

DOES PROSTITUTION HAVE ECONOMIC CAUSES?

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Abstract

This study analyzes the causality of the social phenomenon of prostitution, showing that its origins are not limited to economic factors.

Keywords : prostitution, causes, motivation, mentality.

JEL Classification : E01, E20, Y90

The economic motivation of prostitution is, generally speaking, one of the most frequent ideas presented when analyzing the causality of this contemporary social phenomenon found in all countries. I personally appreciate that prostitution is determined by 3 factors :

- first, the moral and cultural pattern of the prone person, which is generated, above all, by the cultural, family, and relational environment (see the rare frequency of this practice in the educated, ultra-religious, environments, and in small communities where social control is more intense);

- secondly, the economic motivation required for the practice of this occupation (the sex industry is concentrated in the rich states);

- to a lesser extent, the risks generated by the negative social reaction of communities where the practitioner works, the extent of social control and the tolerance toward such practice of the community members (for example, the social tolerance within numerous communities in Spain or Holland and partially in Germany).

The economic motivation is not the main cause, since prostitution is extremely frequent in developed states such as : the United States, China, Japan, the UK, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Canada, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Czech Republic, Hungary, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Israel etc. But also very frequently, the practitioners originate from the neighboring poor states. Such practitioners tend to a greater extent to develop their activity in states where prostitution pays well, is legal, and eventually not discourages (Germany, UK, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Turkey). I skeptic towards the appreciations that indicate poverty as the essential cause of prostitution.

Practicing prostitution depends on the individual's mentality and morality, while he regulation of such occupation is related to the evolution of mentalities, the social tolerance the pragmatism and targets of the political power. In some

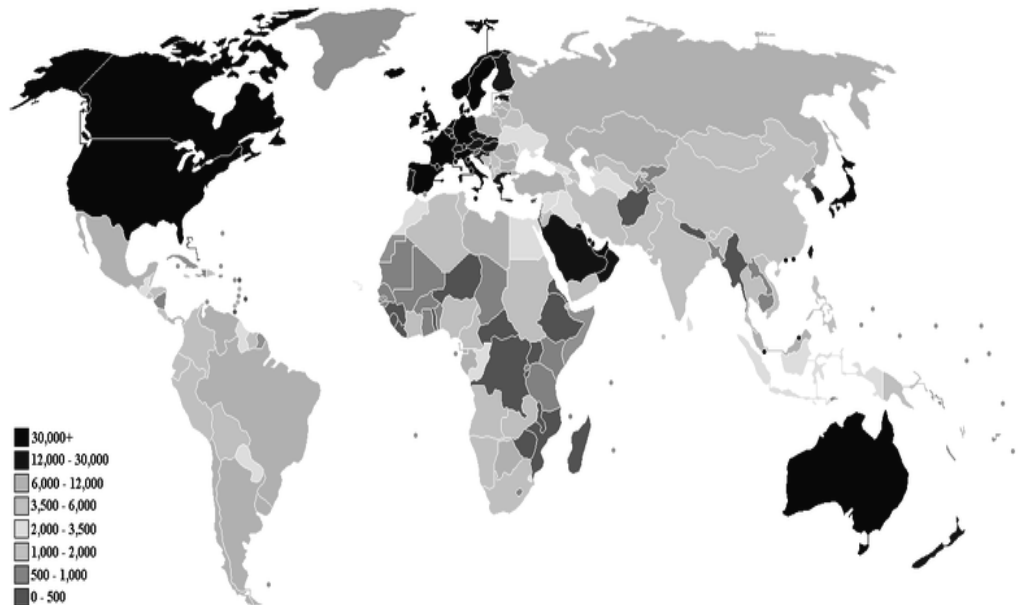
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states (for instance in Romania, India, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Kazakhstan, some African and Latin American states), poverty seems nevertheless to be a determining factor.

Even here there is a historic and cultural line that is specific to each people. To a great extent, the social tolerance covers nearly the same situation with some peoples, that has existed for centuries, until the present day. In the cultural Europe and in Latin America, prostitution is generally tolerated by the states (except for the periods of historic experiments : Inquisition, Nazism, Communism), while in the United States, Asia, and in the Islamic space the deed is punished. If in Romania the main cause of prostitution is the economic situation corroborated with the lack of professional perspectives, throughout the world the situation is far more complex, with a larger causality.

