

# Migrations in Balkans: Historical Perspective

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**Abstract:** Migration is a constant process immanent to humans from the beginning of humanity until today. In some regions such as the Balkans, this process was particularly intense, with its own specifics and characteristics. This peninsula is a crossroads of civilizations with different ideological, socio-cultural, religious practices. It helped here to be developed a spirit of cooperation in all spheres of social life: political, economic, and cultural. But the interests of the great powers to dominate this strategic region occasionally led to conflicts, which resulted in forced migration of the population. The purpose of this paper will be to analyze exactly the process of migration, both forced (political) and voluntary (economic) that are characteristic of modern society. In the analysis of this topic we will use a historical approach, and the subject of our observation will be the period between the 17th and the beginning of the 21st century. Our analysis will cover a longer time interval because it will allow us to identify clear patterns of behavior of collective political actors - states as well as individuals.

**Keywords:** Immigrations, Balkans, Civilizations, Religion, History.



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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.51331/A006>  
Journal of Balkan Studies, 2021  
[balkanjournal.org](http://balkanjournal.org)



Received: 13.10.2020  
Revision: 03.11.2020  
Accepted: 01.12.2020

## Introduction

Migration is a phenomenon of humanity since the beginning of civilizations. Through history migrations were reality of Balkan region as well. Therefore, it could be said that migration is a natural process that follows the historical development of the Balkans. According to the United Nations, migration is a movement of the population regardless of the reasons that motivated it. The term migrants include refugees, displaced persons and economic migrants (International Organization for Migration 2004: 14). Migrations are one of the most important demographic categories that are determined by the two dimensions of space and time (Poulain, Perrin 2001). The space refers to the place where the migrant leaves, as well as to the place where he / she moves. While time refers to the length at which a particular migrant remains to live in a particular area. The right to migration is regulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948. The second article of this declaration aims to ensure that every person has the right to leave any country, including his or her homeland. Depending on the cause, migration can be political or economic. Political migrations indicate that politics as a regulation of relations between large social groups in a given area is dysfunctional and results in military conflicts, whether on an ethnic basis (as is often the case) or on an ideological basis (as was the case with civil war in Greece). Military conflicts by degeneration cause mass migrations to the regions where they occur. The population migrated during military conflicts because they felt insecure and exposed to military dangers. Military conflicts often cause migrations after their end, as a result of the population adjusting to the realities that have arisen with the outcome of military conflicts. Economic migration paths occur as a result of disparities in economic development and living standards in individual countries. The direction of migration is from the economically weaker to the more economically developed countries. The difference between political and economic migrations is that the former are forced, while the latter are voluntary. There is an element of coercion in forced migration, including the threat to the lives of those migrating. The group of forced migrations includes refugees and displaced persons (International Organization for Migration 2004: 25). Voluntary migration, on the other hand, occurs on the basis of individual decisions by individuals that aim to improve their own standard of living, upgrade their profession, or provide prosperity for their family. Significant political migrations occurred after

the central political force in the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire, reached its zenith and began to show weaknesses. Following the historical development of the Balkans as a place where different civilizations touch, since 1800 it can be noticed with greater influence of the Slavic and German civilizations. Here, one can note the role of Russia, which assumes the role of protector of the Slavs living in the Balkans. After a long period of serious Russian influence, the United States and the European Union have recently shown their ambitions to regulate the political situation in the Balkans.

## **Military conflicts and migrations between the 17th and 19th centuries**

The first serious migrations to the Balkans began after the war between the Ottoman Empire and Austria between 1683 and 1699, especially after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire at Vienna in 1683. After this defeat, the Muslims who settled in the border areas of the Empire began to gradually withdraw to its central parts. During this period the city that received the most migrants was Edirne. Immediately after him, Skopje was among the cities where most migrants settled. In 1774, after the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarja, about 500,000 inhabitants migrated to the territory between Anatolia and the Balkans (Halacoğlu, 1988: 3). As a result of one of the major defeats of the Ottoman Empire after the Ottoman-Russian War, 1877-78 many citizens of the Ottoman Empire were forced to migrate. There are various statistics on the number of migrants, but it mainly ranges between 1,230,000 and 1,253,500 people who have changed their place of residence (McCarthy, 1998: 174). The Ottoman-Russian war ended with the Berlin Peace Treaty. As a result of this agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina was occupied by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Dissatisfied with their situation, 120,000 Bosniaks (Muslims) migrated to the interior of the Ottoman Empire.

