

MACRO-HISTORICAL CAUSES OF MODERN MASS MIGRATION

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Abstract: The great migration crisis of 2015 resulted in historically unprecedented massive migration flows towards Europe that tend to repeat themselves over the years. This paper examines the gradual creation of a new periphery lying to the south and south east of Europe, with the latter being conceived as the core or centre of the system centre-periphery. The Northern Africa-Western Asia region and the Sub-Saharan region form the demographic hinterland of Europe. In 2050 these two regions shall comprise over 3 billion people and over 6 billion people in 2100. Instability in the broader region is attributed to structural demographic factors, such as a Malthusian situation comprising overpopulation, limited carrying capacity and youth bulge among the populations and the states of Europe's demographic hinterland.

Keywords: *longue durée*, migration crisis, periphery, youth bulge, overpopulation, carrying capacity, hinterland, total fertility rate, societal security

1. Introductory Remarks

Europe has experienced massive migration flows over the last years, especially after the manifestation of the great migration crisis of 2015, while there are indications that this situation shall repeat itself in the immediate future. The influx of populations from the periphery of Europe is due to a degree to the creation of a highly unstable and volatile region in the southern flank of the European Union, further augmenting inherent political problems attested in this region for decades. The territorial dissolution of buffer states, such as Gaddafi's Libya, or the dissolution of peripheral states, such as Syria, caused by international intervention or civil war, has led to increased migration flows towards Europe in the last period, still these are events of secondary importance in the context of macro-historical trends.

What we are thus attesting in the last decades and emphatically after the

unprecedented migration crisis of 2015 is the gradual emergence of a new periphery lying to the south and to the south-east of Europe, with the latter being conceived as the *core* or *center* of the perceived system of center-periphery. The European states and especially those lying in the region of the Mediterranean (Spain, Italy, Malta and Greece) are thus exposed to massive immigration flows originating in an extended geographical area *i.e.*, the Northern Africa-Western Asia region and the Sub-Saharan Africa region. These two regions can rightly be defined as the *demographic hinterland* of Europe, the latter being viewed as a *core* area. According to this geopolitical hermeneutical model Europe's demographic hinterland can be thought to consist of two great areas that function as migrant-producing spatial unities and geopolitical regions, namely i) the Northern Africa-Western Asia region and ii) the Sub-Saharan Africa region.

It is of equally great importance on both a methodological and policy level to understand that these recent migration flows in an inter-state peripheral system such as the one in question are not caused solely by the upheaval in the Middle East and the broader Northern Africa-Western Asia region in the aftermath of the Arab Spring or by ongoing conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, but also and mainly by structural factors that would function in any case, *irrelevant* of the periodic military and political turbulences. These factors can be properly characterized as macro-historical, as their function and consequences unfold over large, inter-generational periods of time with middle-term and especially long-term repercussions.

Concerning migration flows the typical methodological distinction of Demography between push factors and pull factors is a useful basic tool to comprehend the complex reality of massive migration. *Push factors* are identified with the structural conditions that cause the emigration of a part of the population from a country. The most fundamental push factor connected with massive migration is overpopulation of a given geographical region as a result of high fertility. Overpopulation as a notion is relative to the carrying capacity of a country or region, as the latter is formulated according to the geophysical formation, the economic structure and the social conditions of the country in question. Overpopulation causes spatial crowding, downgrading of personal and familial economic level and inter-personal antagonism over limited resources. Especially in states with inadequate economic and social growth a large population cannot be properly absorbed in the existing economic sector and social fabric, thus causing emigration tendencies. Other push factors include economic crises, political or ideological/religious crises, intra-state or inter-state conflicts, such as civil or international wars.

Pull factors are identified with the structural conditions that cause the immigration of population towards a country. Such factors can vary over the histori-

cal *longue durée*; in the modern period they include the generous social welfare programs of the European states concerning migrants, political stability and economic development of the host country. Pull factors can also include ideological parameters. Relevant historical cases are the emigration towards the Holy Land during the Crusades in the medieval period, the conquest of the Americas by the Spanish conquistadores in the 16th century and the attempt to conquer Europe through demography for Islamist circles.

