

**MODERN
GEODEMOGRAPHIC
PROBLEMS
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
AND THE MIGRATION
CRISIS OF THE 2010S**

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This article explores the impact of the migration crisis of the 2010s on demographic development of the European Union. Employing statistics and mapping, the study demonstrates that demographic development of the EU states is affected by neither socioeconomic performance nor religious, linguistic or cultural characteristics. Migration flows differ significantly by country and EU region. The authors analyze major irregular migration routes and show that their use cannot be explained solely by traditional demographic approaches. There are some differences in the proportion of migrants by country, although their settlement patterns are similar. Even after decades spent in a destination country, Muslim population remains poorly integrated in the local community and its impact on the latter is insignificant (e.g. Turks in Germany). The demographic mosaic of the European Union is becoming increasingly fragmented, which makes any demographic forecasts at the national level hardly sensible. However, forecasts at the community level are possible and necessary. All these factors contribute to a need for geodemographic research.

Key words: migrant crisis, population, irregular migration routes, Muslim population of the European Union, “no-go zones”, geodemography

Introduction

One of the biggest issues of world politics in 2015—2016 was an influx of refugees from the Middle East who arrived in the European Union. The “refugee problem” was covered from different points of view in almost all mass media as well as political, sociological and other studies that were carried out literally “hot on the trail”. The refrain of most publications and research findings was a statement that the current

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flow of refugees would radically change Europe due to the fact that the birth rate in Asian countries is much higher than in European countries, which will have a very negative impact on the development of the “united Europe”. It should be noted that similar problems are also common for modern Russia.

The main tendencies of population changes in the European Union

In order to understand how illegal migrants of 2015 can affect geodemographic development, it is necessary to turn to data not only about their numbers and origins, but also to data on the population of the current EU and the main processes of its quantitative and qualitative transformation. Undoubtedly, the problem of migration in the European Union on the whole and illegal migration in particular have repeatedly attracted researchers' attention, and some of their articles on this topic have been published in geographic journals (example [12, 14]). Among the latest works we can name an article titled “Migratory connections of Europe: space-temporal transformation” by D. V. Zhitin, A. A. Krasnov and A. V. Shendrik, which was published in the spring of 2016 [10].

The most basic indicator that characterizes features of demographic development of any country, region, etc. is the dynamics of population. As of January 1, 2015, the population of the European Union (EU-28) accounted for approximately 508.5 million people, which is by almost 1.5 million people more than at the beginning of 2014. During ten years (2005—2015) the population of the European Union increased by 14 million people (as of 1 January 2005—494.5 million) [25]. Obviously, the size of the EU population is very high and it continues to grow, albeit at a slow pace (about 0.03% per year). However the recent years have seen some acceleration of the growth rates: compared to 1994—2014 when an annual increase in the population was 1.3 million a year, both in 2013 and 2014 the EU population increased by 1.7 million people [21, p. 4].

A question arises: what are the components of this growth? The basis for the growth of the EU population in 2013 was formed by mechanical movement of population — a share of external migration contributed about 95% of total population growth [21, p. 4].

Before the 1990s, the natural increase in the EU exceeded the migration rate; in 1991 the mechanical increase exceeded the natural one for the first time, and in 2003 its share had reached 95% of total population growth. Then, between 2003 and 2009, the share of mechanical growth decreased and accordingly the share of natural growth increased; in 2009 the share of natural growth reached 43% and the mechanical one — 57%. Later the share of mechanical growth began to grow again [21, p. 4]. In 2014, the share of natural increase in the total growth of the EU population made up 14.5% and the mechanical growth — 85.5% [23, p. 20].



The decrease in the share of mechanical growth in 2003—2009 is fully understandable, particularly at the end of this period (i. e. the financial crisis of 2008). However the increase in the share of natural growth cannot be so easily explained. The growth of natural increase in these years was revealed by the authors of this article on the basis of examples of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia [7; 8]. It was called “eurobabyboom” as it coincided with the first years of membership of these states in the European Union.

In general, the demographic situation in post-industrial society can be defined as the fifth stage of demographic transition. The characteristic feature of this stage, distinguishing it from the fourth stage, is an increase in the birth rate in the conditions of stably-developing “well-fed” society. The birth rate at this stage may increase due to better quality of life.

