Immigrants in the Republic of Poland after 1989 and economic security of the state in the context of the provisions of selected strategic documents

Paweł Olbrycht
Faculty of Security Sciences,
General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces, Wrocław, Poland,
e-mail: pawel.olbrycht@awl.edu.pl

INFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

The article aims to assess the impact of the increasing scale of economic immigration into the Republic of Poland after 1989 on the level of economic security of the state. The study indicates and describes the most significant moments influencing the changing scale of immigration to Poland after 1989, and analyses selected strategic documents on security related to the phenomenon of economic immigration.

Qualitative research methods were adopted, including analysis of sources, using the technique of analyzing the content of Polish and foreign literature, Polish strategic documents, legal acts, and statistical data (desk research) of the Office for Foreigners to achieve the objective.

KEYWORDS

immigrants, the Republic of Poland, security, labor market

Introduction

The year 1989 is undoubtedly one of the most critical moments in the history of the Republic of Poland (RP). It was then that the political transformation took place, resulting in the reorganization of the functioning of the state in political (through the introduction of a democratic system) and economic (through the change of the shape of the national economy from centrally controlled to free-market) aspects.

These changes also led to the “opening” of the Republic of Poland’s borders, which was associated with significant facilitation of migration opportunities, understood as a phenomenon involving legal or illegal movement to improve living conditions [1, p. 70-1]. Similarly, from the very beginning of humanity, also in the case under consideration, the phenomenon had a two-track character: it meant both the emigration of the Poles outside the borders of the Republic of Poland and the immigration of foreigners to the territory of the Republic of Poland.
The phenomenon of migration can be included in the following areas: political (escaping from the effects of military action), social (emigration for fear of persecution on minority grounds – e.g. religious, ethnic, etc.), natural (being forced to move for reasons of natural forces – e.g. loss of home due to flooding) [2]. In the context of foreigners’ immigration to the Republic of Poland’s territory, the fourth – economic – dimension of migration seems to be the most important. It refers to the so-called classic theory of migration by Georg Ravenstein. A German researcher claimed that the underlying motivating factor for changing the place of existence is the possibility of increasing income by taking up better-paid employment and improving the standard of living [3].

The phenomenon of migration is inseparably connected with the aspect of economic security. The authors of the Dictionary of National Security Terms define it as the state of development of the national economic system, ensuring high efficiency of functioning through the use of internal development factors and the ability to effectively oppose external pressures that may lead to the delay in the development [1, p. 16].

Given the assumed goal, the research problem solved in the article took the form of a question: What is the significance of the phenomenon of immigration for the level of Polish economic security after 1989? On the other hand, the research hypothesis assumed that immigrants coming to Poland after 1989 do not negatively affect the level of state economic security, and in view of demographic problems, their participation in the Polish labor market is necessary.

1. The most important dates in the context of economic immigration into the area of the Republic of Poland after 1989

Apart from the analyzed 1989, other dates having the most significant impact on the scale of economic immigration to Poland include:

– 1991,
– 2004,
– turn of 2013 and 2014,
– 2017.

1991 is a significant date on the scale of the history of the whole globe. It was then that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was dissolved, and thus the so-called bipolar world system, consisting of a peculiar international balance of power, was finally completed due to political blocs gathered around the United States and the USSR. However, the process of the break-up of the USSR through internal reforms by the then leader of the country, Mikhail Gorbachev, continued since 1985. One of its manifestations was the proclamation of independence by the individual republics in 1990-1991.

In the context of the migration phenomenon, the fact that the emigration of citizens of the newly created countries in Eastern Europe, including, among others, due to the short distance to the Republic of Poland, was of significant importance. It can be exemplified by the citizens of Ukraine, Armenia, or the Russian Federation emigrating to Poland since the 1990s.

As can be seen from the analysis of statistical data, the increase in the scale of immigration since the 1980s was visible in the number of permanent residences permits issued – from
about 1500 to 6512 in 1992 [4, p. 11]. The increase in the number of Polish repatriates (e.g., from Kazakhstan) and foreigners applying for international protection in Poland, was also characteristic of this period. An example of this was the citizens of countries in which armed conflicts occurred in the 1990s – Yugoslavia and the Russian Federation of Chechen nationality.

