

THE IMPACT OF GROWING IMMIGRATION FLOWS ON THE ROMANIA'S SOCIETAL SECURITY ISSUES¹

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ABSTRACT:

Societal security focuses more on individuals as human beings rather than on state sovereignty. It is seen as a reaction for the recent global developments suggest the need for another definition of national security that includes resources, environmental and demographic issues. According to this paradigm, states can be made insecure by virtue of threats to their societies. One of the new threats refers to growing immigration flows. In the last years, in Romania, there has been a rising in irregular migration flows and this aspect cannot be ignored neither by society or the Romanian authorities. A question that will remain unanswered is the future Romanian State capacity to offer a certain minimum level of income or subsistence independently if the social actor works or not (immigrants included). Another important aspect is the State's capability to deal with the "foggy immigrants" looking for welfare in Romania or elsewhere. The article will present the latest dynamics in the immigration flows in Romania affecting some of the most important societal security issues.

KEY WORDS: (societal security, immigration flows, Romanian society)

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the implications of migration on national stability in Romania and Eastern Europe by employing a societal security concept. During the last seven years (since Romania is a part of the European Union), cooperative efforts have been made between Romania and the European Union, including countries such as Greece and Bulgaria to control national borders and immigration. From a national security point of view, the question of immigration has produced cooperation rather than conflict among Romanian authorities and East European countries. By contrast, human security discourse has focus on growing security threats such as corruption, organized crime, human not only in the receiving but also in the sending countries (Moldavia and Turkey especially). In general, cooperation is growing at the inter-state level, while instability is increasing at the society or

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sub-state levels, and Romania is making no exception. In this case we could ask ourselves what are the implications of this contradictory development?

The specific geographic position of Romania imposes a dense network of contacts and agreements with other East-European countries, especially in the Balkan Peninsula, which have become essential for effectively facing the smuggling/trafficking of illegal immigrants.

Moving on, I can not dwell on some peculiar aspects of the immigration and societal security. During this long period, in which Romania is struggling to recover from the economic crisis, major concerns relate to the workplace. This is understandable, especially among immigrants, of which a significant number, with the ending of the job contract, have also lost the legal right to stay in Romania. Even in a situation so precarious it is necessary to pay attention to the social security system. Due to the global economic changes (like the economic crisis) the reinforcement of immigration laws are likely to contribute to perpetuating irregular migration flows and this aspect cannot be ignored neither by society or the Romanian authorities. An effort is therefore needed to find ways of measuring not only legal migration, but also „real” immigration flows in Romania.

Unlike the critical Copenhagen School, more conservative and conventional scholarly work has argued that non-traditional threats to national security may either arise due to natural adverse circumstances or be deliberately created by adversaries. Migration can thus become a serious challenge or indeed a security threat. However, the empirical cases are fairly limited and do not render this claim generally compelling. The Copenhagen School rejects such argument altogether and advances the proposition that security threats may be constructed for political purposes: governments will declare certain areas to be vital to their national security and thus „securitize” them,³ without such shifts in focus necessarily corresponding to objective empirical facts. Thus „securitization” may taint the language, ideology, and policy constructed to manage a certain policy domain, preclude the perception of alternative pathways and lead to the viewing of the policy domain through a tainted lens.⁴

In addition, Buzan, Waever and de Wilde provide a three-pronged classification of societal security threats, consisting of migration, horizontal and vertical competition, the former referring to demographic changes caused by (im)migration and the latter two specifying competitive pressures from dominant groups or from integration processes respectively.⁵

The role of the individual on the one hand and the role of the government with the subordinate collective institutions on the other hand. In this case the individual is the immigrant that from the very start of its entrance on the Romanian soil has the right of social and societal security from the State’s authority. In the late years there’s been a shift in the individual attitude about what the State should offer in response to the societal security. In public opinion’s eyes the State is sovereign over the use and the impact the term “security” might have, societal security included.

Private market failed to provide several important services even for the Romanians, as for immigrants the reality is even worse (many of them don’t have the money they need to access private healthcare insurances and service).

The focus areas of the societal security include:

- Security management systems;

³ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Morten Kelstrup, Pierre Lemaitre, *Identity, Migration, and the new Security Agenda in Europe*, (London: Pinter, 1993)

⁴ Georg Menz, *The Political Economy of Managed Migration*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 39

⁵ Buzan, Waever, Kelstrup, Lemaitre, *Identity, Migration, and the new Security Agenda in Europe*, 121

- Healthcare security;
- Border security (people changing borders with dangerous goods, illegal immigration);
- Chemical, biological, nuclear (crisis management);
- Conflict management capabilities (including the State's capacity to manage an ethnic conflict);
- The State's capacity to ensure the welfare for its citizens (social protection, access to the labor market etc.).