Living conditions, in particular for women, allow giving birth to and bringing up more than one child without any harm to the career or status in society (i. e. nannies, flexible work schedule, work from home). In such circumstances, the value of the family increases. For many years of emancipation women have reached a certain position in society. They do not have to fight for their rights; they have good education and profession, and can afford to raise several or even many children, interrupting their career for a short period of time or even continuing their work. As a rule, the age of women giving birth to children at this stage is higher compared to the previous stages.

According to the geodemographic approach, the so-called civilizational differences do not reveal themselves. When describing a method for attributing countries and territories to civilizational groups, G. M. Fedorov says, “we consider religion as the first typological sign, with the second sign being a language community (language, language group, language family) and the third one historical (i. e. being a part of a state or its colony for a long time)” [16, p. 67]. It is difficult to say with complete certainty that the entire set of these signs or some of them individually are manifested in the geodemography of modern “united Europe”.

The most favorable ratio of natural and mechanical growth in 2011—2014 among the EU countries was demonstrated by the Catholic Slavic Slovenia: the natural increase in 2011 was 1.6 times higher than the mechanical one, and in 2013 — more than 4 times higher (by: [21, p. 7]). What is the current situation in this country? It is difficult to answer this question because in the second half of 2015 its territory was crossed by one of the primary migratory routes for refugees traveling from Greece to the main part of the European Union.

There is a combination of natural loss and mechanical outflow in the countries on the outskirts of the EU. These states are completely different in “civilizational” terms: for example, Catholic Romanian-speaking Portugal, Protestant Orthodox Latvia (where the majority of population speaks two languages — Latvian and Russian), Romanian-speaking Orthodox Romania, Slavic Catholic Croatia (where the Orthodox population is very small as a result of the genocide of the Serbs in the 1990s), and Orthodox Greece (its language is not similar to any other Indo-European language).

It is common for the “old” countries of the European Union, which formed a basis for its “supranationalism”, to have a huge variety of combinations of population movement and migratory movement rates. For example, Belgium and the Netherlands are characterized by small, but quite steady natural change of populations, although they might seem to be almost “endangered” countries. In 2013, the natural increase in the population of Catholic bilingual Belgium (Romanic Walloons and German Flemish) is less than its migration balance (natural increase — 1.5 ‰, migration balance — 2.3 ‰), but in German-speaking Protestant Netherlands the natural increase exceeded the migration balance (1.8 ‰ and 1.2 ‰).

Germany is a country with the largest population in the European Union. It consists of Protestant (north) and Catholic (southern) parts. The natural population decline here is combined with the positive migration balance (–2.6 ‰ and 5.6 ‰) [21, p. 4]. Moreover, data on natural population movement in Germany does not reveal any dependence of the birth rate on religious affiliation of population. In 2013 the natural population growth was observed in two cities — Berlin and Hamburg (0.7 and 0.5 ‰). Both cities are located in the northern part of Protestant Germany. But in another northern German city, Bremen, the natural population decline of around 3.3 ‰ was observed. In the southern Catholic part of Germany, the natural population decline was also observed, although it is lower than in the north. In Bavaria, this rate reached — 1.4 ‰. The natural decline (–3.1 ‰) was observed in North Rhine-Westphalia, characterized by a high share of Muslim (mostly Turkish) population. In 2013 a gap amongst the German states in terms of birth rate reached 1.5 times (maximum — 10.4 ‰ in Hamburg, minimum 6.9 ‰ in the Saar) and a gap in terms of mortality rate — 1.4 times (minimum — 9.6 ‰ in Berlin and Baden-Württemberg, maximum — 13.9 ‰ in Saxony-Anhalt) [data: 26, s. 34].

When analyzing more demographically advantaged German regions, it is very difficult to reveal any significant dependence on religious and linguistic composition of population (e. g. it is not appropriate to seriously consider the impact of High or Low German dialects on the birth rate) or natural and socio-economic conditions. In our opinion, it is more important to consider certain factors and living conditions of people in specific geographic environment, which often have no quantitative indices and are difficult to be identified in statistics. It is a “state of mind” of local or regional communities formed by information flows, which arrive outside these communities and are formed inside of them. These information flows can reflect reality as both traditional and false mirrors. As information flows not only reflect society but also form it, the reality of these flows has a direct impact on the development of society, including its geodemographic development.