Another landmark moment in the history of economic immigration to Poland after 1989 was its accession to the European Union on May 1, 2004, together with six other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, namely, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, as well as Slovenia, Malta, and Cyprus.

Due to the political and economic integration with the countries of Western Europe, Poland faced a historic (and utilized) opportunity to raise the country’s economic level. In the context of the migration phenomenon, it brought two-way consequences. The first one was the growth in the scale of economic emigration of the Poles, who had the opportunity to take up legal employment in the richest countries of Western Europe, such as Great Britain or Germany, much more freely than before. The second aspect, which concerns economic immigrants in Poland, was a significant increase in the Republic of Poland’s level of attractiveness in economic terms, including mainly the labor market. That was owing to joining the EU’s political and economic structures, which has been an attractive factor, especially for citizens of countries beyond the European Union.

The increase in the scale of immigration to Poland in the discussed period can be observed based on positive decisions concerning permanent residence – from 1735 in 2003 to 4365 in 2004 [5].

There is also no doubt that one of the main, if not the most crucial moment in the history of immigration to Poland after 1989 was the turn of 2013 and 2014 when the scale of immigration of its citizens to Poland increased significantly.

November 21, 2013, is widely regarded as the beginning of the so-called Dignity Revolution, which is a kind of response of the Ukrainian society to the impasse in terms of Ukraine’s integration with the European Union, which resulted in mass social protests on Independence Square (the so-called Euromaidan) in Kyiv. These events, in turn, resulted in the actions of the Russian Federation, which saw the potential integration of Ukraine into the “western” political environment as a threat to the realization of one of its most important national interests, i.e., control over the former USSR’s geographical area. These actions included the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the referendum held on it. It resulted in the creation of the self-proclaimed Crimean Republic, widely unrecognized by the international community and military action in the eastern part of Ukraine. As for the latter, according to the official position, the Russian Federation remains aloof, providing only logistical support for separatists of Russian nationality as a form of protection of its national minority. However, this justification is unlikely to be consistent with the actual state of affairs, especially in view of the high level of industrialization in the region under analysis, as the western, economically much weaker part of Ukraine does not enjoy the same level of interest from the Kremlin authorities. Nonetheless, in the context of analyzing the scale of the phenomenon of immigration from Ukraine to Poland, it should be noted that it would be a mistake to identify this fact only with Ukraine’s political situation. For many people, those events may, according to Everett Lee’s Push-Pull theory, presume that the presence of ‘pushing’ and ‘pulling’ factors in
the context of migration [6] provides a strong emotional stimulus, and are not, as in classical theory, motivated solely by the economic aspect. Such a stimulus may be a threat to health and life, for example in the case of people living in the so-called MENA (the Middle East and North Africa) area, but it may also be a kind of internal impulse to make changes in one’s life in order to increase its level.

As was the case in the previously analyzed period, an increase in the scale of immigration to Poland can also be observed based on positive decisions on permanent residence issued in the number of 3710 in 2013, and 6659 in 2014 [7].

The last of the critical moments of economic immigration to Poland after 1989 is, like the previous one, also related to Ukrainian citizens.

In their case, from June 11, 2017, it is not a short-stay visa but only a valid passport that is required to cross the European Union’s external and internal borders for a period of up to 90 days. That fact also applies to the Push-Pull migration theory because although such a form of residence on the Republic of Poland’s territory does not entitle one to take up employment. The very fact of the relatively free, compared to the previous period of legal residence of Ukrainian citizens on the territory of the Republic of Poland may be a factor encouraging (“pulling”) them to decide to stay for a longer time. After obtaining appropriate documents (work permits and temporary or permanent residence permits), they are enabled to stay permanently in Poland. At the same time, however, it should be remembered that in the perspective of having the same opportunities in the European Union countries with a higher economic level than Poland (Germany), they may decide to emigrate to other places, treating the possible stay in Poland as a kind of transition period, and Poland geographically – as a transit country.

In the discussed period, the increase in the number of permanent residence permits issued increased up to 9045 in 2016, and 13306 in 2017 [8].

