

Demography and Migration as Human Security Factors: the Case of South Eastern Europe

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Abstract

Demographic dynamics and population movements have important ramifications for human security and pose new challenges both for public policy and for international relations. The aim of this paper is to offer an overview of the possible linkages between migration and demography on one hand and human security on the other, focusing on the case of South Eastern Europe. Though the theoretical framework is not as yet fully elaborated, the growing volume of relevant literature reflects a fast-growing interest in the political and international implications of demographic phenomena.

Keywords: Demography; Migration; Human Security; South Eastern Europe.

Introduction

Until the end of the Cold War, political scientists did not pay much attention on political and policy impacts of demographic developments, and very little research had been devoted to exploring the relationship between demographic shifts and security (Krebs and Levy, 2001; Weiner and Teitelbaum, 2001). In the post-Cold-War years traditional concerns about stability have descended from the global to the regional level and from the absolute magnitudes of total population to the relative magnitudes of specific ethnic, religious or linguistic groups. There has also been the emergence of a revised concept of security appropriate to an era

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of globalization. Broader than the traditional understanding of security centred on the military defence of national or state sovereignty, '*human security*' involves a new framework encompassing many different threats to human life and dignity: job and income security, food and health security, environmental security, security from crime, security from discrimination. In this new people-centred context, where emphasis is placed on the well-being of ordinary people, demography has come to occupy a pivotal role. There has been a renewed interest in population issues. Demographic factors are now attracting increased attention in the international relations and human security literature.

Contemporary literature on the relevance of demography to matters of security focuses on a number of demographic parameters that seem likely to have a bearing on existing balances, posing a potential threat to security. The complex interrelationship between demography and traditional security has been systematically analyzed by a number of scholars who have examined and quantified the impact of intervening demographic factors on outbreaks of violence and political instability. In contrast, the impact of demography on human security remains practically unexplored, the relationship being much broader and the connections more obscure and thus harder to identify, much less quantify.

Demographic shifts expressed through changes in population size (Pirages, 1997; Homer-Dixon, 1999), population movements (Weiner, 1990; Choucri, 2002), differential rates of fertility across identity groups (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Toft, 2003) not to mention changes in age distribution (Hammel & Smith, 2002; Cincotta et al., 2003) and gender composition (Mesquida and Wiener, 1999; Hudson & den Boer, 2002) are directly associated with domestic and international conflicts over scarce resources, pressures for redistribution of economic and political power, social instability, uncertainty and increased probability of outbreaks of violence. Drawing on statistical surveys of sovereign states, a number of empirical studies have investigated whether, and if so to what extent, population pressure correlates with in-

creased risk of armed conflict. The impact of population pressure becomes statistically significant only when specific economic or political conditions are met. High growth rates, increased population density, changes in the age and gender profile or in the ethnic composition of a society, particularly when coupled with poor economic performance, political instability or high rates of urbanization (Cincotta et al, 2003) do appear to be linked to increased likelihood of outbreaks of conflict. Though the connections between urbanization and violence are still under investigation, rapid growth of urban population, particularly when combined with weak infrastructures, is postulated as a demographic predictor of human insecurity, given its impact on housing conditions, public health, criminality and environmental quality (Goldstone, 2002).

Notwithstanding the centrality of its role, scholars suggest that demography in itself is rarely, if ever, the unique cause of volatility (Kahl, 2002; Urdal, 2005). Analysts agree that demographic factors are a necessary but not sufficient condition for insecurity, whether in conflict or in non-conflict situations. Demographic stress operating in conjunction with other contextual parameters: changes in social structures and/or political institutions, economic stagnation or deterioration - may exacerbate existing tensions and increase the risk of instability (Nichiporuk, 2000; Goldstone, 2002; Cincotta et al., 2003; Cincotta, 2004).