From a methodological point of view most variables used in the social sciences are connected to an *ex post facto* analysis, i.e. *after* the facts or events are unfolded. Demographic factors on the other hand, especially in their manifestation of demographic projections, offer an *ex ante* view, i.e. *before* the facts or events are unfolded. Demography as a science is able with a high degree of certainty to present future trends and possibilities and structural tendencies concerning the size and the characteristics of a given population (size, ethnic/religious composition, age structure). These possibilities or various scenarios of differential population growth are presented and documented with demographic projections.¹ Existing demographic trends are harbingers of future size of populations and the relation between broad geopolitical regions.

Demographic projections can be applied as a methodological tool not only to the systemic level of a chosen unit which is identified as a polity (mostly a state), but also to the middle level of an inter-state dipole or the supra-systemic level of a regional periphery or even a whole continent, especially when the chosen spatial unities are clearly marked on a geophysical level. At this point though, we should proceed to make two necessary methodological remarks. First, that during a geopolitical analysis demographic data present us only with inherent possibilities, not certain and predestined outcomes, and second that the methodological fallacy of essentialism, unfolded by identifying distinct groups of people with unalterable and common motives, is to be avoided.

This view of geopolitical and demographic realities is consistent with the typological distinction proposed by the French Annales School of historical writing between three levels of historical time. The first level is defined as *short-time* and can be related to specific events that are manifested in each period frame and are related to a factual perception of history (*histoire événementielle*); such facts include revolutions, wars or other political and military conflicts and upheavals that last for a specific period. The case of the Syrian Civil War (2011-today) or of

1. For a coherent view see A. Goujon, E.P. Kaufmann & V. Skirbekk, 'American Political Affiliation, 2003-2043: A Cohort Component Projection', *Population Studies* 66:1 (2012), 53-67; V. Skirbekk, A. Goujon & E.P. Kaufmann, 'Secularism, Fundamentalism or Catholicism? The Religious Composition of the United States to 2043', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49:2 (2010), 293-310.

the inter-state conflicts in Libya and various other states fall in this category. All these incidents have caused migration flows towards the neighboring Europe, but their effect is limited on both a spatial and temporal level.

The second level of historical time, *middle-time*, is linked to the notion of *conjunctures* (*conjonctures*) and is related to social transformation and small-scale demographic changes. The latter include as the appearance of a youth bulge among the population of a polity. A *youth bulge* is defined as the existence of a youthful structure (ages 15-29) among a given population. Youth bulges occur when a large share of the population is comprised of children and young adults, thus forming large age cohorts. The existence of youth bulges is often associated with the increased possibility of intra-state tension and high levels of violence or social tension.² Youth bulges as a social and demographic phenomenon are particularly explicit primarily in sub-Saharan Africa and secondarily in the Northern Africa-Western Asia region, while they are generally absent in Europe during the last decades due to declining birth and fertility rates of the native European population.³

Finally, the third level of historical time, the *long-time* or *long-term* (*longue durée*), emphasizes the importance of geophysical and macro-historical structures, such as geography and the cultural references of a population, over events that are unfolded in the short-time and the middle-time levels; the long-term level could also be linked from a causal point of view to specific parameters of middle-time conditions, such as demography.⁴

According to our view a general consideration of the *longue durée* and the structural factors underlying the recent events unfolding in the wider region of the Mediterranean, as a part of Europe, and its connected demographic hinterland is more helpful than the appeal to immediate causal factors and the short-time level (revolutions and political conflict). So, the use of fundamental notions of *Political*

2. C.G. Mesquida & N.I. Wiener, 'Human Collective Aggression: A Behavioral Ecology Perspective', *Ethology and Sociobiology* 17 (1996), 247-62. C.G. Mesquida & N.I. Wiener, 'Male Age Composition and the Severity of Conflicts', *Politics in Life Sciences* 18:2 (1999), 181-9. For an opposite view see H. Weber, 'Age Structure and Political Violence: A Re-assessment of the "Youth Bulge" Hypothesis', *International Interactions* 45:1 (10/2018), 1-33.

