

Migration aspirations & decisions: A comparative study of Turkey and Ukraine

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Abstract

Our paper analyses the intellectual perspectives of international migration based on its biases and underdeveloped aspects. We employ the empirical data from the survey questionnaire conducted in Turkey and Ukraine within the framework of the EU-funded EUMAGINE project with over 8.000 respondents. The aim of the research was to determine how Europe is perceived from outside the EU, and how these perceptions affect migration aspirations and decisions of potential migrants.

We assess the impact of demographic, structural and socio-cultural determinants of migration expectations, and draw the prospects for future studies on non-economic determinants of external migration.

Our main findings show that potential migrants can be divided into two streams of “euro-optimists” and “euro-pessimists” depending on such factors as social background, human and intellectual characteristics as well as other factors.

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1. Introduction

International migration represents a multi-faceted phenomenon with links to a plethora of areas. In the recent years, geopolitical and economic changes in many countries including the countries of the former Soviet Union as well as the other economies in transition gave rise to the new approach to the external migration. Within this context, Turkey and Ukraine represents a particularly interesting example worth studying.

Although there are vast disparities between Turkey and Ukraine that does not allow drawing straightforward comparisons, there are some common social and economic characteristics that allow for a cross-national comparison. This comparison can be implemented to deal with ethnocentrism and supranational laws. Nevertheless, there

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is a certain similarity in the social situation which provides justification for the topic of research. Both Turkey and Ukraine belong to the least successful countries in terms of socio-economic development in their respective geopolitical regions which leads to the shift of labour force from the poor countries to the wealthier ones. There is one more similarity between Turkey and Ukraine, which is the focus on the external migration to the European Union countries.

The geopolitical, civilizational dimension of the problem has been widely discussed in political and media discourse since the conflict began, with the formal basis of the refusal of the European integration policy by the Turkish and Ukrainian governments in favour of “islamisation”, in the case of the former, and integration in the post-soviet space, in the case of the latter.

The recent history of Turkey and Ukraine is replete with examples that confirm the verdict of Samuel Huntington: both countries belong to the group of so-called “torn countries” (Huntington, 1993), characterized as the one, on whose territory lies on the boundary between different ranges of civilization (between “Western” and “Eastern” worlds). Often these synthetic formations appear as the result of a voluntary way of establishing political boundaries after a military conflict (in this case, a border is drawn in the place where “the tanks stopped” and political association includes groups with a long history of hostility or significant socio-cultural differences, problematizing national solidarity and / or post-authoritarian democratization), or after a relatively peaceful distribution of spheres of influence or control between powerful political actors.

Our paper examines the methodological positions and gaps scientific discourse of external migration, as well as proposed, the scheme proposed research and its approbation on the basis of empirical data of two countries - Turkey and Ukraine. Under the social dimension of migration processes we mean a system of social dispositions and attitudes that determine the migratory behaviour of the population and the associated knowledge, perceptions and actions.

In this paper, we will consider the existing theoretical approaches to international migration, outline the theoretical and methodological foundations of the research paradigm, provide the most complete overview of the social dimension of external migration, examine methodological issues of trans-national migration, as well as present the empirical results of applied trans-national study. The empirical material on the basis of which approbation research schemes will be made originates from the research database of the EU-funded EUMAGINE project.

2. Literature review: theoretical and methodological concepts

In research literature on external migration there are functional and structural streams. The functional stream represents neoclassical macroeconomic and microeconomic approaches. The macroeconomic model regards labour migration in the context of economic development (Ranis & Fei, 1961). We employ the model that comprises methodological individualism and assumes that individuals make rational decisions that increase their utility based on the overview of market conditions. When it comes to migration, one can see that people migrate as a reaction to the difference in “attainable” well-being in “their” and “foreign” economic systems (Goss & Lindquist, 1995: 320).

In line with this approach, external migration is stimulated in particular spatial differences of supply and demand for labour. Each economic system is characterized by its unique specifications such as the degree of balance of labour and capital. The loss of balance stimulates migration. Mainstream course is a stream of relatively underdeveloped countries with relatively low levels of “attainable” well-being in relatively highly developed countries, as well as from rural to urbanized areas. The model predicts that the flow at some point meets the needs of the market and the characteristics of the economic systems are aligned. At some point comes the return of the labour force, spatial inequality equal. Thus the dynamics of migration processes is a “wavy” string of loss of balance and renewal of capital and labour, and migration has clear positive aspects, in particular in connection with the further training of labour sending countries, as well as in connection with the involvement in the economy of additional funds and innovative technology. In terms of methodology, the parallel can be drawn with the structural and functionalist paradigm in sociology with its idea of a revolving balance and social system as a well-functioning, even perfect, mechanism. Accordingly, the weaknesses of the model relevant methodological weaknesses close structural functionalism.

In the literature, one can find a wide range of criticism of the model described above. For example Massey (1993) points out that international migration, and migration from rural to urban areas has increased over the

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