

Fertility behavior in the states of crisis and instability pose many theoretical and methodological puzzles to researchers. Often times decline in fertility was linked with crisis. As an example, one can mention steep decline in fertility in the countries undergoing drastically change in social and economic situation like the ones that moved from command-administrative economy and totalitarianism to the market economy and democracy in the 1990-s (USSR, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and others). On the other hand, there is evidence of the opposite effect of the crisis on fertility. For instance, during the current world economic crisis there was a significant increase of fertility rates in Iceland, the country that was one of the most impacted with economic hardships and bankruptcies. Likewise, increase of fertility was noted in US after terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and in Czechoslovakia after occupation of Prague by soviet troops in 1968.

So far, there are two theories that seem to be of best applicability to the explanation of fertility decision-making and corresponding behavior. One is microeconomic theory of fertility advocating rational choice approach to fertility decision-making. According to this theory, the calculation of costs and benefits differ at the states of economic crisis that leads to the decision to diminish number of children. This theory generates empirical support in some instances (like the ones mentioned above). However, this theory is not sensitive to the institutional and cultural differences that could also affect changes in fertility behavior and, most importantly, does not account for non-economic instabilities. Other theory that could be employed for explanation of the phenomena is the one of uncertainty reduction. This initial general assumption shares the premise with the rational choice based microeconomic theory of fertility. The breakaway point that distinguishes uncertainty reduction theory from traditional rational choice explanations is the assumption about what kind of value is maximized.

Uncertainty reduction theory emphasizes universal immanent value that rational actors seek to reduce. Decision-making under uncertainty differs from that under risk in the knowledge of probabilities of the alternative outcomes. While failure to achieve desired ends could be the case for both states — situations of risk and situations characterized with uncertainty - in risk situations the decision-maker can judge the odds of failure, while in situations marked with uncertainty he cannot.

People can reduce uncertainty in two ways. The first one is to gather information that transforms uncertainty to risk for a local choice problem. The second one is to pursue global strategies designed to reduce uncertainty regarding whole strings of future courses of action. The authors of the theory point out several such global strategies. The principal ones in developed countries are stable careers, marriage and children. Most importantly, authors argue that having children reduces uncertainty because parenthood is irreversible and irrevocable. This is because, first, having children involve actors in recurrent social relations, and, second, creates an

irrevocable commitment to a stream of expenditures over a long period of time. Uncertainty reduction theory thus provides a set of hypotheses linking types of uncertainty with strategies for its reduction. Specifically, it predicts that two categories of individuals are more likely than others to seek parenthood: (1) those that face greater uncertainty and (2) those that have less access to other means of uncertainty reduction.

This theory is applicable to the assessment of fertility decision-making in the states of instability because people indeed face the greater uncertainty in these situations. And, fertility, according to the theory, is the way to reduce this uncertainty. However, uncertainty reduction theory doesn't distinguish between different types, scopes and intensity of instabilities (that cause corresponding types of uncertainties). That could be a reason for controversial empirical evidence: in some types of instability theory's premises work, in some they do not. In order to specify the scope of uncertainty reduction theory the study of fertility dynamics in the USSR/Russia from 1952 to nowadays was undertaken. Using several political theories, the ones of reciprocal accountability and social contract among them, the period of interest was classified along the lines of type, scope and intensity of instabilities and crisis. From the perspective of the scope and intensity of instability, following periods were defined: 1. Marked with policy instability; 2. Marked with civil society instability. The latter was further specified in regard to the intensity of instability as typified correspondingly with procedural and constitutional reforms. Also, in regard to "social contract" violation of which is marked with the strongest level of instability, three periods were singled out: first one typified with the stable provision of major contract's elements; second, marked with the deterioration of social contract; and, finally, the third period typified with the erosion and breakdown of the latter.

Then, using age-period-cohort model, period effects were singled out. Each period marked with certain type of instability was analyzed from the perspective of ruling out possible alternative (other than level of instability) impact such as improvement of housing policy or implementation of population policy. This analysis has led to conclusions on which of the scopes uncertainty reduction theory premises hold, and where it does not. A special conclusion was made on the impact of the combination of economic crisis with social and political instabilities of great intensity on fertility decision-making. Also, at one point, constitutional reform (ranked second in the instability's strength) have coincided with "social contract" deterioration and have provided researcher with an opportunity to check a combined effect on fertility decision-making. Overall, conclusions of the empirical data contain confirmation of major premises of the uncertainty reduction theory in certain scopes and include specification of the types of crisis and instabilities where theory's premises don't hold.