3. For sub-Saharan Africa see J. Zinkina & A. Korotayev, 'Explosive Population Growth in Tropical Africa: Crucial Omission in Development Forecasts – Emerging Risks and Way Out', *World Futures* 70 (2014), 120-139. Cf. T. Espenshade, J. Guzman & C. Westoff, 'The Surprising Global Variation in Replacement Fertility', *Population Research and Policy Review* 22 (2003), 575-83.

4. F. Braudel, 'Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée', *Annales* 13-14 (1958), 725-53.

Demography, a thematic field in International Relations defined as the study of the size, composition, and distribution of population in relation to both government and politics, could provide a reliable hermeneutical framework for our interests.⁵

2. *Differential Fertility and Massive Migration towards Europe*

Based on the previous introductory remarks and in this geopolitical context instability in the broader region that was identified above as Europe's demographic hinterland, is attributed not only to the rise of protest movements or even to the military upheaval caused by the Syrian Civil War and the conflicts in Libya or the various ongoing conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. Instead regional instability should be explained mainly based on structural demographic factors that have relevance in the level of *middle-time* and the level of *long-time*, such as religiosity and its demographic consequences, i.e. a high fertility rate and its results, overpopulation and youth bulge among the relevant populations.⁶ After all, the peripheral conflicts have been going on for a considerable period and therefore cannot be causally linked to the migration crisis of the last years in a direct causal manner.

The fundamental factor that causes mass migration is the high Total Fertility Rates that are manifested in the Northern Africa-Western Asia region and especially in the Sub-Saharan region. The differential fertility rates that are observed between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa and between Europe and the Northern Africa-Western Asia region are revealing as far as it concerns possible future trends in population migration, if we keep the social and economic conditions of these areas as a stable parameter. It is of special interest to observe the evident disparities in the growth rate among the populations of Europe and sub-Saharan Africa in the long historical term.

In 1900, on the height of European colonialism and European settler expansion into Africa, Europe had a population approximately three times as that of sub-Saharan Africa. The population of sub-Saharan Africa, a sparsely inhabited region at that time, is estimated to have been just under 100 million, while the European population of that time exceeded 300 million. After a few decades, when the advances of European-brought improvements in health care, medicine and sanitation began to unfold, the population of sub-Saharan Africa began

5. E.P. Kaufmann & M. Duffy Toft, 'Introduction', in J.A. Goldstone, E.P. Kaufmann and M.D. Toft (eds), *Political Demography: How Population Changes Are Reshaping International Security and National Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 3-9.

6. For the correlation between religiosity and fertility see E.L. Lehrer, 'Religion as a Determinant of Marital Fertility', *Journal of Population Economics* 9:2 (1996), 173-96.

to increase exponentially. In 1950, on the onset of European withdrawal and decolonization, the numerical relation between the population of the two regions in question had been significantly reduced, so that Europe had almost two times the population of Africa. In 2000 the population of sub-Saharan Africa had reached 669 million people, clearly exceeding the population of Europe which was already ageing and declining.

According to modified demographic projections, as published in the 2019 Revision of World Population Prospects, in 2020 the European population amounts to 747,636,000. In 2050 the population of Europe shall be slightly reduced to 726,782,000 and it shall continue to feature reduction tendencies, reaching 692,291,000 in 2080 and stabilizing in 696,889,000 by 2100. For the same periods the population of sub-Saharan Africa on the contrary is expected to feature a significant rise: from over a billion people in 2020 (1,094,366,000) sub-Saharan Africa is projected to reach 2,232,633,000 in 2050 and 4,779,563,000 in 2100. Specific countries serve as an enlightening example of the tremendous population increase over the next decades: Uganda's population shall rise from 45 million people in 2020 to over 250 million people in 2100, while Nigeria's population will skyrocket from 206 million people in 2020 to 459 million people in 2050 and 1,357,673 in 2100.⁷

Table 1: Projection of populations of Europe and its demographic hinterland (population in thousands)

