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Reasons for Migration Decision Making and Migrants Security Notions

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Abstract

Migration is considered in terms of social psychology through the eyes of its immediate participants. It is argued that the decision to migrate is closely connected with security issues. The survey sample consisted of 80 migrants from former CIS countries. Main motives of going abroad treated in categories of “factual constraint” and “search for better life” were detected. It is indicated that mundane consciousness does not generalize migration reasons with regard to security categories. Migrants’ security notions under study demonstrate specifics of perceiving the surrounding world as threatening and dangerous.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays Russia is facing acute problems of in-country migration, former CIS country migration and adjustment of people arriving in Russia. According to statistics approximately 3-3.5 million labor migrants live in the Russian Federation on a nonrecurring basis. There are several explanations to the fact. First, this process is quite natural due to economic and social problems of former Soviet republics. Second, there is a great demand for labor force inflow in this country. However, in spite of being quite local this phenomenon causes quite a number of psychological problems, first of all, for migrants themselves. So, “social and psychological parameters of

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social interaction largely depend on culture type alongside with certain behavioral patterns tied up with national, mental features” [1].

Undoubtedly, migration issues spark great public and scientific interest. Conceptual views of security prevailing in Russia effect migration phenomenon comprehension and, in turn, federal migration policy. The range of opinions is certain to be great. “Russia is a multinational country consequently the balance of rights, responsibility, different nations’ interests is of utmost importance” [2]. Nevertheless, as things stand, migration in all its forms in this country and abroad is evaluated as negative, destructive factor.

In accordance with national security conception regarding security agents the state dominates. The concept of general security recognizes plurality of security objects and aspects and does not parade economic, social, political, military, etc. security in rigid hierarchic order. Yet, neither in the former, nor in the latter concept migrants’ needs or concerns are mentioned. One may feel their presence in the context but they are hardly perceived as living beings, compatriots or returnees. They are not even seen as a passive security object but rather socially dehumanized “factor” that should be taken into consideration only upon elaborating policy [3]. Therefore, a lopsided vision of security which fails to detect an underlying link between security and migration should be noted.

Migration denotes a movement of a person or groups of people from one locality to another for the purpose of permanent or temporary resettling. Migration is not to be compared with any other individual experience as it divides a person’s life into “before” and “after”. Despite status, age, gender, education he starts his life from scratch.

Prior to this move, decision is taken under pressure of circumstances. While thinking it over and reacting to it a person addresses his experience and security assumptions. It enables him to assess safety level both at home and in a new locality.

Y.P. Platonov [4] states that migration process involving going abroad is a set of particular steps and actions of people determined by other country permanent or temporary resettling. This behavior is influenced by both macro-level factors (most common and underlying motives provoked by search for material prosperity or personal security) and micro-level factors (environment, values and priorities).

E.S. Krasinets [5] in her study into migration behavior itemizes specific reasons for leaving one’s native country and argues that a range of motives bound up with concerns about personal safety has extended significantly.

From the viewpoint of researchers the subject of migration decision making has not been practically elaborated either in domestic or in foreign psychological scholarly literature. The emigrant’s personality with all his hopes, sufferings, disillusion, his past, present and future has been exhaustively treated in fiction literature rather than in academic articles, although sentiments, value orientations, inner conflicts of those who leave motherland where they as well as their forefathers were born and grown up could have come in sight of professional psychologists. [6].

Russia is a crossway of several immigrant flows: people go in and out of this country. Pointing out economic, political, ethnic grounds for resettling, a fundamental prior factor is a sense of danger which triggers the decision making process.

J. Gultung [7] cast three types of threatening situations according to needs satisfaction criteria. He identified threats that prevent from meeting physical, social and existential wants. The first type, for instance, includes a danger of hunger, disease, the second one – a risk of losing social status or freedom. Perils that hinder from satisfying identity needs involve existential wants and are classified into the third group. All the types enlisted can turn into a source of anxiety and facilitate the decision on resettling. “It is also necessary to take into account social fatigue of a society and its adjustment to danger.”[8]. In this context the process of migration decision making is interwoven with the security issues and, in particular, with an individual’s generalization of motives for resettling in the security categories perspective.

2. Method

The objective of the research is to examine grounds for migration decision making and migrants' security assumptions.

The study was focused on cognitive component since it is cognitive psychic functions that provide information processing: its separate estimation parameters, selection of its most significant items, their retention and usage in generalized notions.

To objectively describe the situation involving the decision to migrate, with regard of the need to watch it with its participants' eyes, we tried to collect a full blast sample in terms of their age, profession and education.

The study was carried out in Russian as a Second Language Testing centre of Ural Mining Academy. The sampling consisted of 80 migrants from former CIS countries (Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Azerbaidjan) at the age from 18 to 60.

The survey object required thorough diagnostic instruments as some questions could stir up aggression, restraint or unwillingness to communicate as well as provoke socially endorsed (in subjects' opinion) responses.

For data collection we used polling techniques: interlocution, interview, standardized questionnaire designed for detecting personality economic and psychological characteristics; tests; project method "Associations with the notion "security".

