georgia has very experienced and professional professors and lectures and everyone is happy with it (Georgia's Migration Profile, 2019).

Georgia is a favorite country for Indian students. They like the environment in which they live and the people they interact with.

According to ISET research, the majority of Georgian higher education institutions use recruitment agencies in Georgia and other countries to attract foreign students.

This information is also confirmed by an online survey of foreign students, according to which 30% of respondents received information about the prospect of higher education in Georgia from similar agencies. It should be noted that according to university officials, the fees for such agencies have increased significantly in recent years, and now reaches \$ 1,000 per student attracted (Kveliashvili, 2018).

63% of foreign students at Tbilisi State Medical University are from India, and a significant number are from Iraq and Sri Lanka. The share of Indian students is also high in other medical universities: 75% at Davitvildiani Medical University, 83% at Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy and 88% at Teaching University Geomeida.

Students at Newwijen University are mainly from India (73%), Nigeria (13%) and Israel (10%), 69% of European students are also from India, and 24% from Azerbaijan.



Students from Azerbaijan are predominantly educated at Georgian Technical University (73%). Iv. Javakhishvili State University 40% of foreigners come to Iraq from Tbilisi State University, the share of Indians and Pakistanis is 14-14%.

36% of foreign students at the University of Georgia come from Iraq, 14% from Iran and 10% from Nigeria. Indian (23%) and Iraqi (21%) students are also predominant at Caucasus International University, with a relatively low share of Turkish students (15%) coming from Turkey (Migration Issues Government Commission, 2017).

Research shows that the interest of foreign students to study at Georgian higher education institutions is growing.

Foreign students make an important contribution to the country's economic development and the development of universities. According to university officials, tuition fees paid by international students allow Georgian universities to make significant investments in infrastructure and technology and to develop new educational programs.

According to the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, 10306 students from 89 countries attended 56 higher education institutions of Georgia in the 2017-2018 school year. Foreign students' total annual financial expenditure reaches 195 million USD, which is 0.6% of GDP and 6% of the export of services (Abuladze, 2018).

Accredited higher education institutions in Georgia have the opportunity to attract foreign students, create a European-level education environment and thus benefit more from enhancing their viability and improving their quality.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data used in the work has shown that the intensification of immigration processes in Georgia, in particular, the constant increase of the international educational and labor migration flows, contributes to raising awareness of Georgia in several countries



around the world. According to the above-mentioned facts, we have claimed that since we have quite a high number of migrants the country can be considered as an important scientific and educational center and a comfortable and profitable country. The dynamics of the annual increase in the flow of Indian students give us hope that not only Indian students in Georgia but also other countries around the world will come to Georgia to receive higher education.

Not less important point is hospitability and safety according to the Indian students' interview they do well in Georgia despite their nationality. They are content with the educational space and population attitudes of their chosen country, which is driving future growth in educational immigration in Georgia. So, it should be highlighted that the country has the potential to become one of the most important educational hubs in the region due to the presence of highly qualified academic staff, and the attraction for foreign workers and businessmen due to the safety and stability.

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