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ABSTRACT

The war between Russia and Ukraine has triggered large-scale internal and international displacement. This forced mobility has affected not only Ukrainians but also Russian citizens. Following President Putin's announcement of partial military mobilization on 21 September 2022, a significant number of Russians fled the country to avoid conscription. This study focuses on the most preferred destination countries, specifically Türkiye, Georgia, Armenia, Serbia, and Kazakhstan, examines the factors influencing migrants' destination choices. It analyzes these preferences through the lens of socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, and geographical factors, using the gravity model approach. Rooted in Newton's Law of Gravitation, the gravity model is a migration theory that explains interactions between two locations based on factors such as distance and economic conditions. The study hypothesizes that the gravity model can effectively explain the settlement patterns of Russian migrants fleeing mobilization. Quantitative research methods will be employed, and data analysis will be conducted using SPSS software. This research aims to fill a significant gap in the literature, as there are currently only a limited number of studies addressing the migration triggered by Russia's military mobilization. Moreover, no existing study has applied the gravity model to this specific case, making this project a unique contribution to the field of migration studies.

ÖZ

Rusya ile Ukrayna arasındaki savaş, hem iç hem de dış göçü tetikleyerek geniş çaplı bir yerinden edilme sürecine yol açmıştır. Bu süreçten yalnızca Ukraynalılar değil, Rus vatandaşları da etkilenmiştir. Özellikle, Putin'in 21 Eylül 2022'de kısmi askeri seferberlik ilan etmesinin ardından, çok sayıda Rus vatandaşı askere alınmamak için ülkeyi terk etmiştir. Bu çalışma, göç eden bireylerin en çok tercih ettiği ülkeler olan Türkiye, Gürcistan, Ermenistan, Sırbistan ve Kazakistan'a odaklanarak varış yeri tercihlerini incelemektedir. Bu tercihlerin ardında yatan sosyoekonomik, kültürel, dilsel ve coğrafi faktörler, çekim modeli yaklaşımı çerçevesinde analiz edilecektir. Kökleri Newton'un yerçekimi yasasına dayanan çekim modeli, iki konum arasındaki etkileşimi mesafe ve ekonomik koşullar gibi değişkenler üzerinden açıklayan bir göç teorisidir. Çalışma, bu yaklaşımın seferberlikten kaçan Rus göçmenlerin yerleşim tercihlerine ilişkin örüntüleri anlamada etkili olabileceği hipotezine dayanmaktadır. Araştırmada nicel yöntemler kullanılacak ve veri analizi SPSS programı aracılığıyla gerçekleştirilecektir. Bu çalışma, Rusya'nın askeri seferberliği sonucu ortaya çıkan göçü ele alan sınırlı sayıda çalışmalardan biri olmasının yanı sıra, çekim modeli yaklaşımını bu özgül duruma uygulayan ilk araştırma olma özelliğiyle de göç literatürüne özgün bir katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

INTRODUCTION

The world has witnessed many wars throughout history. Wars, on the other hand, affect larger areas in a more dangerous way with the developing weapon technologies. This can directly lead to the displacement of people. While the losers of the war may be forced to be displaced, fleeing may be the primary option for those who do not want to fight. The UN mentioned that over 114 million people had to be displaced by wars (UN, 2023). Russia's occupation of Ukrainian territory is one of the wars that force migration. The tension between Ukraine and Russia dates back to the 2010s. Many crises such as Ukraine's political shift away from Russia and approaching Europe, ethnically Russian citizens in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, etc. have formed the basis of this war. The war is still going on from 2022 until 2024, when this article was written, and the intensity of violence has differed over time. This violence has led to the displacement of many Ukrainians. According to the data published by UNHCR, 3.7 million Ukrainians had to migrate within the country, while 6.5 million Ukrainians received refugee status from different countries (UNHCR, n.d.). On the other hand, the process has been more challenging for Russian citizens. On 22 September 2022, Putin called for a partial military mobilisation of 300,000 men. According to *The Economist*, approximately 1 million people have fled the country to escape the war. In the same article, the most common destinations of these people are listed as follows: Kazakhstan, Serbia, Armenia, Turkey, the European Union, Israel, Montenegro, Georgia, the United States and others (*The Economist*, 2023).

The aim of this study is to provide information on Russian migrants fleeing mobilisation. The study aims to analyse the direction of migration from Russia after the announcement of mobilisation. For this reason, the gravity approach will be used for the preferences regarding the direction of migration. This approach is an adaptation of Newton's law of gravity to migration studies. The approach is based on the idea that migrants are predominantly attracted to places where there are certain factors (Beine et al., 2016; Muratoğlu & Muratoğlu, 2016; Parker, 2020; Poprawe, 2015). These factors may be economic development, distance of countries from other countries, and may vary from article to article. Therefore, it is

important to determine the factors to be analysed and the scope of these factors. In this study, the factors were determined as language, language family, alphabet, culture, distance of countries from Russia, GDP, dollar equivalent of currencies, borders, visa exemption.

