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Sociological approaches to measuring migration potential in the countries of origin and migration pressure on Bulgaria

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Abstract. *The main theoretical elaborations on migration pressure have been analyzed in this article. Its author's definition has been offered and are discussed the possibilities for its study and forecasting. Because of the difficulty in collecting data on the migration potential and migration mobility in the countries of origin, is included the option through the use of various sociological approaches concerning migrants who have successfully crossed the state border, to collect data that allow objective assessment of the migration potential in countries of origin and future migration pressure on Bulgaria.*

Keywords: Migration theories; demographic depression; demographic explosion; FRAN indicators; migration potential; migration pressure; transit migration; migration crisis; migration policy; refugees, asylum; identity; sociological approaches

Over the past few years, the notion of "migratory pressure" has become particularly popular in the mass media – both in this country and abroad. The policies implemented on a govern- ment level with respect to the migratory pressure have already become part and parcel of an increasing number of national and international documents. It is noteworthy that despite its intense use, it is not defined terminologicaly and unlike the large number of empirical studies, the number of theoretical research on the issue remains limited.

There has been such a tendency in Bulgaria, too. The migratory pressure exerted currently upon this country, along with the prognostication that this pressure is going to become even more intense, have made the government formulate the following documents: National strategy in the area of migration, asylum, and integration (2011-2020); National strategy for the integra- tion of persons who have received international protection in the Republic of Bulgaria (2014-2020); and Strategy for integrated border control in the Republic of Bulgaria (2014-2017). In2013, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers adopted a plan to take control of the crisis situation resulting from the relentless migratory pressure upon the Bulgarian territory. In 2014, the Min- istry of Interior produced a report on what steps had been taken by the government authorities to defuse the crisis resulting from the intense migratory pressure. Any definition of migratory pressure is absent in the documents, while its measurement is represented by the number of persons registered as illegally crossed the state border.

Notwithstanding the frequent use of the phrase "migratory pressure", this notion has not been defined yet and, unlike the numerous empirical studies, the number of the theoretical ones is still rather limited. An exception are the analyses made by Bruni&Venturini (in 1991 and 1995) and Bohning, Schaeffer&Straubhaar (in 1991) who managed to develop migratory pressure analysis theoretical models but were not in a position to formulate a definition valid for all types of migration.

On the basis of the existing theoretical methods, as well as of the practical experience gained over the past few years, I will venture here the following working definition of "migratory pressure":

The migration pressure is the result of a started but still unfinished migration and express the impact exerted on the state border by migratory flows in their endeavors to find a way to cross the said border. Migratory pressure indicates the potential and the level of development of the migration process, unless this process is brought under control. The migrants exerting the migratory pressure are part and parcel of the migratory potential of the relevant country of origin, which potential is not allowed to be fully put into effect because of the limits imposed as a result of the difficulties or the impotence of the economic and the social system of the host country to admit and integrate a larger number of immigrants.

We have to bear in mind, however, that any pressure is a consequence of the presence of some obstacles. If there are no such obstacles, i.e. if the movement is free, there is going to be no pressure whatsoever. Therefore, the migratory pressure analyses should concentrate on the different factors that give rise to the migratory flows, as well as on the obstacles in the way of these flows.

The diagram below shows quite clearly the role and the place of migratory pressure in the overall migration process. For this reason, this diagram can be used in the analysis of all types of migration (Fig. 1).

The above diagram makes it possible to examine and follow up all the phases of the migration process starting from forming a migration opinion and making the relevant decision and ending by putting the very migration into effect. This process also has two final phases: of adaptation and integration. One can follow up the individual phases on a micro-level (which involves the relevant individual or his family as a migration unit), on a macro-level (which involves the relevant community or a couple of migratory communities together), and on a mezo (intermediate) level (which is a transitory level resulting from regrouping of the relevant individuals). The diagram also shows clearly the place of the migratory pressure phenomenon, which makes it possible to track out this phenomenon through all the phases – from its very emergence to the actual exertion of pressure in terms of the migrants' endeavors to try and find a way across the national border.

An important element of the migratory pressure examination models developed by Bruni&Venturini and Bohning,