Of all demographic characteristics, migration has attracted the greatest interest among scholars. Population movements trigger a shift in the size and composition of a population and therefore influence some of the demographic stress factors, such as age distribution, sex ratio or identity group balances. Those key variables stimulate positive or negative developments in security in both migrant-exporting and migrant-receiving regions. Migration may have positive effects on stability by moderating the adverse impact of either high or negative population growth rates through the elimination of labour surplus or the regulation of labour shortages. The economic benefits for destination countries

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are obvious: increased productivity, labour market flexibility. But exporting areas also benefit, above all through remittances. Meanwhile the presence of national *diasporas* may build bridges between societies with different cultures. Alongside these advantages there are a number of lurking risks which could, under certain conditions, threaten both sides, at both the macro- and micro-economic level. For the region of origin, emigration may, *inter alia*, disturb population balances among identity groups, shrinking the productive (and re-productive) sections of the population, sapping the power of the nation, triggering conditions of 'brain-drain', prolonging economic recessions. For the destination area immigration may alter the ethnic or communal composition, place pressure on urban infrastructures and impose economic and social burdens on the host region (Weiner, 1990; Choucri, 2002). Migration, in addition, whether local or international, changes the structure of households, increasing the number of female-headed households. It alters residence patterns through urbanization and promotes changes in everyday life that directly affect children's physical and emotional well-being. The forced migration of refugees and internally displaced persons is a severely destabilizing factor for certain regions. Most of the above aspects of migration, along with their repercussions, are and have been encountered in the countries of South Eastern Europe in these transition years.

This paper aims to provide an overview of the possible linkages between demography, migration and human security in the Balkans (excluding Greece) in the post-communism years. This region gives a striking illustration of the relevance of demographic trends to security, highlighting the multi-layered linkages between economic and social transition and stability. There are three separate sections in the remainder of the paper. The first provides an overview of the demographic landscape in South Eastern Europe in the transition years, including an attempt to pinpoint the factors impinging on human security. The second deals with internal and international migration with an emphasis on its

human security ramifications. The third focuses on two countries, the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, epitomizing different sets of consequences that demography and migration may have for human security.

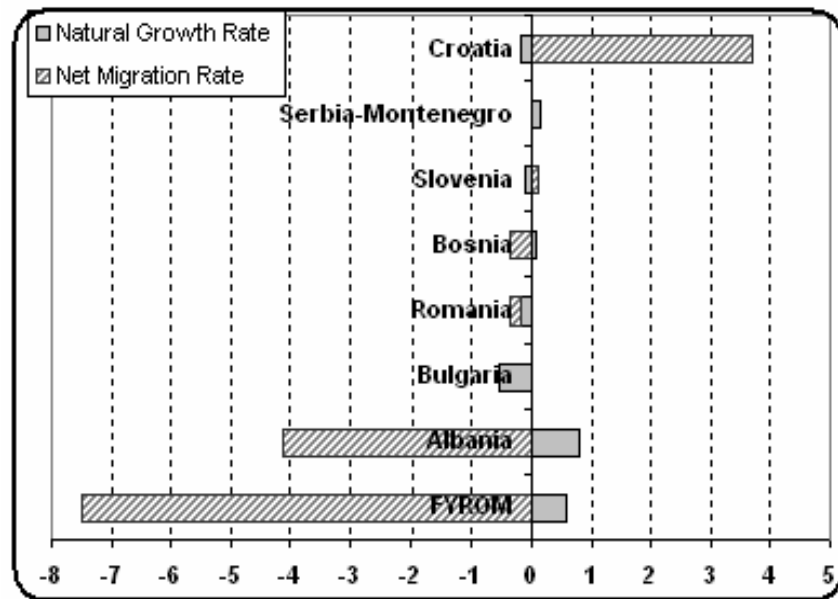
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Although the trajectories of transition have not been identical, people living to the south of the Hungarian borders and to the north of Greece share common political and socio-economic experiences that have inevitably affected their demographic behaviour (Philipov, 2002). Not only has political discontinuity threatened economic stability and destroyed social safety nets. It has also affected social norms and personal values, altering traditional attitudes and habitual modes of conduct. In contrast to the long-standing demographic traditions² of the countries concerned, current demographic trends are characterized by falling marriage statistics accompanied by increased numbers of non-marital unions and extra-marital births (UN/ECE, 2001; Philipov, 2002); postponed childbearing expressed in a higher mean age at the birth of the first child (UN/ECE, 2001); declining fertility rates reaching unprecedented low levels (Sobotka, 2002; Philipov, 2002); high rates of external and internal migration; rising mortality levels (Meslé, 2004). The effects of these changes can be seen in the near-zero population growth rates currently recorded in the majority of Southern European countries (Figure 1).

² As a result of the implementation of pronatalist social policy measures (ranging from paid maternity leave and daycare provision for children under 6 years of age to discouragement of – and restriction of access to – abortions, not to mention taxation disincentives to childlessness, the socialist period was characterized by early and quasi-homogeneous childbearing, with a preference for the two-child family norm. Most women had their first child before the age of 23 and TFR was steadily around replacement level.