Firstly, the historical background of the war between Russia and Ukraine will be analysed and the resulting migration movements will be examined. In the next section, the literature similar to and differentiated from the article in terms of theory, subject and method will be examined and compared. The next section will explain the sample selection and matching, research design, research tools and the adopted methodology. This will be followed by a discussion section analysing the results of the study.

Historical Background

As a former Soviet country, Ukraine has been linked to Russia in many ways. Perhaps the most important of these is political allegiance. Ukraine, which gained independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is a bridge between Europe and Russia. According to the most recent Ukrainian census a significant proportion of Ukrainian citizens (17.3%) are of Russian ethnicity (2001 Ukrainian Census, n.d.). Moreover, 1 in 3 Ukrainians use Russian as their first language (Bermel, 2022). Similar languages and common cultures have long brought the two countries closer to each other. On the other hand, Russia considered Ukraine as a part of itself and had and still has difficulties accepting its independence (Sezer, 2024). For the reasons mentioned above, the political relations between Russia and Ukraine are much more important than Russia's relations with other post-Soviet countries. As the Ukrainian government has been pursuing a pro-Russian policy for years, there have been no sharp crises in these relations. Towards the mid-2010s, the country began to approach the West socially and politically and to move away from Russian policies (Anghel & Džankić, 2023). In Ukraine, the growing public reaction against the pro-Russian government resulted in protests and a change of government. This was not appreciated by the citizens of Russian ethnicity in the Donbass region and by Moscow. In a short period of time, Ukraine was confronted with the Donbass crisis and the annexation of

Crimea. The annexation of Crimea was condemned by many countries. For instance, the EU has described this action as an unprovoked attack to a European country and created sanctions towards Russia (Kruk, 2019). Ukraine, on the other hand, has armed itself to protect its territorial integrity and occasionally engaged in armed conflicts with pro-Russian forces. These crises are still unresolved. Despite all these crises, Ukraine has continued its anti-Russian and pro-European policies and approached the European Union and NATO. Russia, in particular, perceived its approach to NATO as a security threat for itself. Using this threat as an excuse, it has placed military troops on the Ukrainian border (Congressional Research Service, 2022). However, when the dates reached 2022, Russia, using the argument that the Russian minority in Donbass and Lohansk was under threat, first started to arm itself on the borders and then entered Ukraine on February 28, 2022 (Walker, 2024). With the outbreak of armed conflicts, many people were displaced. Ukraine immediately declared military mobilisation. With this mobilisation, it restricted the departure of men capable of fighting while facilitating the departure of disadvantaged groups, especially women and children.

The European Union allocated a special budget (€3.5 billion) for this purpose and facilitated the procedures (European Commission, n.d.). Meanwhile, on the other side of the coin, the entry of Russian citizens into the European Union has been restricted. Some European countries have stopped issuing visas to Russian citizens altogether; some have only made it more difficult, while others have maintained their usual regulations (Fragomen Worldwide, 2024). Nevertheless, many Russian citizens fled to different countries. One of the most important triggers for this was the partial military mobilisation announced by Putin on September 21, 2022. However, people's personal preferences and thoughts about the war have made the situation more complicated. While a considerable portion of the population supports the ongoing conflict, a significant segment remains opposed. However, due to the authoritarian nature of the state, they refrain from expressing their dissent openly in public discourse (Gessen, 2022; Najibullah, 2022). One of the reasons for this is Putin's statement. On March 3, 2022, he said that the

aim of the West is to destroy Russia and that 'traitors' with this Western thought will emerge and the Russian people will fight against them (Reuters, 2022; Henry & Plantan, 2022). These harsh statements, the arrest and torture of protesters, etc. led to the silencing of anti-war Russians. The dangers and uncertainties that come with war and the aforementioned pressures may lead people to flee. The part of the population that was not in favour of the war sought various ways out in order not to fight within the scope of mobilisation. In this article, the group that escaped from mobilisation by leaving the country will be examined.

According to the statement made by the Federal Security Service (FSB) on September 26, 2022; 5 days after the announcement of partial mobilisation, the number of people who left the country after the announcement of mobilisation was 261,000 (Novaya Gazeta, 2022). It can be assumed that this number has increased even more with the passage of time. A significant number of them crossed the land borders into Georgia. Armenia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Serbia have received many Russian migrants, both on land and by air. According to the data of airline companies, there was a significant increase in one-way ticket sales abroad (Petchenik, 2023).

Georgia is one of the leading countries receiving migration. The most important reasons for this are its common border with Russia and the fact that Russian citizens can reside in Georgia for 1 year without a visa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 2024). In fact, in September 2022, the Georgian Interior Ministry announced that 222,274 people came to Georgia from Russia. However, this number was 36,407 in 2021, and in 2022, an increase of 511% was observed even before the end of the year (JAMnews, 2022).

