

MIGRATIONS FROM AND TO SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

edited by Anna Krasteva, Anelia Kasabova
and Diana Karabinova



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Longo Editore Ravenna

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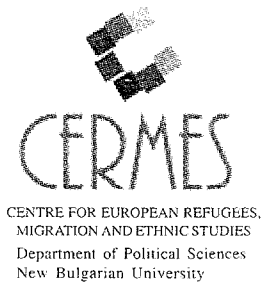
Editor-in-Chief: Stefano Bianchini
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Cover Illustration:
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The book is published with
the support of the Federal Ministry of Science and Research of the Republic of Austria
in the framework of its SEE science cooperation initiative



And with the contribution of
CERMES (Centre for Migration, Refugees and Ethnic Studies), New Bulgarian University



ISBN 978-88-8063-622-9

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Via P. Costa, 33, 48100 Ravenna
Tel. (0544) 217026 Fax 217554
e-mail: longo@longo-editore.it
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Printed in Italy

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Anna Krasteva

INTRODUCTION

If we decide to assume the impossible task of summarizing the complex, contradictory, and diverse Balkan migrations at the beginning of the 21st century, it would be *normalization*. This movement takes a variety of forms; I'll delineate the main trends:

- *From forced migrations to returns*. In the 1990s the Balkans became migration "champions". Between 1990 and 2000 over 10 million people – out of a total population of 80 million – moved¹. Wars in the former Yugoslavia produced huge numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in neighbouring countries and in Western Europe: 300,000 to 350,000 Croatian Serbs were displaced between 1991 and 1995 and 2.6 million citizens of Bosnia were displaced between 1992 and 1995. In 1999, 450,000 ethnic Albanians fled Kosovo for Albania, 250,000 for Macedonia, and 70,000 for Montenegro². Almost fifteen years later, return still remains an "unfinished business", to use the eloquent expression of Mirjana Bobić³. Most of the refugees and IDPs will never return to their native places because these places are not the same, and inter-ethnic structures have changed. Return has, however, become a viable alternative to displacement.

¹ M. Baldwin-Edwards, "Balkan migrations and the European Union: patterns and trends", in *The Romanian Journal of European Studies*, 2005, Vol. 4, pp. 31-43.

² *Ivi.*

³ Mirjana Bobić, "Serbian unfinished business: refugees and internally displaced persons", in *Migrations from and to SEE*, edited by A. Krasteva, A. Kasabova, D. Karabinova, Ravenna, Longo, 2009.

- *From ethnic to economic logic.* Second only to forced migrations, ethnic migrations have been an important type of human movement in the Balkans in the 1990s. 105,000 Germans, 37,000 Hungarians, and 3,000 Jews left Romania, and about 100,000 Greeks from Albania migrated to Greece⁴. Bulgarian Turks are a case in point: 350,000 left Bulgaria in 1989, the biggest migration wave in Europe after WWII and before the wars in the former Yugoslavia. An estimated 150,000 of these migrants ultimately returned, however the emigration of Bulgarian Turks continued in the 1990s and continues today, although the push factors have changed radically. At the threshold of the transition, representatives of the biggest minority in Bulgaria were expelled by the communist state as part of the violent politics of assimilation. A few years later the economic crisis and unemployment – particularly high in areas populated by the Turkish community – pushed several to join their families in Turkey or to try their chances in a more dynamic economic environment in Western Europe⁵, primarily in Germany, as network theory rightly anticipates.

- *From mass emigration to circular migration.* Migration in the communist era was one-way⁶. It was very difficult to escape a communist state and impossible to return. The possibility for migration complemented by potential return is a great democratic discovery. All Balkan migrants enjoy it and several use it in the most profitable way: not to end their mobility, but to make it permanent. Women gathering strawberries in Spain and olives in Greece during the summer and coming back in the winter; men working in construction abroad with their families home; highly qualified professionals moving from one job to another, independent of the country – circular migration takes diverse forms. This is the post-communist version of an old Balkan pattern: *gurbet*. Two important innovations have appeared, and the pattern has been generalized in both gender and social senses. If, in the past, the gender division was very strict – women home and men on move – today there are women working abroad and men home taking care of the kids, the house, and sometimes the small family business. Circular migration today touches all professions – from seasonal workers to experts.

- *From emigration to immigration.* Austrians, Germans, Dutch in Croatia, Britons in Bulgaria, Chinese almost everywhere, Moldavians in Romania, Russians in Bulgaria – immigration in Southeastern Europe is a fact. It is not a new phenomenon, yet it is increasingly invisible due to the political and academic

⁴ Huge discrepancies in figures, going from 59,000 to 300,000 (Baldwin-Edwards, *op. cit.*).