The above-mentioned examples of several states of “middle Europe” show that religious and linguistic affiliation of populations as well as historical aspects of countries and regions have a small impact on the current geodemographic processes in the European Union. Moreover, the factor of religious affiliation in the European Union is constantly and steadily declining, and this process was most active in the first years of the 21st century [1]. This



tendency can be regarded as negative because Christianity provides a spiritual foundation of modern Europe. Unfortunately, it has to be admitted that dechristianization of the European Union is an active process, which is manifested in the reproductive behavior, too. So a difference between the Catholic and Protestant parts of the European Union is gradually disappearing. The orthodox part of the EU-28 (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus) — where the adherence to Christian values in general is higher than in Catholic and Protestant countries — is too small to withstand the onslaught of dechristianization.

Illegal immigration into European Union: features of the recent years

Before a mass “invasion” of refugees from countries of the Middle East, the countries of the European Union were characterized by significant differences in immigration rates. According to the data of 2013, the positive migration balance across the European Union amounted to 1627.7 thousand people, and 72.7% (1183.9 thousand people) accounted for Italy (the first wave of refugees came from North Africa, mostly Libya). Before that period of time, the issue of migrants had not been typical of Italy, as the main flows of migration to the European Union had been heading to France (natives of the ex-colonies), the UK (natives of the ex-colonies) and Germany (gastarbeiters, mainly from Turkey).

The current (2015) wave of refugees affected mainly Greece. This country had to face a similar influx of migrants in the first half of the 1920s when after the defeat of Greece in the war with Kemalist Turkey about 1.5 million Greeks were resettled to Greece, which led to a long-term crisis in the country that lasted for several decades until the mid 1970s (the coup of the “black colonels”).

However the final destination of the refugees of 2015 was not Greece but the entire European Union. According to media reports, these migrants have no intentions to settle down or stay for a long time in Greece, although some of them will inevitably remain in the country. For the European Union, a mechanical influx of a million people is not so great. The peculiarity of this situation is in a high level of concentration of this flow both in time (most migration flows fall on the second half of 2015) and in space (most refugees landed on the Greek islands in the Aegean sea, located within sight of the coast of Turkey).

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) has identified eight main migratory routes into the European Union: Western African, Western Mediterranean, Apulia and Calabria, Central Mediterranean, the circular route from Albania to Greece, Western Balkan, Eastern Mediterranean and the Eastern Borders route. No account of migration along the Apulia and Calabria route has been carried out from October 2014; this data are included in the statistics on the Central Mediterranean route. So there are seven routes in fact (Fig.).

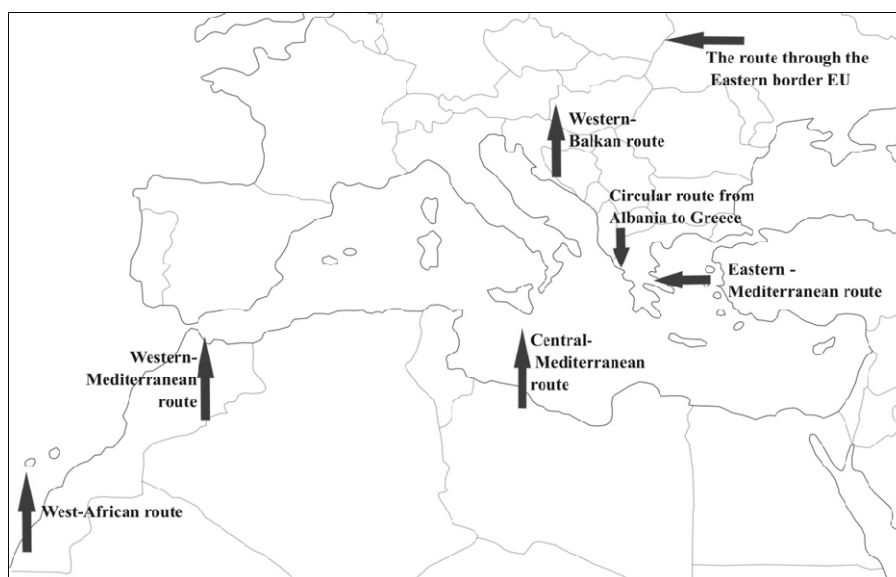


Fig. The main routes of penetration of illegal immigrants into the European Union (based on [24])

Data on the numbers of migrants travelling along these routes in 2015—2016 is presented in table 1.