In Kazakhstan, one of the other countries receiving Russian migration, Russian citizens can reside in Kazakhstan for 90 days without a visa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024). Ilyas Ispanov, Chairman of the Migration Committee of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Kazakhstan, announced in December 2022 that 837,000 Russians crossed the border after the announcement of partial mobilisation in September (Khodjayev, 2023). The primary reason for this was seen as proximity and ease of entry conditions, and it was also

mentioned that some of the Russians were planning to leave Kazakhstan for countries such as Turkey, Georgia, and Eastern European countries (Askar, 2022).

Turkey is one of the countries hosting many Russians fleeing the war. One of the contributing reasons for this is that Russians can stay in the country for 60 days without a visa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Türkiye, 2024). According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) data, the number of Russians residing in Turkey in 2021 was 22291 people, while this number increased to 99898 in 2022, with an increase of 348.83%, and these data do not include the number of tourists (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2022). This number would increase if Russian citizens who are travelling without a visa, i.e., tourists, were included in the data. According to the TÜİK International Migration 2021 and 2022 reports, the Russian Federation, which was not even in the top 5 in the ranking of foreigners entering the country in 2021, ranked first in 2022, with a rate of 25% in this ranking (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2023).

Fleeing the war, many Russians prefer Serbia, which has pro-Russian policies and allows visa-free residence for 30 days (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, 2024). The Serbian Ministry of Interior stated that more than 200,000 Russian citizens have arrived in Serbia since the beginning of the war (Ernst, 2023).

Armenia, which borders Russia, is one of the countries receiving the highest number of Russian immigrants in the post-war period. Armenia allows Russian citizens to stay 180 days without a visa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2024). According to the data released by the Migration Service of Armenia, 372,086 Russian citizens arrived in Armenia in the first six months of 2022, compared to 156,496 in the same period last year (Avetisyan, 2022; Barnes, 2023; Helsinki Committee of Armenia, 2022).

To conclude, the main reason for this crisis between Ukraine and Russia is that Ukraine is not seen as an independent country by Russia. This war has displaced Russians as well as Ukrainians. Citizens who did not want to fight in the context of partial military mobilisation resorted to means such as fleeing the country. In this case, their preferred destinations were countries such as

Georgia, Armenia, Turkey, and Kazakhstan, which are closer in location and offer visa exemption. Serbia, which is politically closer to Russia, was also among these countries. This fleeing process is a complex phenomenon with widespread economic, political, and social consequences and is an important issue to be considered in the context of international relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the factors that determines the significance of an article is how unique its contribution to the literature is. For this reason, the following articles were analysed in order to make comparisons regarding the theory, subject and method of this article.

The concept that forms the theoretical basis of this study is the Gravity Approach. Many articles were analysed within this theoretical framework. The main one is the article titled "A practitioners' guide to gravity models of international migration" written by Beine, Bertoli and Moraga. In this article, the authors briefly defined the gravity approach as follows: This concept, which is based on Newton's law of gravity and is now the subject of fields such as migration and economics, aims to analyse and make sense of the flow of people, goods and information based on a number of factors such as economy and distance (Beine, Bertoli & Fernández-Huertas Moraga 2016, p. 498). This article will contribute to the study in explaining the theory. Another article explaining the theory, its founders and users, and its history is Parker's "Migration patterns in Eastern Europe and the World: A gravity approach". In this article, he mentions that Jan Tinbergen used gravity in the field of migration for the first time in 1962, says that the theory analyses migration flows in terms of distance and size, and adds that it contributes to migration studies by providing insights on the effects of economic, cultural and political factors on migration waves (Parker, 2020, p. 68). In this context, the article will not only contribute to understanding the historical process of the theory but will also be one of the exemplary articles in the study.

In the article "Immigration to the OECD countries from Turkey in 1960-2010 period: A Gravity Model Approach" written by Gönül and Yusuf Muratoğlu, they analysed the migration from Turkey to OECD countries through the

Gravity approach with 50 years of data input. In doing so, demographic, cultural, social, historical, economic and political factors were used, and they were also categorised using the push-pull theory. As a result, it was observed that migration flows increased as the income size of the receiving country increased and decreased as the geographical distance increased, in relation to geographical location, economic size and other variables (Muratoğlu & Muratoğlu, 2016, p.66). In this way, this article has set an example for the study.

A couple of the articles that differ theoretically from this study can be listed as follows

‘Mother Russia, Stepmother Hungary: New Home for Russian Migrants’ by Popova, “Immigration of Russian citizens to Armenia during the Russian-Ukrainian war that began in 2022: pull-push factors” by Melkumyan and Melkonyan, “Migration to and from Azerbaijan” by Aliyev and ‘Russian Immigrant Diaspora in Turkey: Language Use, Preference and Attitudes’ by Antonova, et al.