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Figure 1: Population Growth Rates in Southeastern Europe, 2003



Source: Council of Europe (2004)

Despite those common trends, the demographic portrait of the region is still far from uniform. The demographic landscape confirms the rule of 'Balkan diversity'. This part of the continent registers some of the best and some of the poorest demographic performances in Europe. Albania and FYROM are in the top-ten list for fertility rates. At the other end of the spectrum, Slovenia and Bulgaria, with less than 1.2 children per woman, are among the lowest of the low in terms of fertility statistics. Albania has the second-fastest growing population in Europe; Bulgaria and Romania are among the countries with negative natural growth rates and declining populations. Infant mortality is high in Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania; at the other end of the scale, Slovenia has one of the best records in Europe for this particular demographic indicator (Table 1).

Demographic shifts and differential growth rates bring profound alteration to the geopolitical landscape. According to one widely held and plausible assumption a juxtaposition of widely varying growth rates among identity groups generates pressures for re-distribution of economic and political

power, both across and within borders³ (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Toft, 2003). Huntington (1996) among others argues that 'ethnic diversity' may be expected in the post-Cold-War era to be the predominant factor underlying violence within and between states. But diversity does not always foreshadow conflict. For one large group of analysts ethnic, religious or cultural diversity is not the main driving force behind insecurity. They would rather emphasise interaction among economic, political and structural factors as explanatory elements in analyzing outbreaks of ethnic hostilities (Douyle & Sambanis, 2000 etc.). Basing their findings on empirical evidence they suggest that explanations for conflicts are to be sought in conditions that are conducive to insurgency, above all poverty and political instability (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Mishali-Ram, 2006). The breakup of the former Yugoslavia is a characteristic example of violent conflict-resolution on the basis of ethnic territoriality following the emergence of a 'political vacuum' (Slack and Doyon, 2001; Nichiporuk, 2000).

Some additional demographic indicators are proposed as suitable predictors of insecurity (Goldstone, 2002), above all indicators of mortality. Infant mortality and life expectancy are widely perceived not only as indicators for well-being but also as portents of *state failure*⁴. The slowdown in life expectancy "gains" in most of the countries of the region, along with persistently high rates of infant mortality, are economically and socially determined, reflecting deteriorating standards of public health and worsening living conditions (Vassilev, 2005).

³ At the regional level differential growth rates between ethnic and religious groups may result either from differential fertility rates or from population movements.

⁴ This is a term used by some US political scientists and statisticians to describe collapses of national order, with attendant mass political or ethnic killings, *coups d'état* and civil wars (Cincotta et al., 2003:22).

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Table 1. Major Demographic Indicators in the Balkans

		Population (in 000,000)	Natural Growth Rate (‰)	Fertility Rate (children per woman)	
Albania	(2004)	3.1	0.81	2.1	(1999)
Bosnia	(2003)	3.8	0.09	1.6	(1990)
Bulgaria	(2005)	7.8	-0.54	1.26	(2002)
Croatia	(2003)	4.4	-0.19	1.33	(2000)
FYROM	(2003)	2.4	0.4	1.6	(1999)
Romania	(2003)	21.7	-0.3	1.27	(2003)
Serbia- Montenegro	(2001)	10.6	0.16	1.66	(2001)
Slovenia	2003)	1.99	-0.1	1.20	(2003)
		Infant Mortality	Life expectancy M F		
Albania	(2004)	12.0 (2001)	71.7	76.4	(1999)
Bosnia	(2003)	11.0 (1998)	69.7	75.2	(1990)
Bulgaria	(2005)	12.3	68.9	75.6	(2002)
Croatia	(2003)	6.3	70.5	77.8	(2000)
FYROM	(2003)	11.3	70.5	75.3	(1999)
Romania	(2003)	16.7	67.4	74.8	(2003)
Serbia- Montenegro	(2001)	12.6 (2001)	70.7	75.6	(2001)
Slovenia	2003)	4.0	73.2	80.7	(2003)

Source: Council of Europe (2004), Population Reference Bureau

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Far from being straightforward, the passage from a centrally-planned system to a market economy entailed dramatic shifts that brought profound disruptions of social and economic continuity to the countries concerned. The avalanche of political and social events that followed the demise of the communist regimes had direct implications on human security issues (Kubicova and Sergi, 2002). The sudden end of communism lifted the political barriers that had obstructed the expression of free will for more than four decades. Emigration became the most intense and prominent of demographic trends.