Table 1

**The number of illegal immigrants arrived in the EU countries
(according to Frontex)**

Route	Number of illegal immigrants		
	2006	2015	2016
Western African route	31,600	874	473 (January-September)
Western Mediterranean route	6,500 ¹	7,164	6,090 (January-September)
Central Mediterranean route	39,800 ¹	153,946	127,599 (January-September)
Circular route from Albania to Greece	42,000	8,932	3,054 (January-August)
Western Balkan route	3,090 ²	764,038	121,712 (January-September)
Eastern Mediterranean route	52,300 ¹	885,386	172,982 (January-October)
Eastern borders route	No data	No data	853 (January-August)

Compiled on: [24].

In fact, the Western Balkan route does not exist as an independent one. Several Western Balkan countries have already joined the European Union, and for citizens of most other countries there is no need to illegally cross its

¹ In 2008.

² In 2009.



borders as they have the right to enter the Schengen area without a visa (nowadays for the population of the Western Balkans nowadays a visa for entering the Schengen area is required only for the citizens of the so-called “Republic of Kosovo” that illegally separated from Serbia). The Western Balkan route in its current form is direct continuation of the Eastern Mediterranean route, but some of the refugees who cross the European Union’s border in Greece are lost somewhere in Slovenia, Croatia or Hungary on the way to its other border.

It is sometimes stated that “in 2015... experts began to record a significant rise in the flow of illegal immigrants on all main routes” [5, p. 79]. But as it can be seen from table 1, the situation is not like that. The growth of the total number of immigrants leads to changing the balance of the routes.

It is not always possible to explain the “popularity” of a particular route of penetration of illegal immigrants to the European Union. The Western African route (the endpoint within the European Union — the Canary Islands) is usually chosen by citizens of Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire, Cameroon and other West African countries. The economic, social and military situation in West Africa has not dramatically changed since 2006, and it still remains the poorest region in the modern world. However the flow of immigrants from this area declined by about 40 times. The numbers of illegal immigrants from Albania to Greece decreased by 5 times, although the living standards in Albania significantly yield the same value even in the poorest countries of the European Union and there are no other reasons for migrating from Albania but the economic ones. The Eastern Mediterranean route, which hosts the main flow of refugees now, is not new: in 2008, more than 50,000 people passed through it. An abrupt increase of the flow on this route is usually associated with a civil war in Syria but the war has continued since 2011.

Illegal immigrants from Syria indeed constitute the largest group of refugees taking this route, but they are followed by refugees from Afghanistan, where the internal clashes complicated by external intervention have taken place since at least the 1970s, and from Iraq, which is in a state of internal strife since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003. Obviously, illegal migrants come to the EU countries in search of a better life, but it is not always possible to understand what sets in motion tens and hundreds of thousands of people so that they set off for a journey full of risks. Similarly, it is not always clear what stops these flows. Statistics on illegal migration into the European Union shows a sharp rise and an equally sharp decline in the number of migrants in different directions.

Apparently, key importance in this case is placed on modern means of information and communication (social networks, mobile communication). “Poor” countries are only slightly inferior to the “rich” ones in terms of the level of development of modern networks: in the countries of the Middle East, which provide main flows of illegal migrants, cell phones and Internet access, including mobile, are currently no longer a luxury. It can be illustrated by numerous street shops selling “mobile phones”, computers and other modern electronic equipment in this part of the world. Society in the East is no less susceptible to informational influences than society in the

postindustrial countries. Communication technologies are developing at a faster rate compared with traditional economic activities, and the level of their development does not correspond to the level of development of productive forces of these countries. Accordingly, we can assume that migration flows are largely formed by “fashion” for migration, which appears and disappears. However, this issue requires some deeper research.

