

SAFETY CHALLENGES OF THE MIGRANT CRISIS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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Abstract: Migration is an inseparable part of human history and society. They shape both individual communities and the whole world. However, they also come with numerous challenges and risks, often stemming from social, economic or political factors. Today, the world is facing major migration crises, especially in regions like the Middle East and Europe. These crises not only affect the regions where they occur, but have global consequences, including the Balkans and the Republic of Serbia. The security challenges, threats and risks these migrations bring require careful planning and response. In the research of this work, different methodologies were used, including inductive and deductive reasoning, as well as content analysis. It is important to continue to investigate these processes in order to better understand their causes and consequences and develop effective strategies to manage them.

Key words: Migration, Migrant crisis, Migrant route, Republic of Serbia

1. INTRODUCTION

Population migration has been present almost as long as the human race itself. Throughout history, migration has often played a key role in shaping human society and the world as we know it today. The reasons for migration are numerous and usually related to demographic, economic, political, geographical and other factors, which often combine and complement each other. Recently, in addition to numerous problems the world is facing, there is also a global phenomenon - the migrant crisis. Large migrations are almost always associated with socially harmful and dangerous phenomena, which bring numerous risks to people.

Human migration peaked at the beginning of the 21st century, and in 2015 global forced displacement of people reached a record high. It is estimated that there are around 220 million international migrants in the world today, and that number is expected to continue to grow.

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Urbanization, climate change and armed conflict only contribute to the acceleration of these migrations, which means that they will be difficult to slow down in the near future.

The increase in the number of migrants in Europe and the different attitudes of countries affected by the migrant crisis on the acceptance of refugees represent a major challenge for Europe. The European Union is facing a big challenge, because one of its basic principles - open borders - is being violated. Also, if we add to this the increasingly frequent terrorist attacks that we are facing, the complexity of the situation can be further seen.

This paper will discuss the security challenges that the migrant crisis brings to the Republic of Serbia. The basic premise of the work is the issue of the migration crisis, which today occupies the world, especially the Middle and Middle East and Europe. At the same time, if it occupies Europe, it also occupies the Balkans and therefore also the Republic of Serbia, because it causes many different security challenges, threats and risks.

2. MIGRATIONS

Human migrations throughout recorded history have transformed the entire facet of countries and continents, as well as the racial, ethnic, and linguistic makeup of their populations. For example, the map of Europe is the product of several large early migrations involving Germanic peoples, Slavs, and Turks, among others. And for 400 years - from the end of the 16th to the 20th century - America, Australia, Oceania, the northern half of Asia and parts of Africa were colonized by European migrants. Transoceanic migration of Europeans during this period amounted to about 60 million people.

The term migration comes from the Latin word *migration*, which means migration. According to M. Vakala lexicon of foreign words and expressions from 1980, emigration represents the emigration (or emigration) of the population from the country. (Vujaklija, 1980.)

In the Law on Migration Management of the Republic of Serbia, migration is defined as "voluntary or forced departure from the state of origin or residence, for temporary residence or permanent settlement in the Republic of Serbia or for temporary residence or settlement in another state" (external migration). (Law on Migration Management, Sl. Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 107/2012.)

It can be said that there is no single definition of migration, and the definition of a migrant varies from country to country. Different definitions of migration are not mutually exclusive. Based on all definitions, it can be stated that migration involves people who have left their country under various pressures, such as war, economic reasons, or other factors.

Migrations are a dynamic process that continuously shapes the demographic and cultural landscape of the world. However, understanding historical and contemporary migration flows is crucial not only for recognizing the opportunities that migrations provide but also for addressing the security threats they may bring.

2.1. Causes of population migration

Similar to other complex social phenomena, migration movements of people have diverse causes, apparent manifestations and result in different consequences for the migrants themselves, but also in relation to numerous aspects of the socio-cultural environments of the societies they left and those they come to. Individuals and smaller or larger social groups have always tried to reach regions that allow them to live in more favorable conditions, which can primarily be related to social, political, economic, climatic and other conditions. (Blagojevic, Milosavljevic, 2016.)