⁵ A. Krasteva, "Post-Communist Discovery of Immigration: the Case of Bulgaria", in *Irregular Labor and Community: a Challenge for Europe*, edited by E. Berggren, B. Likic-Brboric, G. Toksoz, N. Trimiklitis, Maastricht, Shaker Publishing, 2007, pp. 104-17.

⁶ With the notable exception of Yugoslavia, see below.

focus on emigration. The first wave of immigration after WWII dates back to the 1960s, when several Palestinians, Syrians, Afghans, and Africans, got grants for tertiary education in socialist countries. The pull factors today vary from the soft climate and beauty of the Adriatic coast, to the relatively low price of real estate in Bulgaria and Romania, to niches in the emerging market economies and the possibility of starting a business with relatively modest capital. Emigration still prevails over immigration, but the EU integration of Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria (and the European prospects for Croatia and other regional countries) may reverse the picture. The Mediterranean model that transformed Spain, Italy, and Greece from emigration to immigration countries only a decade ago will be realized in several Balkan countries. In a few years the recent EU members will be included in the Schengen area, and in a decade the net migration is likely to become positive.

The day when pull factors reach the strength of push factors the citizens of the region will celebrate the end of “balkanization” and will welcome a new image of an attractive and hospitable region. This day is not tomorrow, but it is in the foreseeable future. Millions of emigrants have divested the region of significance; the “roads” became more attractive than the “roots”. Returnees, circular migrants who earn abroad and spend at home, and immigrants “re-territorialize” countries previously characterized by emigration, investing existential value.

I will conclude this introduction by illuminating the demographic paradox and migration patterns and by demystifying the Balkan migration myth.

Demography goes to economy – we can provocatively sum up the universal migration pattern in this way. Africa is the archetypical example of “mirror image” migration, from sending countries with high demographic growth and low GDP to receiving countries with low demographic growth and high GDP⁷. South-eastern Europe reverses this classical model. Balkan countries – with the prominent exception of Albania⁸ – have poorer demographic indicators than the destination countries: Slovenia and Bulgaria, with less than 1.2 children per woman, are among the lowest of the low in terms of fertility statistics, and Romania and Bulgaria are countries with negative natural growth rates and declining populations⁹. The combination of low demographic performance and high emigration is one of the most negative trends in the Balkans.

A Balkan migration model does not exist; rather we observe a *diversification of migration patterns*. The countries of the former Yugoslavia have been transformed into an arena for ethnic and political forced migration. Serbia is the

⁷ China experiences tremendous economic development, yet the lack of vital space remains a major push factor.

⁸ Among the top-ten European countries by indicators of fertility rates.

⁹ A. Tragaki, “Demography and Migration as Human Security Factors: the case of Southeastern Europe”, in *Migration letters*, 2007, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 103-18.

biggest producer and recipient of displaced people. Bosnia and Herzegovina is among the world's top ten in terms of migrants per thousand in the population¹⁰. The Balkans also produces a particularly insidious form of forced migration in human trafficking, yet again the roles are unevenly distributed. The major sending countries are Albania and Romania, while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have acquired the ambiguous reputation of destination countries. All the other regional players participate in the transit of trafficked human beings.

Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania are the main countries for ethnicity-based migration. Some important minorities have emigrated in disproportionate numbers: Turks in the case of Bulgaria, Germans and Hungarians in the Romanian case and Greeks in the Albanian setting.

Croatia and Bulgaria offer encouraging examples of retirement-based immigration for citizens of wealthy EU countries. Romania, Bulgaria, Albania also present typical cases of labour migration.

This variety of migration patterns can be condensed into two profiles: *from closed to open countries* (Albania, Romania, Bulgaria) and *from openness to ethnic cleansing* (most countries of the former Yugoslavia). Yugoslavia and the rest of the Balkans had opposite migration experiences after WWII. The former used to be the most open of the socialist countries, while the latter gravitated towards the opposite pole. The 1990s dramatically overturned the picture, bringing violence, forced displacement, and ethnic cleansing to European territory at a time when Yugoslavian neighbours started enjoying freedom of movement.

These political differences produce theoretical discrepancies, as the same concepts did not express the same phenomena: refugees in post-Yugoslavian states come from neighbouring countries, while refugees in Bulgaria and Romania – similarly to other European countries – offer asylum to refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and others. IDPs are a major challenge for Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the international community. The term does not refer to other countries like Bulgaria and Romania as this phenomenon is unknown there.