We can assume that the external borders of the European Union were crossed by approximately 1.1 million illegal migrants in 2015. There is no contradiction with the data presented in table 1. According to this information, Frontex registered approximately 1.8 million illegal migrants. This agency is not engaged in legal border crossings because it is a job of border services of a respective state. But a large part of migrants was taken into consideration twice — when crossing the external borders of the European Union in the Aegean sea (the border between Turkey and Greece, the Eastern Mediterranean route) and when crossing the borders of the Schengen area on the Balkan Peninsula (the Western Balkan route). Both borders, as it was mentioned above, were crossed by the same people, so the total number of illegal migrants is lower than the sum of data in the table by the number of migrants who arrived in the EU on the Western Balkan route.

For the European Union, with its half a billion population, it is not a big figure. Frequent statements that the inflow [of immigrants] can significantly affect demographic conditions in Europe and stimulate its islamisation are hardly justifiable. For example, originally Turkish population of Germany now accounts for approximately 3 million people. The Turkish diaspora in Germany started to form back in the 1960s, and now it is represented by three or even four generations. However, one of the main issues with the Turkish population is lack of their integrity in the country’s life. In other words, the Turkish population is isolated or at least semi-isolated from the German one.

In France, the share of Muslim population in 2008 reached 8% of the population aged between 18 and 50; according to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs a share of Muslims in France estimated for 8—10%. If the Muslim part of population is actually 10% of the country’s population, then it is roughly 6.5 million people. In France, like in Germany, Muslim (predominantly Arab) population is extremely poorly blended with the French. In Great Britain, the share of Muslim population constitutes 5.4% in England and Wales, and 1.5% in Scotland.

The highest estimation of Muslim population in the European Union in 2012 is 23 million people. The overall number of refugees from the Muslim countries who arrived in the European Union can be estimated for 2—2.5 million people. Even considering these figures, the overall Muslim population in the European Union is estimated for 25 million people, which is approximately 5% of the entire population of the “united Europe”.

In the European Union, Muslim population, including both legal and illegal migrants, prefers to gather in certain blocks or districts, which are called “no-go zones”. It is claimed that there are around 900 “no-go zones” in London, Paris, Stockholm and Berlin, and they are not controlled by any



authority and live by their own rules/laws. It is thought that in France there are dozens of such zones where the police and gendarmerie cannot set the order or just enter it without the risks of reaction, gunfire or even armed confrontation.

Linked to the terrorist attacks in Paris (November 13, 2015), Belgium (March 22, 2015) and Nice (July 14, 2016), broad publicity was brought to the Sint-Jans-Molenbeek commune, where the share of African expatriates in 2015 reached 37.1%. The share of African and Asian population in the Ganshoren commune (included in the Brussels-Capital Region) is increasing.

There is nothing unusual in the formation of such zones. For all major European cities it is quite common to have a high level of territorial and social differentiation of population, for example, division of a city into “bad” and “good” districts. Therefore, in any big European city there are districts for immigrants and deprived locals as well as districts for very rich citizens for whom immigrants or paupers perform serving or catering work. There are much more districts with European population in Brussels than districts with non-EU immigrants. Even more, the share of European population in Belgium’s capital has been constantly growing in the recent years: in 2015 it increased from 59.3% to 69.7%. It should be also noted that there are some European Union and NATO headquarters in Brussels, which leads to a high number of foreigners in the city.

A “no-go zone” can be called, in a more simple way, just a ghetto, inhabitants of which have moved there without being forced to do so. Migrants arrive from the countries where the values are different from the ones typical for modern Europe. They, like all other migrants in all times and parts of the world, try to stay together, assuming it is easier to survive in this way in an unfamiliar place. The demand for unskilled labour is falling, and even if it remains, places of immigrants from Muslim countries are taken by citizens of the new members of the European Union — Eastern Europe. Poles, Romanians and Bulgarians who live in Western Europe also tend to form their own ethnic districts.

The Muslim world is absolutely heterogeneous, which can be illustrated by civil wars in Syria and Yemen, still being raged in spring 2016, in which some groups of Muslims fight against the other ones.

Forecasts of demographic development and probability of their realization

According to some forecasts, the proportion of Muslims in the European Union's population is going to reach 20% by 2050. This information is widely announced in the media [11]. But these forecasts are based on the linear extrapolation of actual data on natural and mechanical growth of the European Union’s population and the EU’s Muslim population. However, both indicators will change inevitably in a direction that cannot be predicted. In a demographic forecast, that could have been made in 1980 (35 years ago,

which is approximately the same period of time that remains until 2050) to predict composition of population of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 2015—2016, the attention to Muslims would be unlikely to be drawn at all as their share in the total population of the EEC was extremely small at the time.