Regions	2020	2030	2050	2080	2100
Europe	747,636	746,411	726,782	692,219	696,889
Sub-Saharan Africa	1,094,366	1,418,194	2,232,633	3,731,714	4,779,563
Northern Africa- Western Asia	525,869	618,038	793,860	1,027,570	1,165,368

Source: United Nations Population Division (ed.), *World Population Prospects 2019, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables*, Washington D.C. 2019, 5 (Table A.2)

Table 2: Sub-Saharan African Population and Ratios, 1800-2000

Time period	Population (million)	Africa/Europe*	Africa/World
1800	92	63,0%	9,65
1850	90	43,1%	7,3%
1900	95	32,2%	5,8%
1950	186	47,3%	7,3%
2000	669	130,2%	10,9%

*Excluding ex-USSR
Source: United Nations Population Division (ed.), *World Population Prospects*, Washington D.C. 2013

7. United Nations Population Division (ed.), *World Population Prospects 2019, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables*, Washington D.C. 2019, 5 (Tables A.9 and A.10).

Concerning demographic projections, by 2050 the relation between the populations of the center and the periphery of our geopolitical system is expected to be completely reversed, as the population of sub-Saharan Africa will be more than three times as large as that of Europe, while in 2100 it will be almost seven times as that of Europe.⁸ In fact due largely to high fertility, sub-Saharan Africa is projected to experience the fastest overall growth in a world level, rising from 12% of the world's population in 2010 to about 20% in 2050. These extremely high rates are connected to the fact that the populations of sub-Saharan Africa have not entered the phase of demographic transition, but on the contrary still develop their activities in a different fertility framework.⁹ Sub-Saharan Africa is still part of a Malthusian correlation between agricultural production, land property, overpopulation and violent internal conflicts.¹⁰

The other part of Europe's hinterland, the Northern Africa-Western Asia region, is also expected to grow faster than the world, edging up from 5% of the global population in 2010 to 6% in 2050, amounting to about 516 million in 2050.¹¹ Total fertility rate in the Northern Africa-Western Asia region is considerably lower in relation to the unusually high rates of sub-Saharan Africa.

Total fertility rate (the number of children an average woman is expected to have in her lifetime) in sub-Saharan Africa in 2010 was quite high, as it amounted to 4.8 with differences observed between the various population groups based on their religious affiliation. In countries of the Middle East the total fertility rate is lower, amounting to 3.0, still above the replacement level (estimated to be 2.1 children per woman). In Europe at the same time the medium total fertility rate of its largely post-Christian and secular population is a meager 1.6, well below the replacement level.¹² This differentiation is due primarily to cultural reasons: Europe has entered a post-religious or rather post-Christian historical period, while it allows and often encourages smaller families, has undermined the no-

8. United Nations Population Division (ed.), *World Population Prospects 2019, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables*, op.cit., 5 (Table A.2).

9. A. Korotayev, J. Zinkina, J. Goldstone & S. Shulgin, 'Explaining Current Fertility Dynamics in Tropical Africa From an Anthropological Perspective: A Cross-Cultural Investigation', *Cross-Cultural Research* 50:3 (2016), 1-30.

10. J. Zinkina & A. Korotayev, 'Explosive Population Growth in Tropical Africa', op.cit., 125.

11. These data do not include the states of Turkey and Iran. For the 2050 estimates (median estimation) see World Bank, 'Population Estimates and Projections', <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/hnp/popestimates>.

12. T.J. Espenshade, J.C. Guzman & C.F. Westoff, 'The Surprising Global Variation in Replacement Fertility', *Population Research and Policy Review* 22 (2003), 575.

tion of family with substitutes or even promotes practices of indirect infanticide, as abortions. Since the last decades of the 20th century Europe has entered a phase of reproduction patterns known as second demographic transition, being locked in a low fertility trap.¹³

The two main areas that form the periphery of Europe in terms of its migration flows are thus expected to witness a significant change in population size which in turn shall probably cause additional massive migration flows towards Europe, *irrelevant* of the political situation predominant in these areas.¹⁴ In contrast Europe shall approach 2050 with an ageing population structure that will be excessively tilted towards the old.¹⁵

Geopolitics with its emphasis on the physical realities of geography can help us realize that sub-Saharan Africa is set with inherent geophysical disadvantages that have not facilitated structural development over the centuries, such as climate, large distance between the urban centers and between the coastline and the interior, lack of effective ports and a peripheral position in relation to the main centers of commerce and production in the world system.