### 2. Diagnosis of foreigners’ needs in the Polish labor market

Compared to the years 1945-1989, the increase in the scale of labor immigration to Poland after 1989 is, therefore, a fact that was mainly influenced by the factors analyzed in the above chapter. In the context of economic immigration to Poland, apart from external ones (from the point of view of Poland), internal factors were also important, primarily the complex demographic situation. As indicated by statistical data from the Central Statistical Office (GUS), since the 1980s, with a break covering the years 2002-2007, a steady decline in the number of births can be observed [9, p. 35]. As a result, forecasts assume that by 2050 there will be a continuous decrease in the number of people in pre-productive age (0-17) and productive age (18 to reach the retirement age). However, a simultaneous increase in the number of people in post-productive age [9, p. 148], i.e., professionally inactive, whose costs of receiving pension benefits in the common insurance system are directly determined by the current situation on the labor market and the number of employees paying pension contributions to the common insurance system, will be seen. Therefore, it is evident that in the face of the fact that people born in the period of the decrease as mentioned earlier in the number of births are being brought into the labor market, the situation is and will deepen, when there will be a shortage of people to fill all vacancies. In the long-term perspective, it will have a negative
impact not only on the universal pension system but holistically also on the economic situation in Poland. Given such a situation, similarly, as in the case of many Western European countries (also affected by demographic problems, e.g., Germany, France, or Scandinavian countries), it is necessary to increase the share of foreigners in the national labor market, whose presence would have a positive impact on the areas mentioned above. Because of this phenomenon, it was, therefore, reasonable to diagnose whether this movement might bring the Republic of Poland more benefits or threats.

The complicated demographic situation and the related need to increase the share of foreigners (immigrants) in the labor market have been noticed for years by the Republic of Poland’s authorities, as evidenced by the content of national strategic documents. For the purposes of this article, it has been decided to analyze selected documents currently in force (as of January 2020): the White Paper on National Security of the Republic of Poland, the National Security Strategy for the Republic of Poland (2014), and the Socio-Economic Priorities of Migration Policy.

2.1. Diagnosis of foreigners’ participation in the Polish labor market
in the White Paper of the National Security of the Republic of Poland

The analyzed document [10] was prepared based on the Strategic Review of National Security (Polish abbrev. SPBN), carried out following the obligation, enshrined in the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland of 2007 based on the Ordinance of President Bronisław Komorowski of November 24, 2010. Under this Ordinance, the implementation of the SPBN was entrusted to the Head of the National Security Office (Polish abbrev. BBN) Stanisław Koziej, who headed an ad hoc body – the SPBN Commission. The main task of the Head of the BBN) was to determine substantive and organizational details of the SPBN implementation, particularly the Report of the SPBN Commission, which contained the main conclusions and recommendations for the Polish security policy, together with the improvement of the national security system. The task of the Review was to collectively assess the level of national security of the Republic of Poland and to formulate conclusions concerning the level of implementation of strategic objectives and methods of public authorities’ activities in the field of security, as well as preparation and shape of the national security system. The White Paper on National Security of the Republic of Poland took the form of a presentation popularizing the findings of the Strategic Review of National Security. Its purpose was to deepen the knowledge and awareness of public administration entities and Polish citizens about their homeland security.

To better diagnose the level of national security of the Republic of Poland, the authors of the White Paper decided to separate the following areas of security: defense, protection, social and economic ones. It aimed to outline better the diversity of the security environment in individual sectors.

As pointed out, when it comes to the SPBN, one of the fields analyzed was the social one, and in the context of the subject of this article – the migration sector and demographic, cultural, educational, and social sectors are correlated with it. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Administration and Digitization (since November 20, 2015, it has been functioning as a merger of the two above mentioned ministries, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration – Polish abbrev. MSWiA) and the Office for Foreigners that is subordinate to it [10, p. 19].
In their diagnosis, the authors of the White Paper noted the need to increase the share of foreigners in the Polish labor market in the face of the Republic of Poland’s complicated demographic situation. At the same time, it was realized that this fact might have a negative impact on the changes in the security environment for socio-cultural reasons. That concerned both possible manifestations of intolerance towards newly arrived immigrants among the Polish community (especially at the local level) and the insufficient degree of integration of foreigners in the new conditions – one of the reasons for which may be the cited socio-cultural differences. Therefore, the authors of the document noted that the benefits resulting from the presence of economic immigrants on the Polish labor market are possible only in the case of their integration with the Polish society because only then will it remain consistent. Otherwise, a phenomenon visible in the metropolises of Western Europe, such as Malmoe, Paris, or Brussels could occur; namely, the creation of specific “ghettos” in individual city districts by immigrants, or manifestations of verbal or even physical aggression towards foreigners, stemming from intolerance towards people of a different nationality, representing a different culture, etc. [10, p. 135-6].