Popova explains the migration from Russia to Hungary with the push-pull theory (Popova, 2021, p.17). Melkumyan and Melkonyan, on the other hand, focusing on the aftermath of the war in Ukraine, explained the Russians migrating to Armenia with the push-pull theory. Push factors include sanctions against Russia, military mobilisation, conscience factor, etc., while pull factors include visa-free entry, financial freedoms, Christianity and the use of the Russian language (Melkumyan & Melkonyan, 2023). Aliyev's article focuses on Azerbaijani migrants and migrants in Azerbaijan. The article emphasises that Russians are one of the most prominent groups in Azerbaijan, both as a minority and as an immigrant group (Aliyev, 2006). The article by Antonova et al. analyses Russian migrants in Turkey. Although the focus of the article is on the difficulties experienced by Russian immigrants and Turkey's policies, it also answers why Russians prefer Turkey. These are economic reasons, tourism and marriage (Antonova-Ünlü et al., 2015, p. 396). Although these articles differ theoretically from the study, they are utilised in the study as a historical perspective and contextual contribution.

This study examines migration from Russia post-2022,

with a particular emphasis on the military mobilisation declaration. A substantial body of literature has been reviewed on this subject. One of them is Mühlfried's article "Between hospitality and hostility: Russian citizens in Georgia". In the article, he states that 30,000 Russians crossed the border with Georgia at the beginning of the war. This number increased to over 220,000 with the declaration of mobilisation. According to the sources of the article, between 60,000 and 100,000 people settled in Georgia. However, the Georgian people perceive Russia as an occupying power and the Russian language as a threat (Mühlfried, 2023). This article makes a significant contribution to the topic by providing evidence that Russians migrated to Georgia following the declaration of military mobilisation.

One of the articles similar to this study in terms of subject matter is "How Putin's partial mobilisation turned into total mobilisation of migrants" written by Vorobeva. This article is one of the limited articles that fully reflects the subject of the study. The author sees the military mobilisation decision as a factor that creates a migration wave.

According to the author, most of this migration takes place in the form of brain drain. Apart from this, not only men but also their families migrate. The author also mentions that there are many people who have applied to leave and are waiting to leave. Although there is no information about which countries these migrants went to, it is mentioned that more than 700,000 people left the country after the war (Vorobeva, 2022, p. 2). This article is particularly valuable to the study, as it specifically explores the impact of military mobilisation on migration.

One more article supporting the subject is "Living in limbo: Digital narratives of migrants fleeing Russia after the Russian invasion of Ukraine" by Prashizky. In this article, it is mentioned that more than 1 million Russians have left their country since the war started. Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Turkey are among the top countries that Russians have fled to. However, many countries have closed their borders to Russians. In some countries, they are prevented from applying for many legal rights such as residence permit and refugee status. For this reason, many of them are in danger of becoming irregular migrants. In general, the migrant mass is educated, middle class,

people who are against war. In fact, many of them flee because they are close to the democratic values of the West, but many of them are left in uncertainty (Prashizky, 2023, p.11). This article discusses not only the number of Russians who fled but also their destinations, the characteristics of those who fled, and their experiences of victimisation, making it a valuable resource for this study.

A further article confirming the subject is "Brain Drain from Russia after February 24th 2022" by Korobkov, Zakharova, Tysiachniouk, Konnov, Vorobeva. One of the important findings of this article is that due to the economic and political instability of Russia and people's dissatisfaction with this situation, many people were thinking of emigrating and the mobilisation declaration has speeded up the process. In addition, another interesting finding is that unlike the migration in the 1990s, this time the destination countries are smaller and economically weaker countries. There is also an underlining of brain drain here, and it is highlighted that individuals in sectors such as engineering, marketing and IT are in the majority (Korobkov et al., 2022: p. 4-11). In this context, the article will be used as one of the articles utilised in the study.

Another article is "Russian Migration to Armenia and Georgia in 2022: Enclave Economy and Local Employment" by Kuleshova, Chigaleichik, Podolsky, and Baranova. According to this article, the majority of the migrants were young people with higher education from large cosmopolitan cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg. The article states that the target countries of Russian migrants were mainly Armenia and Georgia (Kuleshova et al., 2023). The fact that the article has many different findings enriched the perspective of the study, and its content has been used extensively.

One of the articles with a similar subject is "Russian Migration Surge in Serbia" by Anna Khan. In this article, the positive relationship between Serbia and Russia is of crucial importance. Serbia's EU candidacy and good relations have increased Russia's trade relations with Serbia due to sanctions. In addition, the fact that Serbia does not require visas from Russian citizens makes Serbia important for Russian migrants. The increasing number of companies established by Russian migrants in Serbia has the potential to make significant contributions to the

country's economy. However, the possibility of permanent, visa-free residence of Russian migrants in Serbia is limited. Therefore, starting a business is a more feasible way to obtain a permanent residence permit. Serbia should strive to maintain social cohesion while encouraging skilled migration. This will enable the country to utilise the potential of skilled migrants while protecting the interests of the country and the well-being of its citizens. In short, the article discusses the impact of Russian migrants on Serbia and the opportunities and challenges that this brings with it (Khan, 2023). This is one of the articles used to select the countries for the study. Another piece of content to be used is the one report prepared by Iryna Ulasiuk "National Minorities and Migration in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine". This report contains a lot of data on Russians living in the Post-Soviet countries in Eastern Europe and its migration movements (Ulasiuk, 2013). Considering that Russian minorities and Russian-speaking environments are a pull factor for migrants, this data makes significant sense. Although the report and the study do not match in terms of subject matter and timeliness, this report is crucial for the selection of the countries used in the study and for creating the infrastructure for this process.