A good example of the cooperation policy around border control regards the immigrants directs towards the Schengen Area between Romania and Hungary. Immigrants can be perceived as the "common enemy" for both the border police institutions, the Romanian and the Hungarian one. But this "enemy" is not sufficient for ensuring a successful cooperation. Romania's starting-point is decisively disadvantageous. Adjustments and structural reforms are necessary from both sides for the full implementation of the Schengen acquis, but the course is still long for Romania. Human resource and technical imbalances are as much determining factors for interaction as the prevailing cultural, social and work-ethic differences.

The early actions towards what could be a first step in a process of "immigration reform in Romania" make the results difficult to quantify. This is because it really depends of the assumptions (predictions) as to how reformable is the impact of immigrants in Romania. Generally speaking, if we look at the social aspect of the societal security, more immigration is good in the near term (immigrants contribute to social security before they withdraw the benefits), in balance people that come into the social security systems are new and tend to put more into the social security system that they are projected to receive.

The often somewhat hysterical tone and nature surrounding immigration in Europe may appear perplexing to an outside observer. It seems unsurprising that this prosperous and in parts economically dynamic subcontinent with generally high standards of living would appear attractive to newcomers. The wage gap between the northern and the southern shore of the Mediterranean exceeds 1:20. The income between Germany and Poland (roughly 1:8). Moving further east and outside of the realms of the EU, the wage and income gaps become even more starkly pronounced and obvious "push" and "pull" factors become visible.⁶

The key problem for studies considering the impact of migration on the native employment rate is that of endogeneity. For example, a negative correlation between the native employment rate and the migrant stock is consistent with the hypothesis that migrants reduce the native employment rate, but also consistent with the hypothesis that migrants move to regions with lower employment rates. It is therefore difficult to measure the impact of migration on the native employment rate accurately.⁷

Overall, sources of new employment opportunities will remain scarce and diverse, adding to the complex picture on the labor market in advanced economies. The current situation of high uncertainty makes firms reluctant to open vacancies or to hire workers even if they have an open position. New employment opportunities are mainly generated in sectors that have not experienced a jobs crisis before.⁸ In these case immigrants have less

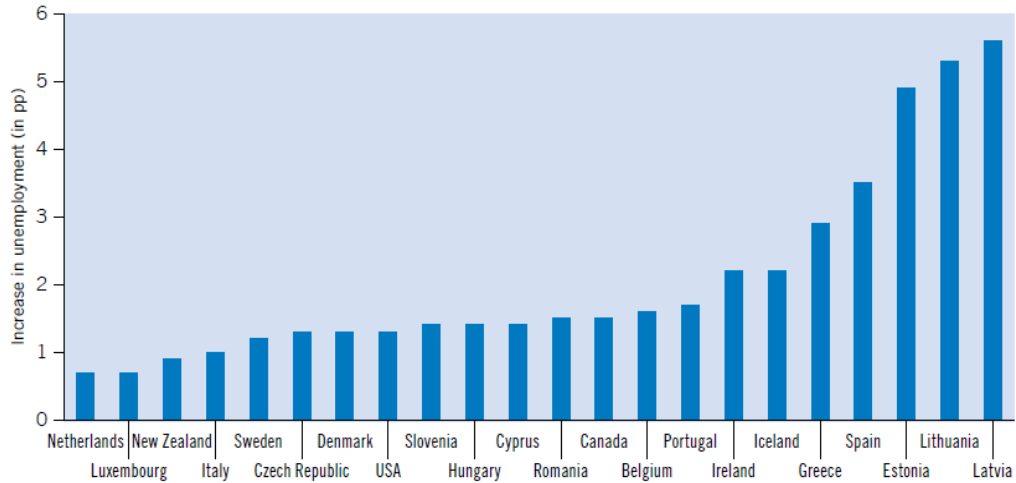
⁶ Menz, *The Political Economy of Managed Migration*, IX

⁷ Migration Advisory Committee, *Analysis of the Impact of Migrations – 2012*, 62, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257235/analysis-of-the-impacts.pdf, accessed 10.03.2014

⁸ *Global Employment Trends 2013*, 54, available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_202326.pdf, accessed 19.03.2014

opportunities to enter in the legal framework of the labor sector pushing towards the informal/illegal labor sector without any contribution to the social tax support of the Romanian economy; as Figure 1. presents the unemployment rate is maintaining itself high. Figure 1.

