

The Push-Pull Factors in the Study of the Ethnic Minority's Migration of Vietnam*

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ABSTRACT

Ethnic minority migration in Vietnam is a unique type of migration. It is the migration of individuals, groups (families, clans, hamlets), communities of ethnic minorities (to villages, communes, districts, provinces, intra-/inter provinces), regions; the migration could be in the Northwest — Central Highlands direction, or could be rural — urban, rural — rural, urban — rural, rural — industrial zones migration. It could be cross border migration (to China, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar; to Middle East countries). These migration could take various forms: spontaneous migration (free migration), organized migration (planned migration) for reasons such as migration to take refuge, for marriage with foreigners, for economic reasons, for labor export, for familial reunion.

Keywords: ethnic minority migration, spontaneous migration (free migration), organized migration (planned migration), labor export

Push-pull факторы в исследовании миграции этнических меньшинств Вьетнама

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РЕФЕРАТ

Миграция этнических меньшинств во Вьетнаме является уникальным типом миграции. Это миграция отдельных лиц, групп (семей, кланов, деревень), сообществ этнических меньшинств в деревни, коммуны, районы, провинции, внутри / между провинциями, в регионы; миграция может происходить в направлении Северо-Запад — Центральное нагорье или может быть миграцией из сельской местности в города, из сельской местности в сельскую местность, из города в сельскую местность, из сельской местности в промышленную зону. Это может быть трансграничная миграция (в Китай, Лаос, Камбоджу, Таиланд, Мьянму; в страны Ближнего Востока). Эта миграция может принимать различные формы: спонтанная (свободная) миграция, организованная (плановая) миграция по таким причинам, как миграция в поисках убежища, для брака с иностранцами, по экономическим причинам, для экспорта рабочей силы, для семейного воссоединения.

Ключевые слова: миграция этнических меньшинств, стихийная (свободная) миграция, организованная (плановая) миграция, экспорт рабочей силы

Research of the ethnic minority migration trends in Viet Nam in the context of national reform, modernization, industrialization and international integration is a significant part

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of general Vietnamese migration investigation. Therefore, ethnic minority's migration process is defined by the same norms and rules. "Pull-push factors" were first proposed by Everett Lee [9]. Aside from characteristics unique to specific ethnic minority areas, the "pull-push" factors are the main determinants for migration. This theory views population migration as the physical change of residence in specific contexts, and points out that migration is the result of the interplay between pull - push factors associated with the area of origin, area of destination, intervening obstacles, and personal factors [9]. It is a process affected by the "pull" factors of the destination, and the "push" factors of the place of origin. Everett Lee explained, that the natural "push" factors of the area of residence, such as hardships (in the place of origin) and the "pull" factors of the destination (area of destination) which are more favorable, offers more life and work opportunities have objectively created flows of migration [9].

Using this theory, many other academics have further developed its offshoots, making it much more applicable in various conditions and circumstances. Other notable researchers include: Lipton (1976), Todaro (1976) et al... Stressing out special significance of Lee's theory, they all concurred with Lee's "pull-push factors", creating the basis for flexible application of migration in the following decades across countries and continents, including Viet Nam.

The main tenets of "pull-push factors" can be summarized as follows:

"Pulls factors" can be present in:

- Developed countries or industrialized metropolitan areas. These are "pull factors" compared to countries and areas that are less-developed, have low-income levels, backward economies and many hardships in life.
- Countries with a modern communication system, where phones, the internet, social networks are readily accessible, allowing greater access to and exchange of information, having more comfortable life. These factors create "pull" factors for the act of migration.
- Countries with a lack of labor as a result of the declining birthrates (countries such as Germany, Japan...)
- Developed economies with above average social welfare systems such as: Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland...
- Advanced democracies, where religious freedom and human rights are highlighted. These are usually "pull" factors for many people living in countries where these rights and freedoms are limited or persecuted.
- Countries where English is the predominant language. This is also a pull factor for younger people.
- Less-developed countries with big fertility rate and growing population of school age have additional "pull" factor in this demographic cohort inspiration to migrate to get better chances to be educated, improve their professional skills and find better jobs compared to their current place of residence.