The method of this study is regression analysis from quantitative research methods. In the study, data on GDP, population, Russian ratio, language, alphabet, language family, culture, visa exemption, number of Russians residing, common border, religion, distance and currencies between 2018 and 2022 for 6 countries were found and tabulated for regression analysis. The literature using this method was also analysed.

The first one is the article "Determinants of migration and the gravity model of migration-application on Western Balkan emigration flows" by Malaj and De Rubertis. In this article, the author used the gravity approach to analyse Western Balkan emigration flows. The author conducted regression analysis under three categories: living standards, corruption and unemployment between 2009-2015 (with data obtained from the official websites of the European Union). The conclusion of this paper is that the increase in the number of migrants from the Western Balkan countries is associated with factors such as economic and social

inequalities, visa liberalisation and corruption in the region (Malaj & de Rubertis, 2017). In this respect, the article is exemplary for the study and will contribute to the study in terms of application of regression analysis. A further article is "International Migration Flows in Turkey" by Koç and Solmaz: A Gravity Model Analysis". In this article, the authors applied regression analysis to 2016 and 2017 data from 83 countries. According to the article, low distance between countries, high income level, prosperity, common religion and nationality, speaking the same language and sharing culture are factors that positively affect migration flows (Koç & Solmaz, 2019). In this context, the outputs of the article support the theory of the study.

Another similar paper in terms of methodology is Kim and Cohen's "Determinants of International Migration Flows to and from Industrialized Countries: A Panel Data Approach Beyond Gravity". A regression analysis is applied with data from 17 Western countries between 1950 and 2007. The article quantitatively assessed the effects of demographic, geographical and social independent variables on migration flows. The results show that demographic (population size of the country of origin and destination) and geographical (distance between capitals and land area of the destination country) are the independent variables that affect migration flows the most. Social and historical determinants are less influential (Kim & Cohen, 2010). In this respect, the article contributes to the study by providing information about the theory as well as the methodology and findings. One of the similar articles with methodology is "On the relationship between corruption and migration: empirical evidence from a gravity model of migration" by Poprowe. In this article, the author applied the regression analysis method with data from many countries between 2000 and 2010. Although corruption data is the most focused data in the article, data such as distance, population, common language, common border and GDP are also taken into account. The conclusion of the article highlights corruption as a driving factor (Poprowe, 2015).

Among the articles that differ in terms of methodology, Ramos' "Gravity models: A tool for migration analysis" by Ramos. This article provides a content analysis on

theory and method. It lists the good and bad aspects of using theory and method, and states that there is an increasing number of academics and policy makers using them (Ramos, 2016). Another article analysed in terms of methodology is "Emigration from Russia: New Trends and Forms". The article uses statistical analysis as a method. The article deals with migration from Russia. In this context, it is more similar to the subject. The article concludes that people leaving Russia are generally educated and qualified people, the reasons for migration are economic, social, personal and political factors, and that there are more Russian emigrants in foreign sources than in Russian sources (Iontsev et al., 2016). A further article is "Immigrants in Azerbaijan: Current Situation and Prospects of (Re)integration Policy" written by Rummyantsev. In this article, interview, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. The article focuses on migration movements in Azerbaijan. The article also provides information on the living conditions of migrants in Azerbaijan, employment processes, language and cultural integration, citizenship acquisition processes and other issues in Azerbaijan (Rummyantsev, 2014).

The findings from the literature review can be summarised as follows: Most studies have analysed migration movements from Russia and post-Soviet countries, primarily using the push and pull theory. However, no research has applied the gravity approach to Russian-origin migration. This study focuses on migration that followed the onset of the Ukraine-Russia war and the declaration of military mobilisation, a topic on which only a limited number of articles are available. All of these articles indicate an increase in migration. One article notes that while migration was already occurring, mobilisation significantly accelerated it. Most articles highlight that the emigrants are highly skilled, further exacerbating the brain drain from Russia. The majority of studies align in terms of both methodology and theory. Although the gravity approach is widely used in migration and economics research, there is no literature that applies it to Russian migration, especially in relation to the military mobilisation after 2022. In this respect, the present study will offer a unique contribution to the existing literature.