The abandonment of the previous production system, the breakdown of traditional economic relations and the collapse

of the social structures engendered a generalised feeling of insecurity. A dominant and recurrent preoccupation of post-socialism literature is *loss*: of income, of employment, of safety but also of self-esteem and of moral order (Bridger and Pine, 1998). The adverse economic background and the new opportunities offered by globalisation together conspired to boost the numbers of persons willing to cross the borders in search of a better future.

The dynamics of economic migration in the region are quite complex. Since the beginning of the transition period virtually all the countries concerned have recorded steady net population losses to migration. Croatia is the only exception to this rule. Albania is the region's major exporting country for human labour, primarily towards Greece and Italy; FYROM and Bosnia-Herzegovina also record population losses to migration. Age pyramids and gender ratios have undergone profound transformation in Bulgaria and Romania. Though traditionally selective, migration processes in the Balkans seem to be involving an increasing range of ages and professions, in some cases affecting women more than men.

As far as internal migration is concerned, there has been a reversal in the traditional flow from rural to urban areas. Deindustrialisation and impoverishment, especially in medium-sized cities and towns, unemployment as a newly-arrived threat, along with radical cuts in social services and benefits, led to a shift in activity and production to rural areas, where subsistence rather than market-oriented farming has developed (Bridger and Pine, 1998). Contrary to initial expectations the democratization process did not result in any increase of urbanization⁵. With the exception only of political capitals and cities offering a high quality of life, most urban areas, having had economies based on one particular industry, are currently suffering from prolonged recession and demographic decline, in both absolute and rela-

⁵ United Nations Population Divisions' World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision.

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tive terms (Mykhnenko and Turok, 2007). Differentiations have also emerged in non-urban areas. Places of historic or other touristic interest are becoming increasingly affluent while those based on traditional agricultural activities face new forms of impoverishment. Regional inequalities have increased, in terms of employment opportunities, housing conditions and standards of living.

The gender selectivity of emigration is an aspect worth studying of the multifaceted problem of emigration. In all post-socialist countries women were the first to be affected by economic recession, unemployment and social deconstruction. High female mobility reshaped the gender composition of the population, profoundly altering the structure of households.

The brain-drain is often described as a running sore for the region. According to journalistic sources around 70% of Albanian university professors have left the country. Bulgarians make up a steadily increasing proportion of the student population at Western European universities. Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and FYROM are also affected by artistic and scientific emigration. The factors leading to these pressures on the scientific and cultural elite of certain countries are not purely economic: bad governance, human rights violations and lack of academic freedoms are of decisive importance (Olesen, 2002). Judging in the first place from empirical evidence and to a lesser extent from official statistics, it is understandable how the quite alarming number of highly qualified persons having fled Southeast European countries since 1990s might be seen as an impediment to the region's rapid reconstruction (Horvat, 2004).

Other types of migration such as forced migration, ethnic migrations and human trafficking are similarly to be met with in this part of the continent. The dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia provided a field day for the resurgence of national sentiment and hypernationalist territoriality. Since 1989 the map of the region has been

repeatedly retraced⁶. Civil war generated large waves of forcibly displaced persons. In the name of ethnic homogenisation large numbers of persons were displaced within their own country (becoming “internally displaced persons” = *IDPs*), while others were more or less forced to flee to neighbouring countries (ethnic migration) or to seek asylum elsewhere (refugees). During the Bosnian crisis in 1992-95, the number of refugees and *IDPs* peaked at about 2.5 million persons, with a second peak of just under 2 million displacements triggered by the Kosovo crisis in 1999. Though the number of persons in need of long-term assistance has recently decreased to 560,000 persons (Ambroso, 2006), the uncertainty remains as regional stability has not yet been achieved. Serious human security concerns persist in the form of displaced persons facing poverty, unemployment, poor housing conditions and limited access to such social benefits as education, justice and freedom of movement.

Moreover, the beginning of economic and social transition for the CEE countries coincided with an explosion of human trafficking in Europe; a phenomenon that has been described as ‘the underside of globalization’ (ILO, 2001). Poverty, diminishing employment opportunities, worsening working conditions and a weakening social fabric are among the conditions that permit the proliferation of human trafficking. Closely related to irregular migration, human trafficking and smuggling are perceived as major security concerns.