Various factors influence an individual to decide to leave his home country, so they are most often classified into the following groups: (Blagojevic, Milosavljevic, 2016.)

Economic factors: represent relocation to find work. Among them, the growing gap between the standard of living and personal income between countries should be highlighted, which attracts migrants to countries with a higher standard of living, economic development, opportunity for employment or advancement;

Conflicts: Conflicts can be, by their nature, ethnic and/or religious, but also the result of economic inequalities or competition for natural resources. When added to that, the lack of personal and religious freedom can be a motivating factor, as well as discrimination based on race, gender, religion or in relation to other grounds;

Demographic disproportion: it can have different forms of manifestation from the decrease in the number of newborns in developed countries and the increase in the average length of life, which contributes to the gap between the supply and demand of labor in developed and developing countries. Surplus labor in underdeveloped and developing countries can create an increase in the unemployment rate, which is a motivating factor for migration;

Governance and public services: poor governance, corruption and lack of quality education and health care strengthen migration processes internationally;

Environmental factors: an increasing number of people decide to migrate due to industrial accidents, floods, soil erosion, earthquakes, consequences of climate change, increased radioactivity, infectious diseases and similar reasons. However, the majority of migrants from this group remain within their home country.

Based on the above factors, it is clear that the reasons for migration are complex and multi-layered. People decide to leave their home countries for various reasons, and often it is a combination of several reasons. All these factors point to the need for a better understanding and management of migration flows, in order to enable a more humane and fair solution to the challenges faced by migrants around the world.

3. MIGRANT ROUTES IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The conflicts taking place in the weakened states of North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia (Libya, Syria, Northern Iraq, Afghanistan) have forced millions of people to move and, therefore, make the region of South-Eastern Europe one of the most frequent migration routes or "roads of the desperate" (the name used by most security experts from EU countries) in Europe. This migration route is called Eastern Mediterranean and is mainly used by migrants from Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea and Syria. This migration route has two directions: (1) Turkey–Greece–FYR Macedonia–RS–EU, better known as the Western Balkan Route or just the Balkan Route; and 2) Turkey–Greece–Albania–Montenegro–EU, noting that Albania and Montenegro are rarely used as transit countries, but migrants are directly transferred to Italy via sea routes from refugee camps in Turkey and/or Greece. (Kovacevic, Kovac 2017.)

According to the report of the FRONTEX agency, six main migration routes are distinguished: the West African, the Western Mediterranean, the Central Mediterranean, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Western Balkans and the Eastern land route.

The transit through Serbia for migrants, who moved (and are still moving) towards the European Union (especially Germany, as the most preferred country of destination, but not exclusively) is part of the route named after this part of the region, the Western-Balkan migrant route. It represents a part of the wider Balkan route, which did not figure as a common mode

of transit for migrants from the very beginning, when maritime routes were the most common way of reaching Europe. (Perisic, 2018.)

The migration of hundreds of thousands of people along the Western-Balkan route had great consequences for countries and their relations with neighboring countries. First of all, this route had two "flows". Originally, it passed through Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. Serbia's relations with Macedonia were facilitated by the fact that neither country is a member state of the EU. Additionally, both perceived themselves as transit countries, which provided them with mutual "understanding" and enabled sharing of experiences. Before the first escalation in the number of asylum seekers (in May 2015), migrants passed through Greece, then Macedonia and Serbia, in order to enter Hungary, which is in the Schengen zone. Southeast European countries made it a priority to speed up the passage of migrants through their territories, and any attempt to limit this process (like Hungary's attempt to close its borders) was met with strong diplomatic reactions from neighboring countries. Relations between Croatia and the Republic of Serbia, as well as between Croatia and Hungary, were in crisis due to migrants and their crossing over the borders of the Balkan states. Some countries have decided to erect fences in order to stop the flow of migrants, starting from Hungary, and ending with Slovenia and Austria. As a result of the closing of the borders, a cumulative number of migrants appeared who remained "stuck" in the countries on the Western Balkan route. (Kovacevic, Kovac, 2017.)