Mathematical statistics methods included one-dimensional distribution and variable correlation statistic analysis (measure of central tendency, correlation and factor analysis).

3. Results

Migrants' responses were emotionally loaded.

The majority of respondents gave affirmative answer to the question whether they felt secure in their native country. It gives rise to the assumption that they do not generalize the reasons for resettling in security categories perspective.

The replies to the question "were you afraid of anything in your country?" can be itemized as follows: social perils came to the fore (risk of losing job, fear of becoming subhuman, threat of social status downgrading). Physical dangers came next (hunger, diseases, risk of ruining health). Existential dangers occupied the third place (Allah, fear of losing freedom).

Then, the answers to the question "what made you migrate to Russia" were analyzed. Among the most essential reasons (in descending order) are the following ones: "life standards improvement" (34,5% of respondents), "financial instability in the native country" (29,8%), "children's future" (24,4%), "financial position improvement" (20,9%), "a chance to start a new life" (18,5%), "a desire to get education in Russia" (16,8%), "a good job prospects" (15,1%), "uncertainty of tomorrow" (13,7%), "family reunion" (9,8%).

So, it is possible to emphasize three blocks of migration motives:

- economic (improvement of life standards and financial position);
- bound to self-realization (a desire to get education in Russia, a chance to start a new life);
- family reasons (children's future, family reunion).

The next stage of the research was the factor analysis procedure, carried out to identify possible ties within the whole set of variables. As a result, six significant factors were singled out.

The first factor contributed 24,68% to the total variance and was labeled "Enforcement". The associations involved are: financial position improvement .89, uncertainty of tomorrow .84, children's future .76, no jobs .58, political situation in the native country .55. On the surface, the items marked seem to have little in common but they all are drawn together by the situation of enforcement when a person knowingly acts against his want, and the driving force is circumstances. In this case it is lack of safety and a refusal to undertake an involuntary action that lead to undesirable for a subject results.

The second most important factor is “Search for a better life”. The given factor accounted for 16,48% of the variance includes these associations: financial instability in the native country .88, search for comfort .76, no job .53.

The third factor called “Family interests” (14,14% share of the total variance) involves these associations: interest in traditions .87, family reunion .85. One can suppose that a decision to migrate is left to the family. This agrees with the above-mentioned data on the importance of family and family opinion for the subjects. It can also be assumed that resettling decision making is a process of seeking the best solution for the whole family, the one that can satisfy all members’ needs.

The fourth factor responsible for 12,54% of the total variance named “Hopes for the better” compiles the following associations: standards if living upgrade .95, search for the new .60. This factor testifies to the optimistic attitude towards future.

The fifth factor accounted for 9,86% the total variance and labeled “Chance” includes the following association: one more chance to start life once again .89.

The sixth factor with the share of 7,0% in the total variance involves these associations: a desire to study in Russia .89, to get the Russian citizenship .64. The given factor can be interpreted as “Ties with Russia”, i.e. Russia has a greater appeal as a guarantor of secure life.

Then the analysis of the migrants’ security notions was carried out.

Thus, the most common associations with the word “security” were: “home” (17%), “job” (14%), “family” (8%), “mother” (8%), “friends” (6%), “parents” (6%), “defensibility” (6%).

Factor analytical results detected six significant factors, the first three of them being the most noticeable.

The first factor contributed 28,03% to the total variance. It was labeled “Security – happy life” and includes the following associations: life preservation .95, freedom .95, money .95, friends .82, parents .66.

The second factor with the share of 17,80% in the total variance defined “Security – a state prerogative” involves these associations: rights .94, life .94, freedom .94, defensibility .87.

The third factor accounted for 11,50% of the variance is composed of these associations: husband .94, daughter .94, mother .53. The semantic loading of the factor can be construed as “Security – home”.

The placement of associations in the semantic field demonstrates the migrants’ mundane consciousness field. As seen from Fig. 1, stable and “right” zone of a “secure” world involving such factors as “Security – happy life” and “Security – a state prerogative” appeared to be empty. The respondents do not see themselves secure, deny security existence in general.

In the opposite sector of the semantic field, in an “insecure” world zone, a greater number of all associations (“family”, “home”, “job”, “confidence in future”, etc.) are situated, i.e. all fundamental human values are recognized by the subjects as frustrated.

The results obtained may indicate the respondents’ deep uncertainty of today and tomorrow. Their self perception of being in danger deprives themselves of feeling shielded from destructive impacts, as well as of steadiness and confidence.

4. Discussion

Thus, the interview results showed the lack of definite motives of the subjects. All their replies imply the feelings of instability and fear. The very decision of resettling is a source of fright and tension. The interviewees lay their hopes on Russia, life and financial position betterment. The most common answers were “children’s future”, “one more chance to start life”.