Trend unemployment has increased (2011 vs. pre-crisis)



Note: The figure displays the increase of trend unemployment between 2011 and pre-crisis trends based on the estimation of a crisis-induced shift of the Beveridge curve (i.e. the relationship between vacancies and unemployment). The shift is measured at an assumed average level of economic activity, reflecting neutral business cycle conditions. Only countries for which the crisis effect on unemployment was statistically significant have been displayed.
Source: ILO calculations, see Appendix 1 for methodological details.

Source: Global Employment Trends 2013⁹

In Romania, the maximum number of work authorizations is fixed by a governmental decree. In light of the economic downturn, the Romanian government has reduced the quota for work authorizations every year since 2009.

In the first five months of 2012, the number of asylum seekers increased by 166% compared to the same period in 2011, but the absolute number remained low (1 200). The main origin countries of asylum seekers were Algeria, Morocco and Afghanistan. The increase in the number of asylum seekers was mainly due to new rules in 2011 which regard asylum seekers' rights. First, Romania now provides accommodation to those having no access to material/financial resources.¹⁰

Furthermore, the General Inspectorate for Immigration took measures in order to increase the capacity of receiving and processing asylum seekers, by strengthening the co-operation with the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations and the Romanian Red Cross. In order to combat illegal immigration, in 2013, the General Inspectorate for Immigration took 4584 measures, 660 of this measures were actions in common share with other institutions and 1658 by the institution itself. As a result of the control measures were found 2318 illegal aliens on the Romanian soil.

The main countries of origin in 2013 were:

- Turkey – 353 illegal migrants
- Moldova – 267 illegal aliens
- Siria – 167 illegals
- China – 140 illegals

⁹ Global Employment Trends 2013, p. 54, available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_202326.pdf, accessed 19.03.2014

¹⁰ OECD, International Migration Outlook 2013, OECD Publishing, 2013, 288, available at http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2013-en, accessed 19.03.2014

- Serbia – 143 illegal aliens

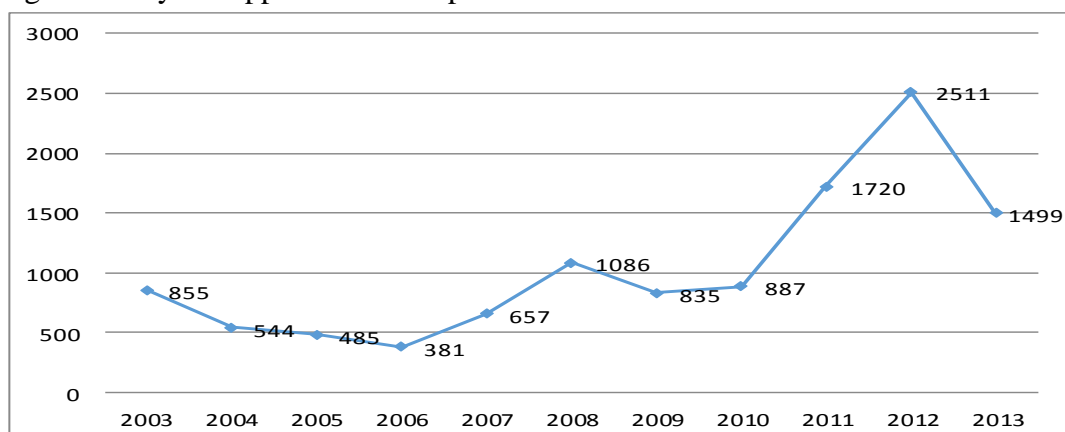
Source: General Inspectorate for Immigration

Since the accession to the European Union, one of the main challenges Romania had to face has been irregular migration. In 2011, new measures were introduced to ensure the legal stay of immigrants on our home soil. Information campaigns on the risk of illegal employment were organized both for immigrant workers and for employers willing to offer jobs for the migrants. Also, a free hotline was opened to report cases of illegal or undeclared work. A joint action plan was issued with Serbia in order to survey migration flows at the national borders.

In 2011, new social integration measures were introduced. A special training project prepared 20 Romanian language teachers to teach Romanian to asylum seekers. Romanian language and culture handbooks were published. From February to June 2011, 300 foreign citizens benefited from Romanian language and culture courses. The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports, together with UNHCR, organized a training programme for teachers of Romanian language and literature in order to provide courses to immigrants.¹¹

Although there were about 1000 less applications in 2013 than in 2012 the numbers are still high.