After the closure of the "Balkan route", the illegal channels for the transfer of migrants have been strengthened, which is taking on increasingly serious proportions, which especially threatens the security of the Republic of Serbia. Certain transit countries (Bulgaria and Macedonia) tolerate this phenomenon in order to reduce the presence of migrants on their territory, avoid the obligation to provide assistance and transfer them to the territory of Serbia without hindrance. At the same time, the appearance of an increased number of illegal migrants at the borders of Hungary, Austria and Croatia causes a reaction and an increasingly rigid policy towards immigrants, which turns into a "total blockade" at the border with Serbia. (Jeremic, Đorđević, 2017.) The building of the fence between Hungary and Serbia created tensions in bilateral relations, which were soon reduced and resolved. Serbia's key position was that migrants needed to be allowed passage to EU destination countries rather than being sent back. Therefore, Serbia almost immediately after the fence was erected on the Hungarian border began to "redirect" migrants towards Croatia.

In an effort to limit the entry of the so-called false asylum seekers, considering them to be economic migrants, Slovenia and Croatia started allowing entry only to migrants from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. Serbia and Macedonia introduced the same measures. Consequently, during that period, a large number of migrants were returned and "stuck" on the border between Macedonia and Greece. Soon, a new fence was erected by Macedonia on the border with Greece. (Perisic, 2018.)

From the above, it can be concluded that migration routes through the Western Balkans and beyond have profound consequences for the countries of the region, their mutual relations and relations with the European Union. These routes are subject to change due to geopolitical conflicts and security challenges in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East and North Africa. Countries such as Serbia, Macedonia and Croatia face the challenges of managing migration flows and pressure from the EU to control the entry of migrants. Restricting the passage through these countries causes tensions, but at the same time encourages the need to find compromises for more effective crisis management. It is crucial to understand that migration has complex socio-economic, political and security aspects that require a

coordinated approach by the international community in order to preserve stability and protect the human rights of migrants.

3.1. Challenges of the migrant crisis

From a global perspective, it can be stated that the challenges and problems brought by migrant flows are more pronounced today than ever before in the past.

On the regional level, the situation with migrants increases security risks, opens up new economic, social, and health issues, as well as the possibility of disrupting the ethnic structure in certain communities. Short-term and medium-term security consequences may include terrorist attacks committed by terrorists arriving with migrants in the EU, an expansion of organized crime activities in the illegal smuggling of migrants, and in the long term, an increase in organized crime groups and rising crime rates, as well as a rise in xenophobia and racism in transit and recipient countries. In the short and medium term, challenges may also include the need to secure significant additional financial resources for transit countries, unified action by the EU and transit countries in managing migrant flows, increasing disparities between Western and Eastern EU members and the creation of "two-speed EU" and "mini-Schengen". Long-term challenges may involve cultural differences, refugee integration into societies, significant changes in social structure, increased unemployment, and substantial changes in ethnic and religious composition (Jeremic, Đorđević, 2017.). With all these challenges, it is important that all countries get involved in creating sustainable solutions that balance between humanitarian access and maintaining security. The key will be effective cooperation between states, organizations and local communities in order to mitigate the negative consequences and enable the successful integration of migrants. Only through joint efforts and a holistic approach is it possible to build a stable and safe region, where human rights are respected and economic and social conditions are improved for all citizens.

The migrant crisis facing Europe can be viewed from various perspectives, producing different consequences such as economic, political, and notably impacting the security of individuals. Essentially, the current migrant crisis in Europe jeopardizes the national security of affected states, whether they are permanent destinations or transit countries. Moreover, it poses risks to both human and international security. Each year, between four to five million migrants enter another country, with illegal border crossings varying between 30% and 50%. This inevitably brings increased risks to the local population in terms of infectious diseases, crime, and terrorism (Simeunovic, 2015.). In light of these facts, it is clear that the migrant crisis represents a challenge that requires a comprehensive and coordinated response at both national and international levels. Countries affected by this crisis must develop strategies that effectively manage the influx of migrants while ensuring respect for the human rights and dignity of all individuals on the move. The international community also plays a crucial role in providing support through financial assistance, sharing information, and developing common policies.