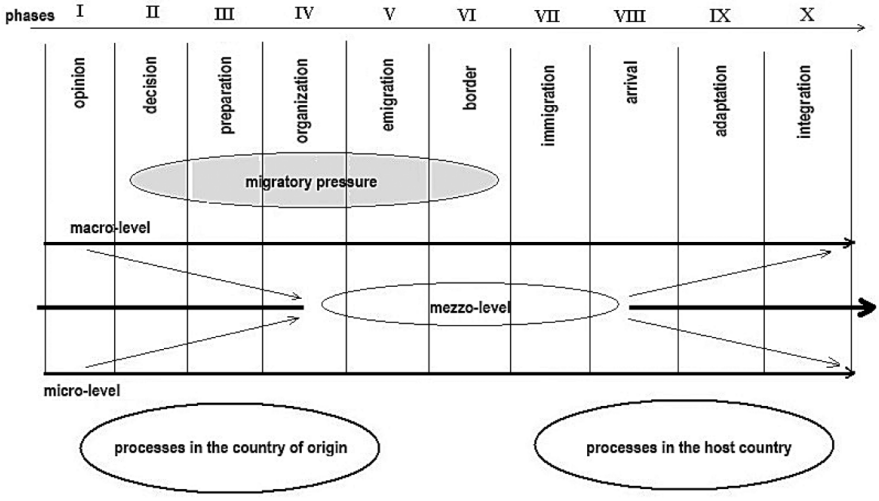


Figure 1. The place of migratory pressure in the overall migration process

Schaeffer&Straubhaar is their finding that the opposing demographic tendencies existing in the developed and the developing countries do not necessarily lead to an equilibrium because this equilibrium is a function of the people's need to work in the countries of origin, as well as of the economic capacity of these countries to provide the necessary number of jobs. For this reason, any sharp increases in the number of potential emigrants in these countries calls for modification of their immigration policies. The very realization of this dependency could help the relevant authorities foresee the future employment problems and formulate policies finding a solution to these problems or bringing under control the consequences of the demographic growth in some countries (usually the countries of origin), as well as of the worsened demographic indicators in some other countries (usually the host countries).

The first migratory pressure examination models, which were developed in the 1980s and the 1990s, were based on the understanding that migratory pressure as a phenomenon involves "exportation" of the work force surpluses in the countries of origin to the hosting countries due to the negative differences in the per capita income in the two types of countries. It was realized as early as that time, however, that the effect of such "intervention" was going to be on a macro-level. For this reason, the studies shifted onto the micro-level seeking there an answer to the question as to why should a person emigrate in certain circumstances and why he will not emigrate under different circumstances. In this context, the analyses centered on the potential migration which was defined as a "work force surplus" in relation to the jobs available or as a "work force surplus" resulting from the impotence of the relevant country's economy to offer adequate jobs. Consequently, it was concluded that, if there were some inclinations towards emigration, the migration potential was going to be transformed into a migratory flow. A migratory flow is a function of some economic and non-economic variables, such as the pay gaps, one's chances to find a job, the size of the particular groups in the countries of origin to which the potential migrants belong (e.g. family or relatives' groups, as well as occupational or some other structures), the economic relations between the countries of origin and the hosting countries, the cultural and the religious preferences of the potential migrants, etc.

The conception of "migration potential" becomes particularly important, if the size of this potential in a particular country or region becomes fairly high. What really matters here, however, are the structural differences resulting from the demographic processes current in some population groups, rather than the differences between the labor supply and demand.

Attempts to more accurately study and forecasting the migration pressure on the basis of the elaborated theoretical models are confronted with the absence or unreliability of some important statistical and demographic data relating to countries of origin. For this reason, the analyzes and forecasts are based on the differences in age structures between sending and receiving migration flows countries.

Specifically for the Mediterranean region it was concluded that the past 50 years had witnessed an unprecedented population growth in these countries. That was the main distinctive demographic characteristic feature that was found between the two Mediterranean coasts, which corresponded, in general lines, to the demographic differences between the North and the South. The demographic growth in the countries along the Southern Mediterranean coast had been due to the formation, during the first phase of life, of increasingly larger cohorts, which were going to determine later the number of population in all other life phases. In the period 1950-1990, the school-age population had doubled in number and the annual flow had increased from 2.4 to 5.4 million. These data indicate quite clearly the problems, which the educational systems of the countries along the Southern Mediterranean coast had encountered, but they also show a constant increase in the number of young people who were entering upon a new, working-age phase of their lives. In the period 1950-1990, the number of people joining the economically active population group had

increased by 138 per cent and the number of people joining the middle-aged group had increased from 1.5 to 3.8 million, reaching an aver- age value of 4.6 million people in the early 21st century.

By 1970, the annual inflows into the school-age population group had been less than 3 mil- lion people in the countries along the Northern Mediterranean coast. Afterwards, they gradually diminished, reaching today a number much smaller than the number registered in the early 1950-ies. What is more important, however, is that, currently, the total number of new inflows into the educational systems of the countries along the Northern Mediterranean coast is half the total number of new inflows into the educational systems of the countries along the Southern Mediterranean coast.

The labor market situation in the countries along the Southern Mediterranean coast has also been deteriorating as a result of the very low level of outflows from the economically active population group. The value in these countries used to be 0.28 in the 1990-ies, while the respective value in the countries along the Northern Mediterranean coast used to be 0.94.