Poverty is a major determining factor in areas such as : Eastern Europe, Russia, South America, Central America, Mexico, Africa, Central and South-Eastern Asia, and so on. Nevertheless, poverty is not the only cause, which results from comparing the top of the world countries in point of the gross domestic product (GDP) per inhabitant with the list of states with a high prostitution rate. Between social poverty, legal regulation and GDP per inhabitant there is a direct influence, but not an absolute determination. The fact that the economic aspect is not the single cause of such practice results from comparing the evolution of the social phenomenon, of the legal regulation of such practice, and of the social weight of its practitioners in states with a comparable GDP per inhabitant.

The states of the world in point of their gross domestic product.



In dark red are marked the states with the lowest GDP per inhabitant, and with dark blue are marked the countries with the highest level of this indicator.²

² [Http://www.wikipedia.en_list of countries by GDP.](http://www.wikipedia.en_list of countries by GDP)

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Here is the GDP per inhabitant of the richest 10 states in the world, as estimated by the International Monetary Fond (IMF) in American dollars for the year 2010:

- 1st place Luxembourg – 104,390;
- 2nd place Norway – 84,543;
- 3rd place. Qatar – 74,422;
- 4th place Switzerland - 67,074;
- 5th place. Denmark – 55,113;
- 6th place . Australia – 54,869;
- 7th place . Sweden – 47,667;
- 8th place. United Arab Emirates – 47,406;
- 9th the United States – 47,132;
- 10th . Holland – 46,418.

In 5 of these states (places 1, 4, 5, 6, and 10), practicing prostitution is legal (in 3 of them it is even legally regulated), while in other 5 it is illegal (places 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9).

But look at the GDP per inhabitant of the 10 poorest countries in the world, as estimated by the International Monetary Fond (IMF) in American dollars for the year 2010 :

- 173rd place – Eritrea – 423;
- 174th place Guinea – 420;
- 175th place Madagascar – 391;
- 176th place Niger – 383;
- 177th place Ethiopia – 364;
- 178th place Malawi – 354;
- 179th place Sierra Leone – 325;
- 180th place Liberia – 226;
- 181st Democratic Republic of Congo – 188;
- 182nd place Burundi – 177.³

In 4 of these states (places 175, 177, 179, 181), practicing prostitution is legal (in none of these states it is legally regulated), and in other 6 it is illegal.

High prostitution rates are found in rich society states (for example : Germany – 0.49%, Spain -0.64%, Portugal – 0.26%, Holland – 0.30%, Austria –

³ World Economic Outlook Database, International Monetary Fund, October 2010.

0.21%, Japan – 0.20% etc.), but also in countries with a low living standard for the majority population (for example: Brazil – 1.04%, Thailand – 0.44%, India – 0.23%, China – 0.37%-0.75%).

- The lack of education and instruction contribute to the perpetuation of this phenomenon in the same areas. It is true that in some states, where there a good educational process is established, there is a high prostitution rate (for example : Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium etc. In these states, nevertheless, prostitution is sometimes practiced by sometimes even over 2/3 of the market, by practitioners of foreign origin.