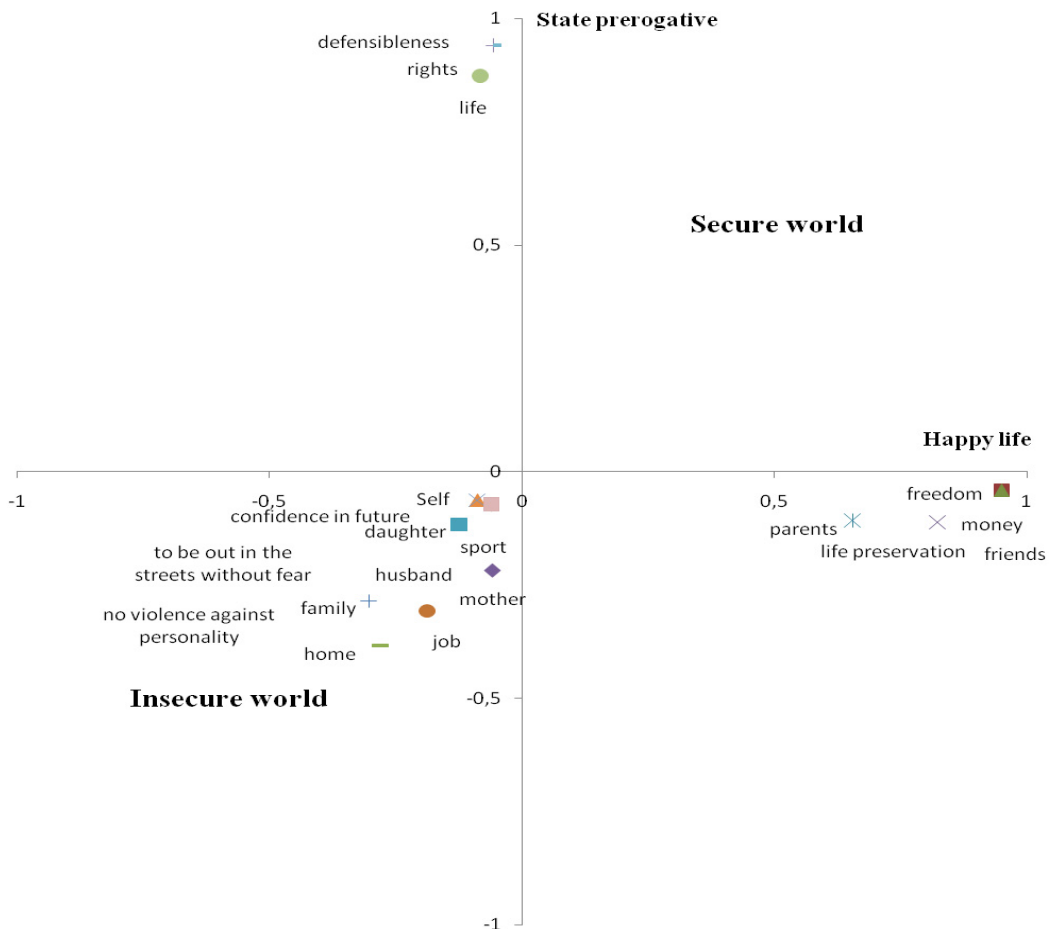


Fig. 1. Placement of security notion associations in the migrants’ semantic field

As the surveys highlights, the notion “security” comes across the migrants minds no sooner than a threat to life emerges. In all other cases mundane consciousness does not generalize grounds for resettling in terms of security. It simply fixes these reasons: “no job”, “nowhere to study”, loneliness”, “being subhuman”, etc.

The most powerful factor is “Enforcement” which infers involuntary, forced resettling linked with security rather than with removal. For the most, part negative motives dominate: a migrant is trying to get away from circumstances that can undermine economic grounds of his security and narrow social boundaries of security.

The second important factor labeled “Search for a better life” characterizes, on the one hand, objective reasons for resettlement. On the other hand, it implies a low adjustment level of immigrants to the surrounding world, its style and conditions the macro environment dictates pushing a person out of the country. It also could be an attempt to solve intrapersonal conflicts, a move to start everything again in another country. Vague ideas of what will happen to them, uncertainty of tomorrow, fussy life position in the long-term do not allow them to feel safe, which, undoubtedly, affects environment interaction.

The results indicate that migrants completely lack a condition of security. “High uncertainty of tomorrow facilitates the need not only for mighty powerful figures, which could protect from threatening forces but also for

xenophobia. The terrifyingly rapid changes generate intolerance to culture modifications and different ethnic groups” [9].

The lack of security takes the lead, starts to determine motives for an individual’s social behavior through rebuilding and rearranging this motivation and specifically transforming other groups of his basic needs, psychic characteristics and personal traits. It is the depriving element that determines social behavior by its integral influence. As many researchers underline it becomes an active and dominant force in mobilizing the organism’s resources in the most hazardous conditions – social disorganization, natural disasters, catastrophes, criminal attacks, etc.

To sum up, migration today is a combination of economically capable personality, physically sound, with the perception of the world as being threatening and a sharpened sense of danger. In view of the given characteristics migrants tend to interpret indefinite stimuli as dangerous. A person who is internally convinced that the world around is a permanent source of threat can shape a psychological attitude to its recognizing. Naturally, it does not only determine his intellectual and physical abilities but also lowers his psychological resources regarding a person’s resistance to negative environmental impacts and encourages tendencies to unacceptable behavior.

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