METHODOLOGY

The scope of this study includes a comprehensive analysis of the routes of Russians emigrating after the declaration of mobilisation and a specific explanation of the gravity approach. First of all, it requires the collection of quantitative data from the websites where competent governments publish statistical information. Then, in order to apply the gravity approach within the scope of the countries where Russians emigrate, elements such as language, language family, alphabet, culture, distance of countries from Russia, GDP, dollar equivalent of currencies, borders, visa exemption, etc. need to be classified and coded. These data will be classified, processed, and coded in an Excel file and then used to apply regression analysis, which is one of the quantitative research methods. The results will be analysed in comparison with the factors mentioned in the articles of scholars working on the gravity approach, such as Sciabolazza (2018) and Cohen and Kim (2010). The data mentioned above was collected by utilising the statistical websites of the governments of the relevant countries. The primary reason for this is to ensure the reliability of the data.

In the selection of the variables in this study, articles with similar theories and/or topics, such as Koç and Solmaz (2019), Muratoğlu and Muratoğlu (2016), Poprawe (2015), and Melkumyan and Melkonyan (2023), were utilised. Although unemployment and corruption rates were also used as variables in many theoretically similar articles, these variables were not used in this study due to a lack of resources, reliability of the source, and relevance to the subject. In the selection of countries, the influence of media and news channels is undeniable. At this point, the most used sources are the news article "Where have Russians been fleeing since mobilisation began?" published by Reuters (Reuters, 2022) and the content on the increase in flight statistics and one-way tickets published on Flightradar24, a website that collects and shares simultaneous flight statistics (Petchenik, 2023). Thus, Azerbaijan, Belarus, the United Arab Emirates, Armenia, Georgia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan were selected as the countries to be analysed. However, due to the unavailability of the

desired data in the scans conducted in Turkish, English, and Russian for all countries, this study focuses solely on Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Serbia, and Turkey. Although it was planned to collect data for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 for these five countries, some of these countries did not release their 2023 data. As a result, the data between 2018 and 2022 could be analysed. These five years were chosen to compare data before the war between Russia and Ukraine (2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021) with data after the start of the war (2022).

The study aims to answer the question, "What drives Russians fleeing military mobilisation to choose countries such as Georgia, Serbia, Turkey, Armenia, and Kazakhstan?". Within the scope of this question, the hypothesis of the study is H_1 : *Russians fleeing from mobilisation prefer countries such as Georgia, Serbia, Turkey, Armenia, and Kazakhstan due to common variables such as common language, alphabet, language family, common borders, distance from Russia, common religion, common culture, visa exemptions, dollar equivalents of currencies, and GDP as defined by the Gravity Approach.*

The formulation of this hypothesis is

$$\text{LogMijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Language}_{ij} + \beta_2 \text{Alphabet}_{ij} + \beta_3 \text{LanguageFamily}_{ij} + \beta_4 \text{Borders}_{ij} + \beta_5 \text{Religion}_{ij} + \beta_6 \text{Culture}_{ij} + \beta_7 \text{VisaExemption}_{ij} + \beta_8 \log(\text{DistanceToRussia}_{ij}) + \beta_9 \log(\text{CurrencyDollarEq}_{ij}) + \beta_{10} \log(\text{GDP}_{ij}) + \beta_{11} \log(\text{Population}_{ij}) + u_{ijt}$$

In other words, the independent variables in this study are: language, alphabet, language family, borders, religion, culture, visa exemptions, distance to Russia, dollar equivalents of currencies, and GDP. The dependent variable of this study is the number of Russians residing in the country and the independent variable is the population of the country.

This study utilises many concepts in order to understand and analyse the dynamics of the subject matter. One of the most important concepts to be used in this study is the partial mobilisation announced in Russia in September 2022. 'Partial mobilisation' means that when states need military power, they call on people who have already fulfilled their military service. The purpose of this call

is to announce that those called up must re-enlist and fight. There is a large number of people fleeing from this mobilisation, and this is confirmed by state data (Novaya Gazeta, 2022). This situation in Russia is the main subject of this study. The motivations played by destination countries in the realisation of these migrations (by migration here we mean the movement of a person towards a different country) is an important question for this study. The concept of 'destination country' refers to the country where the migration will end up. Based on the literature review and data availability, the destination countries to be analysed in this study are Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Serbia. For these countries, data will be collected on population, Russian to population ratio, language, language family, alphabet, GDP, visa exemption, distance, and common borders. These data will be categorised and coded for each year mentioned above. The gravity approach will be applied to the data on these one-way migrations from Russia. The 'gravity approach' claims that the destination country has attractive factors in migration mobility based on Newton's law of gravity. In short, the study plans to analyse the migration mobility of Russians after partial mobilisation, which is the main focus of the study, with the concepts of visa exemption, language, border, culture, and GDP as independent variables. For this, it will use regression analysis from quantitative research methods with SPSS. As it was not possible to access the data of those who avoided military service, this study was carried out by using the data on Russians who emigrated after the war. Since there is no communication with any person while collecting the data for this study, there is no need for an ethics committee document.