From the analysis of the provisions of the White Paper on National Security of the Republic of Poland, it can be concluded that relatively little attention was paid to the issue of immigration to Poland in this document. Nevertheless, this document was published in 2013, i.e., before the previously analyzed events in Ukraine and the so-called migration crisis in Europe in 2015, it had the greatest impact on the above.

2.2. Diagnosis of foreigners’ participation in the Polish labor market in the Strategy of National Security of the Republic of Poland 2014

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the analysis of the provisions of a document with an even higher rank than the White Paper, namely the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland of 2014.

The President approved the document of the Republic of Poland. It concerns state security and is devoted to national security issues and indicating ways of using state resources in the protective, defensive, social, and economic spheres for security purposes and their integration in the national security system. The results of analyzed Strategic National Security Review were used in its preparation.

Its purpose was to identify national interests and strategic objectives in the area of security, under the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. That was performed, among other things, through the diagnosis of the national security potential and the security environment of Poland in the national, regional, and global dimensions, as well as a forecast of its development trends. The document also provides a description of state authorities’ activities, which are necessary to achieve national interests, and indicates the directions and methods of preparation of the national security system.

It should also be pointed out that due to the critical role of the Republic of Poland in the structures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, the provisions of the National Security Strategy are tightly correlated and convergent in terms of the assumed objectives and interests with the provisions of the strategic documents of the organizations as mentioned above. These are the NATO Strategic Concept and the European Security Strategy, respectively.
Since the document under analysis was based on the findings of the SPBN, the contents concerning the issues of foreigners’ immigration to Poland (including economic immigrants) were, in a way, copied from the White Paper provisions. Although the authors of the Strategy identified the necessity to adapt the migration policy to the “new needs” as one of the strategic objectives, this notion was not fully specified in the document [11, Art. 12]. However, the term “challenge” was defined as uncontrolled migrations, which may result from armed conflicts and wars, as well as economic and social problems [11, Art. 30]. Besides, it was noted that the interest of the Republic of Poland is to place the main emphasis on the citizens of the countries covered by the program of the Eastern Partnership established in 2009 (where Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are the leading members of the European Union’s integration program with some former republics of the Soviet Union). It mainly referred to highly skilled persons who could positively affect the demographic situation of Poland [11, Art. 48]. Although the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland, which is still in force (as of January 2020), was created in 2014, the assumption was confirmed in subsequent years in the face of the increase in the scale of immigration from countries such as Ukraine or Belarus.

2.3. Diagnosis of foreigners’ participation in the Polish labor market in the Socio-Economic Priorities of Migration Policy (2018)

The last of the analyzed Polish strategic documents was entirely devoted to the issues of migration policy in the context of the labor market. It was adopted in March 2018 by the Council of Ministers by a resolution: Socio-Economic Priorities of Migration Policy, developed by the then Ministry of Investment and Development (currently, as of January 2020, the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy).

As noted at the beginning by the then Head of the Ministry, Jerzy Kwieciński, in the perspective of the year 2030 and gradual decrease in the number of Polish citizens (including those active on the labor market), a situation might occur in which even 20% of workplaces would remain vacant. These forecasts indicate that the activation of the unemployed and professionally inactive persons may not be sufficient for the economic growth of Poland. Thus, it will be necessary to continually increase the share of foreigners in the Polish labor market. The document indicates four main directions of actions planned to maximize profits resulting from the participation of foreigners (economic immigrants) in the Polish labor market [12]. The first of them is to create tools enabling monitoring of the migration phenomenon and diagnosing social and economic needs of Poland. These activities include the improvement of systems for monitoring migration processes, integration of the Polish labor market monitoring systems with regard to the needs of the economy and development of analytical tools enabling the determination of demand for work of economic immigrants and the necessary level of their professional qualifications.