The migrant crisis also impacts the labor market, as a large influx of new workers can destabilize the legal labor market, foster black markets, and have negative effects on public finances and the state budget. Additionally, migration can destabilize the demographic structure of countries. Conflicts between migrants and law enforcement, as well as among migrants themselves, become common due to this crisis.

3.2. Risks of the migrant crisis

Considering the migrant crisis from a security perspective, it is important to note that security challenges, risks, and threats are not of the same magnitude for all countries. States that serve

as transit points for migrants are less exposed to endangerment compared to those that represent final destinations for migrants.

Seen from the perspective of endangering national security, the migrant crisis brings with it numerous risks and problems. These problems are reflected in the crisis of human, material and technical, financial resources, as well as normative frameworks related to the work of state authorities and public services in the countries through which migrants pass or settle. Most countries are not adequately prepared to deal with such a large influx of migrants, whether they are transit countries or final destinations. As a result, there are crowds at border crossings, a large number of migrants remain unregistered and unaccounted for, and so on.

The migrant crisis significantly impacts human security, particularly due to increased risks of migrants falling victim to organized crime. They often attempt deals with criminal groups for illegal border crossings, making them susceptible to robbery, violence, or even human trafficking. Additionally, migrants face threats to other basic rights such as access to education, economic resources, and social welfare. From the perspective of international security endangerment, the migrant crisis has sparked various diplomatic conflicts and disagreements between states. Driven by national interests, European states have begun to protest against each other for allowing migrants to enter Europe and move through the continent (for example, Hungary protested against Serbia for allowing migrants through its territory; Croatia and Slovenia also protested for similar reasons; Austria protested against Croatia and Slovenia, Macedonia against Greece, etc.), as well as around refugee quotas aimed at providing shelter. (Mijalkovic, Petrovic, 2016.)

Migration brings with it significant challenges that affect not only national, regional and international security, but also the basic human rights of migrants. Mass migration can have a profound impact on the demographic structure of local and regional communities, especially if migrants systematically settle in specific geographic areas. This can significantly change the demographic profile of the population and potentially cause conflicts based on geographic, ethnic, religious and racial identities.

In the context of global security, illegal migration presents a challenge with multiple complex aspects. States have a sovereign right to control their borders and establish conditions for entry and exit, guided by national interests such as security, economic well-being, public morals and political stability. At the same time, the principles of human rights and the norms of humanitarian law require that the causes of migration be taken into account and adequate treatment of vulnerable people seeking protection in more stable areas, whether near or far, be ensured.

Special reflections on the security situation, manifested in the migrant crisis, have occurred in Europe, predominantly in the Western Balkans region and in the Republic of Serbia, where all factors contributing to migration and potential crisis have been examined. Based on data from official institutions of the Republic of Serbia, EU institutions, UNICEF, and Interpol, it has been concluded that numerous factors have influenced the current development and course of the migrant crisis. Based on the registered manifest forms so far, the most significant factors affecting the security situation in the Republic of Serbia include political, socio-economic, and security factors. Based on previous assessments, potential threats to security arising from the migrant crisis are reflected through the following challenges, risks, and threats, primarily at the regional and national levels: unresolved status and difficult conditions of displaced persons from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Gambia, and Mali; organized crime, looting, unrest, and expression of dissatisfaction towards authorities and individual incidents; human trafficking; illegal migration and border violations; disputes with neighboring countries, the EU's inability to resolve the migrant crisis long-term, and individual

decisions of neighboring countries; terrorism importation; illegal trafficking and arms smuggling; rise of right-wing extremism; economic development issues; threats to energy security; economic threats to national security; endangering free trade and flow of goods between neighboring countries and traffic blockades; border closures towards Serbia; endangerment of the environment; and risks associated with the emergence and spread of infectious diseases among people. The approach to conducting a security assessment was based on a strategic situation analysis, security environment analysis, identification of challenges, risks, and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia, fundamental strategic doctrinal documents, and basic planning documents. (Berisa, Rakic, 2016.)