Lastly, I will deal with the myth of mass emigration. Political elites, the public, and media in both old and new EU member-states reiterate the massive international flows of Romanians and, to a lesser degree, of Bulgarians. Figures allow us to draw a more accurate and balanced picture. Emigration from Romania and Bulgaria can be expressed by three characteristics: it is high, it is increasing, and it is still not as high as the intra-EU mobility. Between 2003 and 2007, the population share of Bulgarians and Romanians in the EU-15 increased from 0.2% to 0.5%. Romanians accounted for around 19% of all recent intra-EU movers who took residence in another EU member state over the last four years, and Bulgar-

¹⁰ Together with Albania, but the latter produces mainly labor, not forced migration.

ian citizens for about 4%. Nevertheless, “in most member states the inflow of other EU-15 nationals has been larger than the number of recent arrivals from the EU-10 and EU-2”¹¹.

This book does not aspire to demystify all the myths regarding Balkan migration – they are too omnipresent and too numerous. Its ambition is more modest: to offer insightful visions on a variety of questions, from asylum to retirement in displacement, from remittances to identities, from gender to politics. An additional ambition is not to privilege any perspective, but rather to give the floor to both insiders and outsiders. The book presents the main results of a spring 2008 conference in Sofia entitled, “Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe”, organised by the Austrian Sciences and Research Liaison Office and the Center for European Refugee, Minority, and Ethnic Studies at New Bulgarian University with the collaboration of the Ethnographic Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

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EUROPE AND THE BALKANS INTERNATIONAL NETWORK



Università di Bologna

NATO COME INIZIATIVA UNIVERSITARIA E CON L'AMBIZIONE DI SVILUPPARE UNA CONVERGENZA STRETTA TRA RICERCA SCIENTIFICA E LE ESIGENZE DI INFORMAZIONE QUOTIDIANA NELLA NOSTRA SOCIETÀ, IL NETWORK INTERNAZIONALE 'EUROPE AND THE BALKANS' SI È COSTITUITO ALLA FINE DEL 1993 CON IL SOSTEGNO FINANZIARIO DELL'UNIONE EUROPEA (PROGRAMMA HUMAN CAPITAL AND MOBILITY). ESSO SI AVVALE DELLA COLLABORAZIONE DI OLTRE 250 STUDIOSI ED ESPERTI DI 36 PAESI EUROPEI, STATI UNITI, CANADA, EGITTO, SUD AFRICA, INDIA GIAPPONE, AUSTRALIA ED È COORDINATO DAL 'CENTRO PER L'EUROPA CENTRO-ORIENTALE E BALCANICA' DELL'UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA, A FAENZA.

CONCEIVED AS A UNIVERSITY PROJECT AIMING TO MAKE ACADEMIC RESEARCH MORE RELEVANT TO THE WIDESPREAD NEED FOR INFORMATION, THE 'EUROPE AND THE BALKANS' INTERNATIONAL NETWORK WAS ESTABLISHED AT THE END OF 1993 WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (HUMAN CAPITAL AND MOBILITY PROGRAMME). IT INCLUDES OVER 250 SCHOLARS AND EXPERTS FROM 36 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, THE UNITED STATES, CANADA, EGYPT, SOUTH AFRICA, INDIA, JAPAN AND AUSTRALIA AND IS COORDINATED BY THE 'CENTRO PER L'EUROPA CENTRO-ORIENTALE E BALCANICA' OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA, AT FAENZA.

If we decide to assume the impossible task of summarizing the complex, contradictory, and diverse Balkan migrations at the beginning of the 21st century, it would be *normalization*. This movement takes a variety of forms; 24 scholars from 9 countries delineate the main trends: from forced migration to returns; from ethnic to economic logic; from mass emigration to circular migration; from countries of emigration to countries of immigration. Migration equals mobility. The day when pull factors reach the strength of push factors the citizens of the region will celebrate the end of 'balkanization' and will welcome a new image of an attractive and hospitable region. This day is not tomorrow, but it is in the foreseeable future. The 'roads' became more attractive than the 'roots', millions of emigrants have divested the region of significance. Returnees, circular migrants who earn abroad and spend at home, and immigrants 're-territorialize' countries previously characterized by mass emigration, investing existential value. 19 articles about migration to and from the region draw the figure of the Balkan migrant — and take you on an exciting journey to known and unknown tracks of humanity.

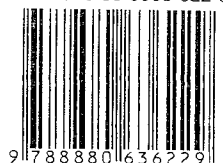
Cover illustrations by Kallina Krasteva-Brailsford.



L 002231

€ 25,00

ISBN 978-88-8063-622-9



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