"Push" factors include:

- Poverty and low-income levels;
- Lack of professional development prospects;
- Lack of arable land, geographically isolation, lack of resources;
- High unemployment, lack of jobs;
- Prevalence of social issues, lack of guarantee of human rights;
- Wars and internal strife;
- Worsening natural disasters, climate change, famine, skyrocketing crime rates.

Application of this theory in ethnic minority migration in Viet Nam after 1975 — up to now could be described considering particularly the trend of free migration of ethnic minorities to particular provinces that could be explained by the different factors.

I. Northwestern provinces (northern mountainous provinces) migration to the Central Highlands

Free migration in this area is mainly by ethnic minorities, of various faiths: Protestantism, Catholicism, Cao Dai, Islamism. In the beginning, migration was chaotic and in large numbers. Eventually, the numbers tapered off and migration became by small groups, their destinations were mainly the Central Highlands and the Southeastern region (2000–2010). During this period, the Central Highlands saw roughly 43,000 households with nearly 200,000 people of ethnic minority descent migrating from the Northern mountainous region. About 50% were intra-province migration. Of 13/14 Northwestern mountainous provinces, free migration departures were mainly from the 2 provinces of Dien Bien and Cao Bang (accounting for nearly 50% of the total free migration of the region). The reasons for this are very diverse, but can be attributed mainly to a lack of arable land, geographical isolation, many hardships in livelihoods (push factors); for the H'mong minority, their generational vagrant lifestyle results in conducting reclamational agricultural burning and moving from one place to another. Due to the lack of fertile, arable land in their place of residence, this population is forced to move to new areas; meanwhile, their destination in the Central Highlands (area of destination) had fertile red basalt soil, open land, with much easier livelihoods. Their place of destination has also marked improvements in population planning and zoning, in creating favorable conditions for migrants to have access to farm land, and settlement foundation in the long-run basis. In terms of policy, they became beneficiaries of state policies, with incentives for housing, farmlands, water, medical insurance. The State had implemented the policy of: “continuing to improve regulations, policies, ensure that all ethnicities were equal, respected, united, and differences harmoniously resolved to create a marked change in socioeconomic and cultural development of ethnic minority areas, particularly in the Northwest, Central Highlands, Southwest, western part of the Central coastal region” [10], and the policy of “equality, unity, mutual respect for joint development”. These were strong pull factors. However, this phenomenon also led to the concentration of migrants in border areas, resulting tension along the border.

II. Mountain to delta migratory trend

A number of ethnic minorities have shown a preference for migrating to the delta region, including the Tho people in Nghe a province. As mentioned above, the reasons for migration are diverse, but for the Tho people, it was also due to **“pull, push factors”**. Historically, the Tho people’s ancestors were delta-inhabitants who moved to the mountains to avoid the heavy taxation policies of the feudal regime, and to avoid the diseases that were common among the people of deltas. Their family tree scrolls state that they came from Quy Hop, Nghia Dan of Nghe An province; others stated even more clearly that they came from Dien Chau, Quynh Luu, Yen Thanh of Nghe a province. Tay people were previously known as the Tho ethnic group are agricultural people. They were advanced slope-farmers, tilling the soil with a special type of plow, planting seeds with a round stick... Beside planting rice, they also plant corn, peanuts, sugarcane. The Tho people thrived on planting ramie, and making products from this fiber such as hammocks, fishing and hunting nets. The majority of men in the villages make wickers, and produces rattan chairs, clothing and needings to trade. In a few other places, they also developed special fishing tools. Group hunting became a tradition, partly for economic reasons. They also make a living by gathering local forestry products, along with people of other ethnicities such as the Dan Lai, Ly Ha, or Tay Pong [4]. In short, the Tho’s migration was a result of “pull-push factors”, to improve their livelihoods. While they had originally lived in the delta where livelihoods and the living environment were much easier than in the mountains, they had migrated to avoid persecution in the past. Today, living in the mountains, where

livelihoods are harder to make and life has many hardships, has become “push factors” for them to move to new locations with more favorable conditions and livelihoods. It is this reason that they have plans to migrate back to where they originally came from.