The second element assumes the development of tools to attract foreign workers and entrepreneurs, including support for employers looking for foreign workers and foreigners looking for information about Poland’s labor market. What is more, it concerns creating a system to motivate the Poles living abroad and foreigners with the most required qualifications for the Polish labor market to take up employment and settle down in Poland.

The third element is the opening of Polish universities and scientific units to foreigners. It appears crucial to support universities in developing study offers for international students
at faculties of key importance to the Polish economy – mainly due to the development of scholarship programs for foreigners, also of Polish origin.

The last element of public administration activities to increase the effectiveness of foreigners’ participation in the Polish labor market is to create a system of solutions facilitating the integration of foreigners, including those of Polish origin.

In this respect, the most crucial elements are, among others, learning the Polish language and a system of support points for foreigners in the so-called one-stop-shop format that offers a comprehensive service of regulating formalities at one point (“window”) of a given office. Their task is to provide comprehensive assistance in finding a flat, accessing educational opportunities for children, becoming familiar with the procedures and Polish law, or obtaining necessary permits.

As can be observed, this document, in contrast to the White Paper and the National Security Strategies, diagnoses and defines in the most detailed degree the directions of activity of the authorities of the Republic of Poland in the field of adaptation of immigrants in Poland and maximization of benefits resulting from their participation in the national labor market.

Conclusions

As it was directly pointed out in the analyzed strategic documents, both in Poland and in other European Union countries, economic development is impossible without an increasing share of foreigners on the labor markets, which is caused by a complex demographic situation resulting in the lack of an optimal number of people of working age. Therefore, the Republic of Poland’s situation is identical in relation to other developed European Union countries, and it requires constant supplementation of places on the labor market with foreigners. That leads to an inevitable increase in the scale of immigration – mainly from non-EU countries. In the case of Poland, at present (as of January 2020), they include mainly Ukraine and Belarus, which confirms the assumptions of the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland on the main focus on immigrants from countries associated under the Eastern Partnership program. However, the scale of immigration to Poland from outside Europe, from countries such as Turkey or India, is also growing. Therefore, the Polish authorities must recognize these challenges and pursue a migration policy that allows for a balance between economic benefits and the level of security – both social and public.

As it directly results from the provisions of the Socio-Economic Priorities of Migration Policy, the participation of foreigners in the Polish labor market not only does not constitute a threat to the country’s economic security. It is even indispensable to raise its level and thus to influence it positively.

It is also a challenge for the public administration authorities to raise public awareness of those needs and reduce prejudice against foreigners, most often resulting from prevailing stereotypes. Furthermore, it is to take care of the deepest possible adaptation of foreigners in Poland to avoid the negative phenomenon of the “ghettoization” of immigrants, which occurs in Western European countries.
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The author declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions
The author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

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The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

ORCID
Paweł Olbrycht https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8362-5644

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Biographical note

Paweł Olbrycht – a doctor of social sciences in the discipline of security sciences. Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Security Sciences of the General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces. Editor-in-chief of “Student Yearbooks of the Military University of the Land Forces Academy”. Tutor of the Scientific Circle of Anti-Terrorism Security.

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu była ocena wpływu wzrastającej skali imigracji ekonomicznej na teren Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej po 1989 roku na poziom bezpieczeństwa ekonomicznego państwa. W artykule wskazano i opisano najważniejsze momenty mające wpływ na zmieniającą się skalę imigracji do Polski po 1989 r., dokonano analizy wybranych dokumentów strategicznych z zakresu bezpieczeństwa związanego ze zjawiskiem imigracji ekonomicznej.

Do realizacji celu przyjęto jakościowe metody badawcze obejmujące: analizę źródeł, z zastosowaniem techniki analizy treści polskiej i zagranicznej literatury, polskich dokumentów strategicznych, aktów prawnych oraz danych statystycznych (desk research) Urzędu do Spraw Cudzoziemców.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

imigranci, Rzeczpospolita Polska, bezpieczeństwo, rynek pracy

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