Focusing on two different cases

The case of former Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia constitutes a case study for the effects of loss of central government control in a multi-ethnic state. Na-

⁶ The country was initially broken up into four different states in 1991: Croatia, Slovenia, a rump Yugoslavia (including Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina) and FYROM. A fifth state was created in 1992 with the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina and a sixth in 2006 with the separation of Montenegro from Serbia. Claims for independence continue to be put forward in the mainly Albanian-populated area of Kosovo.

tionalist claims spark communal tensions culminating in the country's violent dissolution. The passage from a centrally planned system to democratization and a market economy create a political vacuum that is filled by 'ethnic nationalism and ethnic territoriality' (Slack & Doyon, 2001). Bosnia and Kosovo are typical examples of the security relevance of differential growth rates against a deconstructing political background. Higher fertility rates among Bosnian Muslims in the former case and Albanian Kosovars in the later were perceived by nationalist Serbs as destabilizing factors. It is a basic assumption of ethnic competition theory that ethnic populations compete for resources and power. The slower-growing group of Serbs therefore felt threatened by the faster-growing Muslims. In their case, the feelings of insecurity were fuelled not only by hyper-nationalism but by demagogic leaders as well. From a human security point of view, the situation was further aggravated when the international community decided to interfere to put an end to the ferocity. The international response to the Yugoslav crisis was ill-conceived, exacerbating human security concerns. NATO air strikes purporting to protect ethnic Albanians resulted in violation of the human rights of Serbian people.

The case of Bulgaria

Bulgaria is a country of special demographic interest on account of certain particularly unfavourable trends, noted since the mid-1980s, which are not explicable as the effects of war and violent upheaval. The situation has been described as the worst in Europe (with the sole exception of Russia). Bulgarian analysts openly employ terms such as '*population haemorrhage*', '*demographic shock*' or '*population crises*'. The first signs of declining fertility become evident in the 1980s, with the trend intensifying after 1990. The key features of this period have been the steep fall in fertility rates along with an 'ageing of fertility' that is the result of postponement of first births and the widening of intervals between births (Sobotka, 2002). Time will be needed for it to become clearer whether - and if so to what extent - this poor demographic

performance reflects a broad-spectrum reaction to a thorny and intricate transition process plausible to recover once the economic hardship and political uncertainty are over. Whatever the reality, there can be no doubt that the recent demographic 'shock' is both the outcome and the cause of human security concerns.

Population shrinkage as the result of the abrupt decline in fertility, in conjunction with high rates of immigration, is leading the country into a vicious circle. The demographic implications become even more serious against a backdrop of economic hardship and low living standards. Demographic factors are in turn perceived to be holding back economic and social development. The unfavourable economic situation further complicates the process of coping with an ageing population. Pressures on the social security systems are exacerbated by the radical changes in the labour market and the emergence of unemployment, the dramatic decline in real incomes, the increase of inequalities and the growth of poverty. The effects of slashing health budgets and dismantling the nation-wide arrangements for care of the elderly are further aggravated by the loosening family ties made inevitable by population movements.

Concluding remarks

Demographic shifts, movements of population and changes in patterns of settlement: all these are portents of economic, social, political and environmental challenges with direct repercussions on security. Interest in population issues has increased. Demographic factors are currently attracting much greater attention in the international relations and human security literature. Though not the main cause of conflicts, demographic trends can, in certain specific contexts, exacerbate tensions and put security in peril.

Some regions are more prone to instability and South Eastern Europe is one of them. Recent demographic trends, unfolding in an adverse economic climate, pose major concerns for development perspectives and progress in the transition process. Human security concerns have come to the

fore. Massive migratory outflows in combination with low fertility levels have brought about profound alterations to the age and gender composition of the region. Differential growth rates across identity groups have changed the region's ethnic and religious profile. Shifts in the equilibrium between different ethnic and religious groups, changes traditionally seen as destabilizing factors, were at the source of the violent armed conflicts that led to, and accompanied, the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Poor economic performance and deteriorating public health conditions are leading to depopulation in Bulgaria. This bleak picture is compounded by a weakening social fabric, falling living standards, growing gender inequalities and the proliferation of human trafficking. In this corner of Europe safeguarding human security is a much more complicated issue than anywhere else in the continent.

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