RESULTS

Results of Correlation Analysis

Table 1. CORRELATION ANALYSIS RESULTS

| Variable | Correlation | P-Value |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| <i>GDP (Billion USD)</i> | 0.425 | 0.020 |
| <i>Visa Exemption</i> | 0.562 | 0.001 |
| <i>Shared Culture</i> | 0.379 | 0.050 |
| <i>Same Language Family</i> | 0.401 | 0.036 |
| <i>Shared Religion</i> | 0.292 | 0.117 |
| <i>Shared Alphabet</i> | -0.412 | 0.030 |
| <i>Shared Language</i> | 0.538 | 0.002 |
| <i>Percentage of Russians</i> | 0.894 | 0.000 |
| <i>Distance (km)</i> | 0.132 | 0.497 |
| <i>Population</i> | 0.755 | 0.000 |

The correlation analysis reveals significant relationships between various factors and the number of Russian residents in different countries. Notably, the 'Percentage of Russians' shows a very strong positive correlation (0.894, $p = 0.000$), indicating that existing Russian communities attract more residents. 'Population' also has a strong positive correlation (0.755, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that larger populations are associated with more Russian residents. 'Visa Exemption' (0.562, $p = 0.001$) and 'Shared Language' (0.538, $p = 0.002$) both exhibit moderate positive correlations, highlighting the importance of mobility and linguistic similarities. Additionally, 'GDP' (0.425, $p = 0.020$) and 'Shared Alphabet' (0.412, $p = 0.030$) are moderately correlated with the number of Russian residents, while 'Same Language Family' (0.401, $p = 0.036$) and 'Shared Culture' (0.379, $p = 0.050$) are also

significant but to a lesser extent. In contrast, ‘Distance’ (0.132, $p = 0.497$) and ‘Shared Religion’ (0.292, $p = 0.117$) show weaker and statistically insignificant correlations. These results underscore the critical roles of demographic, economic, and cultural factors in shaping the distribution of Russian migrants.

Results of the Regression Model

The regression analysis for the pre-2022 period indicates several key factors influencing the number of Russian residents in various countries. The ‘Constant’ term is significant, highlighting a strong baseline effect. ‘Percentage of Russians’ has a positive coefficient (92887.316) with a p-value of 0.089, indicating a moderately significant impact, suggesting that existing Russian communities were a major draw for new Russian

residents. ‘GDP’ shows a positive but non-significant effect (0.051, $p = 0.188$), indicating that wealthier countries might attract more Russian residents, though the relationship isn't strong. ‘Distance’ also has a positive but non-significant coefficient (24.197, $p = 0.304$), implying that proximity to Russia did not significantly influence the migration pattern before 2022. Notably, ‘Shared Alphabet’ and ‘Shared Culture’ have negative coefficients (-123622.484 and -112111.618, respectively), but they are not statistically significant, suggesting potential cultural or linguistic barriers. Other variables like ‘Population’, ‘Shared Language’, ‘Shared Religion’, ‘Same Language Family’, and ‘Visa Exemption’ also show non-significant impacts, indicating a complex interplay of factors influencing Russian migration before 2022.

Table 2. REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULT FOR PRE-2022 PERIOD

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-value | P> t | 95%Confidence Interval |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------|---------|-------|---------------------------|
| <i>Constant</i> | 771466.768 | 179837.268 | 4.291 | 0.000 | [398418.883, 1144514.654] |
| <i>Distance (km)</i> | 24.197 | 23.159 | 1.045 | 0.304 | [-23.508, 71.903] |
| <i>Percentage of Russians</i> | 92887.316 | 52089.289 | 1.784 | 0.089 | [-15035.996, 200810.628] |
| <i>GDP (Billion USD)</i> | 0.051 | 0.038 | 1.359 | 0.188 | [-0.027, 0.129] |
| <i>Shared Language</i> | 62475.981 | 71916.793 | 0.86 | 0.399 | [-85769.342, 210721.304] |
| <i>Shared Alphabet</i> | -123622.48 | 74064.632 | -1.670 | 0.109 | [-278637.332, 31292.363] |
| <i>Shared Religion</i> | -57870.810 | 56756.447 | -1.020 | 0.316 | [-175878.066, 60136.446] |
| <i>Same Language Family</i> | -63415.470 | 75473.436 | -0.840 | 0.414 | [-218904.486, 92073.546] |
| <i>Shared Culture</i> | -112111.618 | 66918.046 | -1.675 | 0.108 | [-250429.117, 26205.880] |
| <i>Visa Exemption</i> | 95289.619 | 69417.176 | 1.373 | 0.184 | [-48931.076, 239510.314] |
| <i>Population</i> | 0.001 | 0.005 | 0.278 | 0.784 | [-0.008, 0.011] |

Table 3. REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULT FOR POST -2022 PERIOD