## **The Balkan wars and migration**

An important factor for migration in the early 20th century was the Balkan wars. They had their background in the ambitions of Russia and other European powers to have their influence and control over certain territories / states in the Balkans. The prehistory of the Balkan wars begins with the Serbian uprising of 1876, and in 1877-78 the Ottoman-Russian war took place. At this moment Russia openly sided with the Orthodox Slavs in the Balkans. An important factor in the Balkan wars was the Macedonian

question. After the failure to separate Macedonian territory from the Ottoman Empire by supporting an uprising, the strategy of the Balkan states, supported by Russia and other European empires, was through direct conflict between the Ottoman Empire and an alliance of Balkan states to separate Macedonian territory from the Empire. At the same time, some European centers of power, such as Austria-Hungary, supported the Albanians in seeking independence from the Ottoman Empire. As a result of the defined policy of forming an alliance of Balkan states to separate the territory of Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire by military means, the Balkan states began to conclude mutual agreements. Thus, on March 12, 1912, an agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria was signed, on May 29, 1912 was signed an agreement between Greece and Bulgaria, and a later was signed an agreement between Bulgaria and Montenegro (Sojlemzoğlu, 1949: 288). These agreements paved the way for the first and second Balkan wars. The results of these wars were catastrophic. The territorial form of all the states involved was significantly changed, the Ottoman Empire abandoned the last significant territory in the Balkans that was part of it, many civilians were terrorized, especially Muslims, and there was room for Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian nationalism to grow. All these events led to a new wave of migrants. Many people had no choice but to migrate to the territory of the Ottoman Empire. The personal destinies of these people were tragic. Migrations have brought challenges in many respects economic, religious, and cultural. To better illustrate the challenges of this time period, we point to remarks made by foreign observers of the Balkan wars. One of the French journalists who were dealing with the immigrants during and after the Balkan Wars was Stephan Lauzanne (1990: 47-48). The desperation of migrants is best illustrated by the following testimonies of Lauzanne:

I had the chance to see the first immigrant group 20 km near to the Istanbul. After this group I was witness to the other immigrant groups who were coming to Istanbul. There were some pours, old men's, women's, children are who were approaching to our side, and they with total silence and panic were escaping from non seen power that was chasing them..... You can see the fear, confusion and emptiness upon them (Lauzanne 1990: 37-48)

Lauzanne's testimony indicates that the migrant situation in Istanbul in 1912 was shocking. He goes on to describe the situation in the following words:

Most of the immigrants were coming by the trains, the roads were full by immigrants. You can see that Istanbul was occupied by the Immigrants and they were settling in one location. After short period the streets of Istanbul were block by immigrants. There was a big line of immigrants who came in Istanbul with their arrow cars. In each car upon the hay stack there were women and children's. All of them were presents who escape from the war and they were sleeping in the beg yards of mosques and centers..... That was the picture of military defeat that made them to immigrate.

During the Balkan Wars, a significant portion of the Muslim population retreated with the Ottoman army, first to Istanbul and then to Anatolia. A significant number of them lost their lives along the way. Much of the retreating population was captured by local paramilitary formations and executed. Those who somehow managed to reach Istanbul, Thessaloniki and Kavala struggled with other types of problems such as cold, lack of shelter, lack of food, health problems, etc. Those who fled to Edirne, Janiene, Schoeder had an even more serious problem because they were surrounded by the armies of the Balkan states. To understand better the dimensions of migration from the Balkan wars we will use relevant statistics. Before the Balkan Wars, the number of Muslims in the Balkans that were part of the Ottoman Empire was 2,315,293. After the Balkan Wars, the number of Muslims in the same territory decreased to 870,114. There is a difference of 1,445,179 people who migrated. Calculated as a percentage, it is approximately 60% of the Muslim population that migrated during the Balkan wars (McCarthy, 1998: 184-192). Of the total number of migrants from Rumelia (Balkans) to Turkey (1,445,179), according to Justin McCarthy, about 27% settled in Anatolia. Many Muslims migrated during the Balkan wars, but Icdygy, Sert (2006: 88) indicate that after the Balkan wars about 440,000 Turks migrated from Thrace and Macedonia to Turkey.