Figure 2. Asylum applications and procedures



Source: General Inspectorate for Immigration ¹²

By the actions in the informal economy of the host-country the immigrants (asylum seekers especially) establish within the State's structure a so called „foggy social structure”. The „uncertain” character of the structures the immigrants build was studied by Godfried Engbersen and Dennis Broeders. The researchers argue that the state has three main strategies to deal with foggy social structures:

– The first strategy is to accept and tolerate these structures for economic and humanitarian reasons. This is rather an informal policy based on a silent consensus among policymakers to deal pragmatically with the economic interests of certain business sectors, especially agriculture.

¹¹ OECD, International Migration Outlook 2013, OECD Publishing, 2013, p. 288, available at http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2013-en, accessed 19.03.2014

¹² General Inspectorate for Immigration: statistics 2013, p. 18, available at <http://ori.mai.gov.ro/detalii/pagina/ro/Bilant/189>, accessed 19.03.2014

– The second strategy is to convert the informal into the formal, or the illegal into the legal, through regularization programs. Such programs bring irregular immigrants out of the shadows of secret society. They also transform such immigrants into regular denizens with corresponding rights and duties, making them less dependent on informal markets and crime. In the past few years, the Italian, Spanish and Greek governments, in particular, have pursued this strategy of regularisation programmes.

– The third strategy is to break open the foggy social structures of irregular immigrants. This is currently a dominant strategy in the welfare states of Northern Europe. Since the beginning of the 1990s, irregular immigration has been considered a more serious social problem in Nordic European countries and at the supranational level of the European Union. This third strategy confirms the growing importance of internal border control. It also shows that the existing gap between rhetorical rejection and pragmatic acceptance of irregular migration is increasingly being bridged.¹³

Romanian legislation, or rather, the lack of it, creates a kind of ghosts asylum seekers, whose asylum applications have been rejected. For the Romanian legislation frameworks, under certain conditions, such immigrants officially cease to exist (along with those who do not wish to apply for asylum).

As “foggy immigrants” they are placed in the “tolerated category” and have no rights - to work, housing, the right to healthcare, but are only allowed to stay in the territory Romania.

Such non-legal social identity acquire value only when, for one reason or another representative of this category of immigrants enter in conflict with the law or the social subject is a matter of urgency. There are no studies, no real verifiable size datas of this category of immigrants.

Most of them prefer to “lose”, waiting to earn enough money and hoping to find a guide to take them to another European country. Moreover, this part of the non-immigrant people engage with Romanian State in a relationship of “mutual ignorance”.¹⁴

Statistics available in Romania provide a fairly good idea of the migrant population in the country and of its main socio-demographic and economic characteristics. It is often said that, statistically speaking, Romania’s administration is able to provide good information on the foreign population flow.

Considering some important recent developments, the statistics which are available tend to obscure some major structural changes in social dynamics and demography. Sticking to the sole criterion of nationality implies maintaining the sole understanding of the nation, while at the same time reinforcing the dichotomy between “immigrants” and “Romanians”.

In conclusion, nowadays risk has become the arbiter of social stratification, replacing the old class and status system based on unequal distribution of scarce resources. In this view, danger, not scarcity, determines social position and relations. Moreover, knowledge of risks has become commoditized, a commodity not everyone can afford, because so far as scientists do not recognize risks, they do not exist as social artifacts. This means that scientific risk experts have a monopoly on defining what dangers society contains. Those who lack technical expertise must rely on those who have it, thus removing much of the critical discourse about risk from popular politics.¹⁵

¹³ Michael Bommers, Giuseppe Sciortino, *Foggy social structures*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 170

¹⁴ Iris Alexe, *Gestionarea Benefică a Imigrației în România*, București: Fundația Soros România, 2010, 150, available at http://www.fundatia.ro/sites/default/files/ro_106_Gestionarea%20benefica%20a%20imigratiei.pdf, accessed 15.03.2014

¹⁵ Geoffrey R. Skoll, *Social Theory of Fear*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3

CONCLUSION

Still, a large amount of work needs to be done before the „official” statistics on immigrants in Romania can become a real tool for monitoring the immigrants integration, rather than just being a rigid administrative information system focused on the size and the main characteristics of the foreign population. By being more comprehensive, statistics may respond to another question about the diversification of migration flows that can be translated into a longitudinal statistical tool that focuses on the integration process.

The main challenge that authorities have to face in the near future is the undocumented migration and its measurement. Until recently, administrative offices in charge of the statistical collection of data ignored the fact that illegal migration is a reality in Romania as well as in other industrialized countries.

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