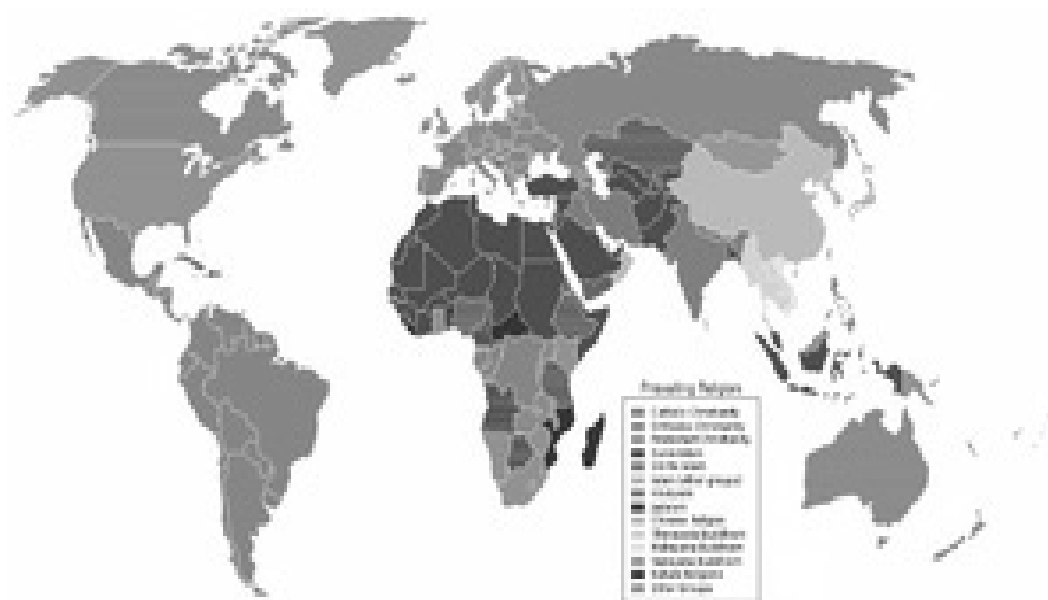
- The wars between nations, but also the civil wars, favor the perpetuation of this phenomenon, directly by the relations that are established between the members of military or paramilitary forces ad the prostitution networks, but also indirectly, by the alteration of the social and economic climate and the generation of some situations of power gap in some territories. As a result thereof, jobs are lost and numerous families are torn apart following the death of one of the spouses.

In 1945, with a population less than half of the present one (311.7 million inhabitants) in the United States there were 1.2 million prostitutes, while at present their number is of approximately 500 thousand.

The situation may be explained by the decrease of the living standard determined by the war period. Civil wars or regional conflicts led to the increase of the prostitution rate in states such as : Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, D.R. of Congo, Ethiopia.

Both in Europe and throughout the world, cultural and religious factors have a maximum influence on the perception of the prostitution phenomenon by the civil society. In Romania, the Romanian Orthodox Church expressed several times its opposition against legalizing prostitution and rejects any law draft on this topic. Apparently, the role of the dominant religion of a country does not seem very important as far as the legal regulation of the prostitution is concerned, since the Church is a private law person which no longer exercises a dominant influence in society.

Apart from the influence of clerics on the electoral mass (especially in the rural space), there is also another influence of religion, which is more subtle. The religious precepts have become, during the centuries, an inseparable part of the culture, morals, and civilization of the state societies. Even if we are not religious, we do our moral reasoning considering the acquired moral values, among which religious precepts have melted in. This generates, in my opinion, a dominant national mentality. Such collective mentality transcends nevertheless the nations, superposing to a great extent to the geographic space dominated by the great religions and rites.



The dominant religions of the world. In purple are marked violet the states that are mainly Catholic, in blue the protestant ones, in red the Orthodox Christian ones, in green the Islamic ones, in yellow the Buddhist ones.⁴

Conclusions

By analyzing the relation between the cultural and religious space and the legal regime instituted on prostitution, I appreciate that :

- in the Catholic space, the permissive regime is predominant;
- in the areas inhabited by Greek Orthodox there is a limited tolerance of this phenomenon;
- in the areas inhabited by old rite Orthodox, such practice is not tolerated by the state;
- in protestant countries, this practice has a controversial position, being generally unaccepted or barely accepted;
- in the countries inhabited by a Hindu majority prostitution accepted in general, under certain conditions;
- in the countries with majority Sunni or Shi'a Muslims, Buddhists of any rite, prostitution is prohibited y the law, even if it exists as a phenomenon in society. It is observed that this appreciation is valid to a greater extent in the states throughout the world than in the states of the European Union. Probably in certain areas of Europe, the influence of the dominant cult is lower due to the distance between the public authority and the church, to the establishment of the layman education, to mass-

⁴ Image taken from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_religious_groups.

media, and to a relative mix of religious persons, due to historic causes and migration of persons within the European Union.

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