When it comes to endangering human security, it is clear that the migrant crisis can threaten various spheres of human security. In this sense, in terms of economic security, it is clear that the economic rights of migrants are threatened: firstly, the impossibility of exercising the right to work and the rights arising from the right to work is the main migration motive of economic migrants, but also one of the dominant motives of those who claim these rights they cannot achieve because they live in conflict environments and under totalitarian regimes; secondly, during their movement towards the country of the desired destination, migrants are not able to exercise their economic rights; finally, it is very uncertain that they will be able to get a job (in the legal sector) in the destination countries as well. (Mijalkovic, Petrovic, 2016.)

The migrant crisis represents a complex challenge for national security, including economic aspects. The arrival of migrants can have a significant impact on the country's economy, threatening the stability of the budget and leading to a decrease in labor prices in an already economically unstable environment. It is especially challenging for poor countries in transition like the Republic of Serbia, which often do not have enough economic resources and adequate infrastructure to receive and provide for hundreds of thousands of migrants, which can seriously threaten their development, stability and prosperity.

Based on the above, it can be pointed out that the analysis of the migrant crisis from different perspectives - security, economic and humanitarian - it is clear that this phenomenon represents a significant challenge for national and international security. The crisis affects countries that serve as transit points or final destinations for migrants differently. Problems such as human rights violations, resource strain, economic instability and potential security risks such as organized crime and terrorism highlight the complexity and urgency of solving migration problems at the global level. Effective governance requires balancing sovereignty with humanitarian obligations, striving for sustainable solutions that simultaneously protect security and human rights.

4. CONCLUSION

Various forms of migration have been present for a long time in human history, but in the modern age they have become an indispensable topic of global politics and social development. The motivations for migration are often deeply personal and include the pursuit of individuals and families for a better life, economic security or escape from political adversity. The European Union, as an attractive destination due to economic opportunities and stability, traditionally attracts large numbers of migrants from other parts of the world.

The paper shows that various factors influence an individual to decide to leave his homeland, such as conflicts, demographic disproportion, management and public services, environmental factors.

The paper points out that migration routes through the Western Balkans and beyond have profound consequences for the countries of the region, their mutual relations as well as relations with the European Union. These routes are subject to change due to geopolitical conflicts and

security challenges in other parts of the world. Countries like Serbia, Macedonia and Croatia face challenges in managing migration flows. Restricting the passage through these countries creates tensions, but at the same time encourages the need to reach compromises for effective crisis management.

Research indicates that the migrant crisis can have deep and complex security consequences. In the short term, there is concern about the possibility of terrorist attacks by individuals or groups linked to terrorist organizations, who may infiltrate alongside refugees and migrants. Also, illegal networks and organized crime often take advantage of this situation for human trafficking and other illegal activities. In the long term, migrant waves can lead to an increase in organized crime, strengthening xenophobia and racism in transit and receiving countries, which can seriously threaten social cohesion and stability.

The paper concluded that the migrant crisis is a challenge that requires a comprehensive and coordinated response both at the national and international level. Countries affected by this crisis must develop strategies that effectively manage the influx of migrants, while ensuring respect for the human rights and dignity of all individuals on the move.

The paper points out that the migrant crisis represents a significant challenge for national and international security. Countries that serve as transit points or final destinations for migrants are affected differently by the crisis. Issues such as human rights abuses, pressure on resources, economic instability, and potential security risks such as organized crime and terrorism underscore the complexity and urgency of addressing migration at the global level. Effective governance requires balancing sovereignty with humanitarian obligations, striving for sustainable solutions that simultaneously protect security and human rights.

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