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-value | P> t | 95% Confidence Interval |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------|---------|-------|---------------------------|
| <i>Constant</i> | 28709.346 | 174775.912 | 0.164 | 0.872 | [-334597.608, 391016.301] |
| <i>Distance (km)</i> | -21.185 | 11.831 | -1.791 | 0.095 | [-46.459, 4.090] |
| <i>Percentage of Russians</i> | 139604.379 | 38232.464 | 3.651 | 0.001 | [61934.859, 217273.899] |
| <i>GDP (Billion USD)</i> | -0.022 | 0.024 | -0.902 | 0.379 | [-0.073, 0.028] |
| <i>Shared Language</i> | 20841.922 | 41683.222 | 0.500 | 0.623 | [-66380.540, 108064.385] |
| <i>Shared Alphabet</i> | -3391.799 | 35955.899 | -0.094 | 0.926 | [-76428.969, 69645.371] |
| <i>Shared Religion</i> | 39929.014 | 26435.637 | 1.511 | 0.147 | [-14511.510, 94369.537] |
| <i>Same Language Family</i> | -10565.969 | 35859.474 | -0.295 | 0.770 | [-85000.014, 63868.076] |
| <i>Shared Culture</i> | 57215.927 | 27043.660 | 2.115 | 0.046 | [1234.509, 113197.345] |
| <i>Visa Exemption</i> | 15844.579 | 28328.070 | 0.559 | 0.581 | [-42047.703, 73736.862] |
| <i>Population</i> | 0.008 | 0.004 | 1.845 | 0.086 | [-0.001, 0.018] |

The post-2022 regression analysis reveals a shift in the factors affecting the number of Russian residents. ‘Percentage of Russians’ remains a significant factor with a higher coefficient (139604.379, $p = 0.001$), reinforcing the importance of established Russian communities in attracting new residents. ‘GDP’ now has a negative and non-significant coefficient (-0.022, $p = 0.379$), suggesting that economic wealth became a less important factor in attracting Russian residents post-2022. ‘Distance’ shows a negative and moderately significant coefficient (-21.185, $p = 0.095$), indicating that closer proximity to Russia has become less attractive or significant for migration. ‘Shared Culture’ has a positive and significant coefficient (57215.927, $p = 0.046$), highlighting a shift towards cultural similarities as a more important factor post-2022. Other variables, including ‘Population’ (0.008, $p = 0.086$), ‘Shared Language’, ‘Shared Alphabet’, ‘Shared Religion’, ‘Same Language Family’, and ‘Visa Exemption’, generally maintain non-significant effects, though the coefficients and significance levels have changed slightly.

The comparison between pre-2022 and post-2022 regression analyses highlight significant shifts in the factors influencing Russian migration. Before 2022, the

‘Percentage of Russians’ in a country was a moderately significant attractor, but its significance and impact have increased dramatically post-2022, underscoring the growing importance of established communities. The role of ‘GDP’ has diminished, with a shift from a positive to a negative coefficient, indicating that economic conditions became less of a pull factor. The significance of ‘Distance’ has also shifted, suggesting that geographical proximity to Russia became less attractive or relevant for migration decisions post-2022. The emergence of ‘Shared Culture’ as a significant positive factor in the post-2022 period points to a new trend where cultural affinity plays a crucial role in migration decisions. These changes may reflect broader geopolitical, economic, and social shifts influencing migration patterns, emphasising the evolving nature of migration dynamics in response to global events and changing priorities.

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

This study focuses on Russian migrants who emigrated from their country due to the conflict between Russia & Ukraine and the declaration of military mobilisation by Putin. In this context, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Serbia and Turkey were selected and data such as common

language, alphabet, language family, common borders, distance from Russia, common religion, common culture, visa exemptions, dollar equivalents of currencies and GDP of these countries were collected and coded for SPSS analysis.

According to the results of the analysis, before 2022, the migration movements of Russians are consistent with the gravity approach. However, with the data for 2022, it is seen that the migration preferences of Russians shift away from the gravity approach. According to the results of the analysis, while GDP and Population were observed as important factors in determining migration destinations before 2022, the ratio of Russians in the destination country became more decisive in 2022. In short, before the outbreak of the war, Russians were making migration preferences in accordance with the Gravity approach. However, in 2022, it was observed that Russians showed a different tendency from the rationality offered by the Gravity approach in their destination choices. The outbreak of war in 2022 is an important factor to explain this deviation. In this context, the study concluded that the effect of the Gravity approach on migration preferences differs in war and peace conditions.

The analysis might be improved by including more country and year data. However, information for each category may not be available for all countries. Since this is one of the main limitations of the study, only 5 countries were analysed. In addition, data for the year 2023 could not be added to the study due to the fact that the Armenian government did not publish its statistics for that year. In this regard, suggestions for future studies can be as follows: Identifying and analysing the countries with the highest proportion of Russians, increasing the number of years covered by the analysis and conducting an analysis for Ukrainian refugees.

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Author Contribution Rate

The researchers contributed equally to this study. The investigators did not declare any conflict of interest.

Ethics Committee Approval

Since there is no human interaction in this study, obtaining an ethics committee approval document is not required.