III. Mountain to commercial zones migratory trend

The destination for this type of migration is the delta provinces which are undergoing strong industrialization. The localities with the most migrants are Thai Nguyen, Bac Giang, Bac Ninh, Quang Ninh, Vinh Phuc. The majority of migrants following this trend are young people who have graduated from high school. Despite being highly educated compared to the average education level of their ethnicity, they are under increasing pressure in terms of work hours and the requirements of the modern, industrial production belt which in turn, are taxing on their health. They are also under pressure from warnings that their occupation longevity will only last 10–15 years. Therefore, they must always be proactive in finding new jobs or return home to live. However, for ethnic minorities, they retain their preference for seasonal, free work, leaving free the option of returning home during the harvest season or when the village community and family clan require them to return.

This is a typical type of migration and accounts for a large percentage of ethnic minority migration.

IV. Migration of ethnic minorities in border areas

As mentioned above, there are many reasons for migration, such as gender, age, marital status, level of education, technical competence. However, these factors do not exist separately but rather interact with different, particularly economic factors, an interaction between “pull and push factors”. In reality, the poverty rate for ethnic minorities in localities are usually high, with a redundant work force at the locality, and female workers have become a highly sort-after resource in female-labor-intensive industries (leather shoes, textiles, electronics assembly) for the past several decades. This has created a strong impact on the migratory patterns of ethnic minority populations, one that is heavily gender-segmented. The main destination for female workers are urban areas, and is spreading quickly through border areas. This can be attributed to high poverty rates and redundant laborers in many localities. But even when women migrate for family reasons, both men and women share the same goal of improving their living standards. The average age for inter-provincial migration is the youngest, at only 24, while intra-/inter-district migration average age is a bit older. The average age of migrant women dropped from 25 years old in 1989 down to 24 years old in 1999, 23 years old in 2009. Meanwhile, the average age of non-migrant women increased commensurately from 25 in 1989 to 28 in 1999, and 31 in 2009. Marital status is also another major factor affecting migration. Familial migrations are met with more obstacles versus single-individual migrations. Competence is another factor in migration. Ethnic minorities have a lower average training percentage as compared to the national average. A domestic migration survey in 2015 [5] showed only 31.7% (or about 1/3) has special profession and passed through technical expertise; 27% have finished secondary school. Non-migrant ethnic minorities have a secondary school graduation rate of 29.5%, 24.5% have technical training, 18.6% primary school graduation rate, and only 18.2% high school graduation rate. Statistics show that migrant ethnic minority populations have a higher level of education as compared to non-migrants ethnic minorities. Aside from the age factor, the higher level of education is another “pull factor” for the destination areas. Migrants mainly come to urban areas, industrial zones, colleges and vocational training centers, socioeconomic and cultural centers of localities, places that has higher requirements for education, craftsmanship, and technical expertise

for migrant workers. This reality is the main pull factor for migrants, causing severe competition, natural selection among migrants, resulting in the fact that not all of them can migrate successfully. Only those who have equipped themselves with a sufficient level of education can join this migration flow.

V. Cross-border migration:

Free migration: Hardship living conditions, unemployment and low incomes are “push factors”. Meanwhile, on the other side of the border, it is much easier to find a job. Better incomes, simpler transactions and more convenient daily communication create “pull factors” tempting domestic workers into moving abroad to settle and work. In some cases, out of convenience or as part of prior agreements, some women become wedded to foreign men from South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, among other nationalities. With the exception of a few odd cases, the majority enjoy a much wealthier and happier life compared to before migration period. Many send money back home to parents and relatives so that these people can build or buy houses, cars and other luxuries. This has given rise to the so-called Taiwanese, Korean towns with luxurious mansions in the middle of the countryside. Some individuals, who cross the border as a result of being deceived or illegally trafficked, have been married to foreigners and, out of good luck, enjoy a much better life. They then encourage others to follow suit, creating illegal flows of migrants. However, not everybody is so lucky. Quite a few are faced with dire consequences and risks which have been covered in the media and press as a warning for those tempted to migrate.