The theoretical migratory pressure examination models have been trying to combine analyses of the demographic and economic processes unfolding in the countries of origin, which have an effect on the emigration pressure. For this reason, the researches on migration potential and migration pressures are carried out mainly on the basis of statistical data on the countries of origin. In calculating the migration pressure on a host country can be used the following formula:

$$MF (i) = \varepsilon (j) \times PM (i)$$

MF (i) is a migratory flow from the country of origin i and PM (i) is the migration potential of the same sending country i, multiplied by the coefficient of propensity to emigration ε to the host country j.

The propensity to emigrate ε to the host country j can be represented by the ratio of current emigration EM from the country of origin i in the host country j to potential migration PM to the same country of origin i.

$$\varepsilon (j) = EM (i \rightarrow j) / PM$$

Weakness of this demographic and statistical approach, especially when we have to work with longer time intervals, is that it will take into account changes in migration practices with delay in time. Therefore, in forecasting future values of the coefficient ε (j), it can be successfully combined with sociological methods for its study. This is especially important in the development and implementation of preventive methods aimed at controlling future migration pressure.

In the case of the Mediterranean, the majority of countries of origin after the Arab Spring entered in the phase of serious social, economic and political crises. The unreliability and limitations of the available statistical data is a major barrier to migration and demographic analyzes. This finding is a challenge for specialists dealing with migration problems in host countries.

To avoid partly this inconvenience, here is offered a sociological model for data collection, the processing of which can be obtained results showing the level of development of the migration process in the countries of origin and hence to draw conclusions about their migration potential and exerted migratory pressures. Here, starting from the fact that some migrants within the migration flow that exerts the migratory pressure manage eventually, in one way or another, to cross the national border "disguised" as either illegal immigrants or as asylum-seekers. It is in this way that the effect of migratory pressure spreads out over the territory of the host country, while immigrants are carriers of valuable information in terms of migration processes in the countries of origin. When registering this type of immigrants, representatives of various institutions involved in the process, establish contact with the immigrant and conduct interviews or questionnaires, the data of which are summarized.

For example, the methodology of European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders

of the Member States of the European Union – Frontex, is based on statistical analyses of the quarterly variations of eight FRAN (Frontex Risk Analysis Network) indicators, which characterize illegal migration, and of yet another indicator that is specially related to the refugee flow analyses (Frontex, FRAN Quarterly – Q3, 2014). The FRAN Member States regularly exchange, once every month, data about the following indicators:

1A – Registered illegal border-crossing cases outside the border checkpoints.
1B – Registered illegal border-crossing cases in the area of the border checkpoints.
2 – Detected suspects having organized illegal border-crossing channels.
3 – Detected cases of unauthorized sojourns in the relevant countries.
4 – Entry refusals.
5 – Number of filed asylum-seeking applications.
6 – Detected documentary fraud in the course of the risk analysis procedures.
7A – Number of decisions made on the refoulement of illegally residing third-country nationals.
7B – Refoulement of illegally residing third-country nationals.

The indicators numbered 1-6 are closely related with the migratory pressure. They indicate the resulting consequences on the basis of how difficult it is to bring this pressure under control. In this context, the variations of the 1-6 FRAN indicators could be used to analyze the effectiveness of the steps that have already been taken to get the migratory pressure under control, but also through additional data collection in relation to parcicular indicators can practically take into account the effects of existing migration networks and other mechanisms. Through the tools of sociology can learn not only these migratory mechanisms that determine migration processes at the macro-level, but also through the development of a system of additional indicators can reveal the attitudes of the individual (micro-level). Their mutual influence can be found by collecting data on the current socio-economic situation in the countries of origin or their separate regions of the expected migration flows. Thus may specify the material conditions of life which surround the potential migrant and affect his mobility. Among them particularly important are: standard of living, economic, demographic, social, political and climatic condition. Confirmation of the same data from the largest possible number of sources (respondents) only increases the objectivity of the migration survey.

Indicators affecting the realization of the migration potential can be grouped into two large groups: economic and social. Their assessment can be done with different economic, demographic and statistical indicators that in one or another way are associated with migratory movements. The most important of them are:

- Indicators of the economic development of the sending country or region;
- Indicators of demographic development of the home country or region;
- Indicators of living standards of the home country or region;
- Indicators characterizing the housing affordability;
- Indicators characterizing the regional labor market;
- Natural climatic and environmental performance;
- Indicators of socio-political stability;
- Cost of migration (material costs associated with migration);
- Indicators for migration from previous years.

It should be borne in mind that ultimately the decision to migrate depends on the characteristics of each individual, of its values, interests and needs. Only this can explain why under the same environmental conditions, individuals take different decisions regarding the appropriateness of migration. I.e. migration decision is the result of the interaction of the individual with the environment. The role of the intermediary is assumed by existing migration mechanisms, offering different options based on the available information on each host countries and the living conditions in them.