From a macro-historical point of view mass migration has been caused by a variety of short-term, middle-term, but mostly long-term factors. In the pre-industrial age with its Malthusian connotations, these include limitations in the carrying capacity of a given geographical region, as manifested in the inherent correlation between agricultural production and population sustainability or between access to herding grounds (for nomadic populations). Relevant historical examples include the mass migration of Germanic populations in the 4th and the 5th centuries due to the previous and the pressure exerted by the mass migration of the nomadic Huns from the region of Central Asia, itself caused by lack of herding spaces for the nomadic economy of this population. Instead, modern mass migration is caused primarily by the parameter of religiosity and the high fertility abounding especially in the sub-Saharan Africa region and in the Northern Africa-Western Asia region.

13. R. Lesthaeghe, 'The Second Demographic Transition in Western Countries: An Interpretation', in K. Mason & A. Jensen (eds), *Gender and Family Change in Industrialized Countries*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, 17-62; W. Lutz, V. Skirbekk & M.R. Testa, *The Low Fertility Trap Hypothesis: Forces That May Lead to Further Postponement and Fewer Births in Europe*, Wien: Vienna Institute of Demography, 2005.

14. Pew Research Forum, 'The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050', 2 April 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>.

15. J.A. Goldstone, 'Europe's Brave New World: Security Implications of Global Population Changes, 2007-2050', *European View* 7 (2008), 326-8.

3. *Conclusions and Policy Implications*

Asymmetric population growth between Europe and its periphery is the fundamental macro-historical factor for massive migration oriented towards the continent of Europe. This demographic asymmetry shall in all probability lead to recurring increased migration flows towards Europe from its periphery over an extended period frame. This migration influx shall be of a massive, unprecedented nature in the history of Europe for thousands of years. Millions of people from the hinterland of Europe shall attempt to move towards Europe attracted by a permissive legal framework, an ideological milieu that undermines the notion of historical European identity and an ahistorical mentality among European administrative elites, especially on the level of the European Union bureaucracy. The member-states of the European Union are unwilling to maintain their cultural identity as reflected in the perseverance of the given historical characteristics of their historical populations.

Measures that could be adopted to answer the geopolitical issue of massive migration flows are related both to the level of the European Union and to the national level of individual states. From a demographic point of view the states of the periphery of Europe, i.e. the North Africa-Middle East region and sub-Saharan Africa, should be encouraged to achieve a status of *demographic transition*, moving from a combination of low life expectancy and high fertility to the opposite condition, i.e. high life expectancy and a more stable fertility pattern. The historical example of Iran that has drastically reduced the total fertility rate of its population serves as a reminder that fertility decline, and population stabilizations is possible, though with a concentrated effort under state guidance. Family planning, access to birth control and educational possibilities and the raising of the social status of women through institutional reforms are some parameters that have been linked to reaching demographic transition. Economic stabilization and development of these countries using European financial and technical assistance is another factor of importance. Still economic assistance should be directly linked to the significant lowering of the fertility levels of each state that receives external aid.

What is foremost needed though is a change in institutional mentality among the European states and agencies themselves, a coherent neorealist approach to the phenomenon of migration and the contextualization of immigration flows in a wider security framework. The radical change in the notions of refugee and migrants is self-evidently a necessary step for the preservation of the historical identity and the cultural background of Europe. In this manner the inescapable dynamics of population pressure linked to structural demographic factors, as the differential fertility between the regions of Europe and its hinterland caused by religiosity and a different perception of reproduction choices, can be properly assessed and evaluated for future policy applications.

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