The forecasts, proposed at the end of the last century, did not come true. According to M. A. Klupt's view on the projections of 1999, "... differences between forward-looking estimates and reality are determined, to a large extent, by perceptions that prevailed only a decade and a half ago. An important element of those perceptions was the image of an aging and dying due to a low birth rate Europe" [15, p. 58].

The current geodemographic situation (using the terminology of G.M. Fedorov, see [17]) changed in a way that no one was able to foresee even 15—20 years ago. The extreme variability of moods and attitudes of current European society provides no basis for a reliable forecast of society development in any direction, including the demographic one. Long-term forecasts of such vast and crowded areas as the "united Europe" are actually transformed into guesses, with the same level of probability for the "predicted" events.

We should address the supporters of the idea that social development can be predicted with the following question: can they give an example of if not a long-term then at least medium-term accurate forecast of demographic, economic or social development? There are no such forecasts, and their preparation is just a "numbers game" with no real result. Only predictions made by the UN demographers about the population of the Earth and its major regions are always true, but it should be borne in mind that the UN both produces forecasts and announces them to be filled so it is impossible to check them.

However, at the local or even regional levels, such forecasts can give more or less reliable results. Local communities of people are often formed on the basis of income level and similar social status of their inhabitants. It is clearly visible in today's European Union. On this basis, the value of geodemographic research, which explores society in the context of geographical environment of its habitat, must be increased.

Most representatives of the demographic science understand this importance. For example, one of the most famous Russian demographers A.G. Vishnevsky in the article "After the demographic transition: divergence, convergence or diversity" concludes that "... the demographic transition includes transition from one type of spatial and temporal diversity of demographic indicators to the other" [4, 128]. But it is the "space-time diversity" that is an object of geodemographic research.

However, the demographic "mosaic" — that is being emerged in the European Union as a result of heterogeneous processes of natural and mechanical movement of population, the driving forces and motives of which can be only guessed — demonstrates that the time of "universal theories", supposedly suitable for the whole world and for all times, has passed in demography, as well as in other social sciences. Based on this fact, one can



only agree with the statement of M. A. Klupt that “the paradigm of a single line development promotes the knowledge of the world in those cases where processes or an overall trend unifying them are unidirectional. To investigate the causes of multi-directedness of the processes or differences in the development of geographic, social, cultural and other segments of the world, a single-line development paradigm is not enough” [13, p. 36]. In order to understand, analyze and forecast the processes of current demographic development of the European Union, much more attention must be paid to the typology of geodemographic processes, to geodemographic zoning created on its basis and to designing development models for each type of region.

Conclusion

It is believed that the characteristics of the demographic development of the Old World countries can reduce their value in the modern world. Thus, according to R. S. Grinberg, “both the EU and Russia are objectively decreasing “quantities” in the modern world, where economic power is rapidly shifting to the East. What is more, demography is not in their favor” [6, p. 8].

However, it is questionable whether one should fully agree with this opinion. The fact that migration flows head for the EU, and not vice versa, already indicates that the level of economic and social development of the EU countries considerably exceeds that of the surrounding regions. The same is true, albeit to a lesser extent, about Russia. As long as the inhabitants of most of the former republics of the USSR and even those states which have never been part of it (such as China) cross our borders in order to find “work”, one can be sure that in future neither the “united Europe” nor Russia is going to become those objectively decreasing “quantities”.

It is beyond any doubt that the current flows of migrants in the EU and Russia are very large. Yet the situation is neither catastrophic nor unusual so far, as it can be seen on the example of migrations in the EU. Europe to a greater extent and Russia to a lesser extent are likely to come to an “equilibrium” state, in which qualitative development of society and quantitative (demographic) development will continue at the same speed. Therefore it can be claimed that their importance in the world is going to grow, rather than to shrink. However one should keep in mind the fact that the EU with its half a billion population can only “be shaken” by the current “migration crisis”, while for our country, with its population of a little over 140 million people, an influx of migrants originating from the Asian republics of the former Soviet Union may have much more serious consequences.

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