There are various and many statistical sources related to immigration from the Balkans to Anatolia during and after the Balkan Wars, starting from 1912 to 1926. It can be said that in addition to Muslims, non-Muslims migrated to Anatolia during this time interval. In that period there was a population exchange based on Turkey's interstate agreements with Bulgaria and Greece. Based on these agreements, many people who felt loyal to the Ottoman state, who were originally Bulgarians and Greeks, also moved to Turkey. They saw no future for themselves and their families in the emerging nationalist Balkan states. A characteristic of the newly formed Balkan states in this period of

time was a strong nationalism that was stimulated in order to build a sense of statehood, which went very hard after 400 years of living under the umbrella and under the protection of the Ottoman state. Nationalism in the newborn countries was stimulated to suppress the positive feelings towards the Ottoman state that prevailed among a significant part of the population. As a result of these nationalist concepts, the Muslim population was marginalized, segregated, and difficult to integrate into the emerging nationalist states. Hence, population exchange agreements began to be concluded. The first such agreement was signed between the Ottoman state and Bulgaria. Between December 2-15, 1913, a joint commission was formed with 6 members from the Turkish side and 9 members from the Bulgarian side. The commission aimed to delimit the population within 10 kilometers of the border between the Ottoman state and Bulgaria. This commission decided 46,764 Bulgarians to migrate from Turkey to Bulgaria, and 48,570 Muslims to migrate from Bulgaria to Turkey (Ağanoğlu, 2011). The second attempt at population exchange was between the Ottoman state and Greece. The first attempt at population exchange was made in 1914, but due to the beginning of the First World War this attempt was stopped and postponed for some time.

According to the Carnegie Commission, immediately after the Second Balkan War, 50,000 people from Aegean Macedonia migrated to Bulgaria, and in the first three decades of the 20th century, 100,000 people from Greece migrated to Bulgaria (Cheprezanov, 2008:221). Pejov (1968: 96) states that in November 1919 alone, about 100,000 people from Greece, mostly from Aegean Macedonia, migrated to Bulgaria.

## **Migrations between the two world wars**

In the period between the Balkan Wars and the First World War, population migration also took place in the Balkans. These migrations were not organized by the states, but rather by the preference of the population to live in a country dominated by their ethnic group. Statistics show that in 1926, 626,954 people migrated from Anatolia, while from the eastern Black Sea migrated

182,635 inhabitants. The total number of people who migrated to Greece during this period is 1,104,216 (McCarthy, 1998: 336). Based on the protocols signed by Turkish and Greek representatives in the settlement commissions, on January 30, 1930, the total number of Greeks who migrated was 186,189 (Eren, 1993: 358). These migrations had their socio-economic, political and cultural dimensions. They changed the demog-

raphic picture and political realities of the Balkans. Migrants were usually faced with the problem of adapting to a new environment, learning new rules of conduct, new living standards, and so on. States on the one hand insisted that migrants accept existing standards, while migrants insisted on maintaining old practices. Also, during the migrations themselves, a number of practical problems arose, such as the registration of migrants from migrant centers in certain cities such as Edirne. Additional logistical problems arose as to the migrants to be redistributed from one migrant center to another and above all to end up in their final destination from where they will continue their daily life.

According to Akgündüz (2008: 9) the number of people who migrated from the Balkans to Turkey from the 18th century until 1923 when the modern Turkish state was created is not less than 5 million. In addition to the majority of the Turkish population, this number includes Cherkezi, Albanians, Bosniaks and other smaller ethnic groups. The issue of immigrants from the Balkans to Turkey will continue after establishment of the Republic of Turkey. The main factor for Turkey like main state who is receiving immigrants from all of the Balkans is the cultural, religion and historical background of Empire. This imperial culture is allowing to all emigrants to adopt and integrate in all areas easily. Based on the Stephan Ladas the immigrant's number who came to Turkey during the periods of 1921-1928 from different states like Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania and Soviet Union were 463.534. Like a source Ladas is referring to the Turkish State Institute for Immigrations (Office Central de statistique, 1928: 36).

In the period from 1923 to 1933, 26,120 families or 108,179 inhabitants migrated from Yugoslavia to Turkey in their own arrangement. In the period from 1936 to 1947 the number of migrants from Yugoslavia to Turkey was 5,894. The migrations from 1936 to 1947 were pre-planned. According to (Ağanoğlu, 2011: 320) the number of migrants from Yugoslavia to Turkey in the period 1936 to 1947 was 2,277. Migrants from Romania also arrived in Turkey. Thus, between 1923 and 1938, 113,710 migrants arrived in Turkey from Romania. Some of these migrations were planned, and some of the citizens themselves migrated in their own arrangement. In the period from 1936 to 1960 the number of migrants from Turkey to Romania was 7,631 (Eren, 1994: 382).