VI. Migrant guest-workers to foreign countries

The majority of migrants are workers. Many of them are migrating to work as unskilled workers in South Korea and the Middle East (Syria, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, etc.). More skilled workers are moving to Japan and Germany, among other countries. The attractive thing about these countries is the opportunity for higher incomes, advanced management system, modern human relations, way of living, convenient transport and communications, thus the workers can acquire a lot of knowledge about new technologies, production and management approaches. After their working tour, the workers might bring home industrial production experience (including direct working skills, management experience, software and technological know-how). Many migrant workers have returned home with technical knowledge, new ways of DOI 10.22394/1726-1139-2019-6-ng business which enables them to succeed, and inspire many others to follow in their footsteps. They also create new countryside highlights. Most ethnic minorities are found in the first group of migrant workers, a.k.a. unskilled migrant workers in South Korea and the Middle East (Syria and Saudi Arabia). Even though the level of skill requirement in these countries are not too high, it is still higher than that of the home country; the migrant workers are also entitled to more convenient and modern social communications. Average incomes and social security are generally higher than in their home country.

VII. Migration across the border into Chinese provinces

The largest flow of cross-border migrants, however, remains free migration into China. This is due to labor shortages in Chinese provinces along the border. Amidst China's industrialization and modernization, many industrial cities and new trading hubs have been formed, attracting millions of workers from abroad.

Large cities such as Shenzhen, with many industrial and commercial zones, require a high proportion of skilled workers that are scattered in other cities such as Beijing,

Shanghai, Jiangsu, Guangdong and Guangxi. Against this backdrop, the main source of labor remains young people, those who are physically healthy, well-educated and self-motivated, and thus are often attracted to working in industrial and commercial zones in big cities. This has created a major gap in terms of agricultural workers, a.k.a unskilled workers who are involved in cultivation or animal husbandry. These agricultural jobs are very familiar to rural Vietnamese population in the ethnic minority region in general or in the border areas in particular. Filling in the gap, thousands of Vietnamese people, particularly those residing along the border, have moved to China for work, creating a spontaneous flow of migrants that is very difficult to control. They do familiar jobs which are simple and mostly manual such as cutting sugarcanes, planting banana trees, ploughing a new furrow and planting forests. Those are very familiar jobs to ethnic minority farmers; therefore, they adapt very quickly and easily to the jobs. Younger people having secondary school education level can find jobs working for small companies that are very popular in the border areas. This group of migrants is characterized by its seasonal nature and the fact that it involves people of all ages and gender types. The majority of this type of migrants is from localities along the borderline with China. According to local reports, Lang Son and Ha Giang top the list of departure provinces in this category. With regards to 2017 alone, nearly 800 people from Pho Cao, Dong Van, Ha Giang have moved to China to do housekeeping jobs. Other provinces such as Son La and Nghe An have also seen the flow of thousands of migrants to China. Despite DOI 10.22394/1726-1139-2019-6-ng simple jobs, the migrant workers manage to bring home relatively big sums of money. Thanks to this source of remittance, many households in the border areas have been able to refurbish or build their house anew, bringing a brand new look to the entire countryside. All of these are evidence of the “push and pull” factors on the migrants’ hometown.

All in all, the article above presents an analysis of the major trends of migration of Vietnamese ethnic minorities during the past decades. In general, there are many push and pull factors, co-existing with other aspects such as social factors, traditional customs, religions, education and skill levels. For example, H'Mong people's migration is due to their nomadic nature and/or the deceptive words of Evangelicals. But it is also due to the fact that in the Northwestern mountainous areas, the cultivation land of the H'Mong people is increasingly contracted, so there is a rising H'Mong population who cannot find arable land for farming and living. Faced with such pressures, they are obliged to migrate to the Central Highlands or other areas with more favorable living conditions. Here, the “push and pull” effect remain the cross-cutting factors through the myriad of diverse factors and conditions. Among the on-going migration trends of ethnic minorities, the flow of low-education, unskilled workers, seasonal migration, and temporary migration remain the major trends involving the vast majority of migrants.

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