For the assessment of migration attitudes and specify the migration potential can be used next a system of indicators:

1) Sustainable attitude to migration:
   - Availability of migration attitudes;
   - Migration reference points;
   - Migration expectations.
2) Migration motivation:
   - Economic motives;
   - Social reasons;
   - Professional reasons;
   - Political motives;
   - Ethnic and religious reasons;
   - Forced migration.
3) Migration experience and its intensity:
   - Existence of previous migration experience and its intensity;
   - Presence of migratory experience in families of relatives and friends;
   - Availability of information channels for transmission of migration experience;
   - Existence of migration structures.
4) Perceptions about living and working conditions in the region.

The proposed sociological approach for study of migration creates an opportunity to collect from immigrants important, including and missing migration information on countries of origin and thus can be specified as the volume of migration potential and strength of the migratory pressures. The diversity of the collected information shows that it is a complex multi-dimensional concept, where the study of migration mobility of the population and its determinants is defined from social and professional status, citizenship and education, and also the influence of personal attitudes and preferences of the potential migrants.

Such sociological approach can complement the demographic migration analysis. If in general the migration potential is seen as surplus of workforce that resulting from the inability of the economy of the country of origin to offer adequate work, it is known at the time of the three major countries of origin of illegal migration to the Balkans and Bulgaria.

For the period from 1980 to 2010, i.e. for a period of 30 years, the population of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria has doubled and during the period 2000-2010 the population aged 15-64 in the three countries increased by 15 million people. This had exerted an enormous pressure on the labor markets and as the economies of these three countries had not managed to provide the necessary number of jobs, this had generated the migratory pressure that we are witnessing today. According to the data of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the total number of those who left these countries by the end 2014 is about 7 million people and in 2015 we can be assumed that it is realized about 50% of their previous migration potential.

When prognosticating the future migratory pressure upon Balkans and Bulgaria, however, we will have to examine the functioning of the migration networks that have been established by the immigrants or refugees that have already settled in one country or another, in addition to the demographic and economic analyses that are being made of the current processes unfolding in the three main countries of origin (Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq). Because these networks tend to "hand down" to their relatives and friends the migration experience they have acquired, thus providing them with the necessary information of how to reach and cross the Bulgarian border. This task can only be accomplished with the tools of sociology.

Notwithstanding the current ambiguity about the exact number of the Syrian population, caused by the political crisis and the armed conflict, on the basis of the UN predictions about the age structure of this population over the next 10 years, one could predict that another 4.7 million people are going to join the economically active population group as these people are currently school-age children or adolescents. During the same period, the group of the working- age population is going to be definitely left by 1 million people. Thus, we get a difference of some 3.7 million people who are not necessarily going to appear on the labor market. For example, only some 20 per cent of the Syrian women are employed. Given the situation, some 2.2 million Syrian citizens are going to look for jobs over the next 10 years, and, if they do not find jobs in Syria,

they will have to leave the country. Bearing in mind the serious nature of the civil conflict in Syria, of the world economic crisis, and of the global tendency towards longer and more frequent dry spell periods, nobody can come up with a favorable prognosis about Syria's future economic development. Therefore, we could assume that, by 2025, there is going to be an annual emigration pressure in Syria involving some 220 thousand people. And, should the current trends be preserved, we could expect that some 45 per cent of these people (about 100 000 persons) are going to set off on the Eastern Mediterranean migration route towards the EU, which goes via Bulgaria.

The situation is very much similar in respect of Afghanistan, the next significant country in terms of exerting migratory pressure upon Bulgaria. By 2025, 7.2 million people in this country are going to join the working-age population group for the first time in their lives. At the same time, 1 million people are going to leave this group for good. Thus, we are left with a difference of 6.2 million people out of which 4.3 million are going to look for employment. The potential annual emigration pressure is going to involve about 430 thousand people. And, if the current trends should be preserved, 84.2 per cent of these people (about 360 000 per year) are going to set off on the Eastern Mediterranean migration route.

The information about Iraq is as follows: by 2025, some 7 million people joining the eco- nomically active population group and 1.2 million people leaving permanently this group. Out of all the people who have joined this group, some 4.1 million are going to need new jobs. This is going to keep the intensity of the current migratory pressure and could even make it more intense. The emigration flows could reach an annual number of some 400 thousand people who, if keeping the standard practices, could follow in the footsteps of their predecessors along the Eastern Mediterranean migration route.

Of course, all these prognostications are rather conditional but they reveal the actual potential of the future migratory pressure, part of which is going to be exercised upon Bulgaria, too. To forecast more accurately its future parameters, by using the proposed sociological method can gather data on the propensity to emigrate ε in Bulgaria or any other country subject to migration pressures. This will allow adequate, rational and timely management of resources necessary for the controling of migratory pressure.

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