## Migration after World War II

The newly established Yugoslav communist regime, led by Tito, in the first phase of its establishment did not agree to allow the population to migrate. However, migrations did occur. They were caused by financial, social, religious and national reasons. The migration of the population from the Balkans to Turkey continued in 1990, after the break-up of Yugoslavia, which was caused by the rampage of radical nationalism. After the declaration of independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Serbian aggression, about 1,300,000 Bosniaks were forced to migrate, and about 20,000 of them migrated to Turkey. The Serbian aggression in Kosovo in 1999 also sparked a wave of migration in the Balkans, some of which ended in Turkey.

**Table 1,** Ethnic international migration in some Balkan countries in the period 1945-1992/93, absolute values

Country of Origins	Country of destination	Amount	Period	Ethnic groups
Yugoslavia	East and West Germany	360,000	1945-1950	Germans
Yugoslavia	Italy	200,000	1945-1950	Italians
Slovakia, Romani and Yugoslavia	Hungary	315,000	1945-1950	Hungarians
Romania	West Germany	402,000	1950-92	Germans
Yugoslavia	West Germany	90,000	1950-92	Germans
Bulgaria	Turkey	630,000	1950-66	Turks and other Muslims
Yugoslavia	Turkey	300,000	1950-66	Turks and other Muslims
Romania	Western Europe	240,000	1960-92	Jews
Romania	Israel, USA	500,000	1991-93	Mainly Gypsies
Yugoslavia, Romania	Hungary	124,000	1988-93	Mainly Hungarians

Source: Fassmann, Münz (1994)

In the post-World War II period, migration trends in the Balkan Peninsula were mainly influenced by the processes of industrialization and urbanization. These processes took place in the Balkans several decades later than in Western Europe. This period is also

marked by significant economic migration, from some Balkan countries such as Yugoslavia and Turkey to Western Europe. In the early 1960s, Yugoslavia was the only communist country on European soil that had open borders and population migration agreements. In the period until 1964, legislation was passed that allowed the population to migrate. During this period Yugoslavia became the most important source of labor for countries such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Between 1964 and 1973, some 860,000 Yugoslav citizens migrated. Many of them, or about 200,000 citizens, migrated across the ocean to countries such as Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia. In 1969 alone, 192,232 migrants from Yugoslavia were registered in Germany, and in 1970, 202,360 were registered, and in 1971, 113,333 new migrants were registered. This means that in just 3 years, 507,925 citizens migrated from Yugoslavia to Germany. Between 1964 and 1971, more than 10% of the population between the ages of 20 and 30 migrated. If we analyze the educational structure, 34% of the highly educated population in Yugoslavia migrated during this period. Due to concerns about the outflow of a large part of the young population, restrictions on migration followed for some time. Thus, already in 1972, the number of migrants from Yugoslavia to Germany dropped to 75,501, while in 1973 that number dropped to 81,504 (Akgündüz, 2008: 110). Between 1973 and 1985, an additional 500,000 people migrated from Yugoslavia to Western Europe. In the late 1980s to 1990, another 550,000 inhabitants of Yugoslavia migrated to Western Europe (Bonifazi, Mainolo, 2004: 521). The Balkans in general and Yugoslavia in particular have long had a mobile population. The wars that followed in the 1990s restored the trend of political migration to the former Yugoslavia.

The labor-recruitment agreement between Turkey and Germany, signed on October 30, 1961, only regulated the practice that had been going on before. In June 1960, 2,495 Turkish workers worked in Germany. As early as July, the number rose to 5,200. Between 1961 and 1973, about one million Turkish workers were legally staying in Western Europe. Because there were a number of workers who did not return on time after the contracts expired, the assumption was that in 1973 there were 1,300,000 migrants from Turkey in Western Europe. The largest number of migrants was recorded in 1968. According to the Turkish Employment Bureau, 525,000 workers left the country this year. Most of them, about 80% went to Germany (Martin, 2012: 128). On November 23, 1973, Germany stopped accepting migrants from non-European Economic Com-

munity countries. Among the countries from which migrants were banned was Turkey (Akgündüz, 2008: 4). In 2008, 2.3 million citizens born in Turkey lived in the European Union. Of these, 1.5 million lived in Germany, 158,000 in Austria, 230,000 in France, and 200,000 in the Netherlands (Biffi, 2011: 1). According to Turkish statistics, in 2009, 3.8 million Turkish citizens lived outside the country, covering overseas countries and the Middle East. According to these data, 1.7 million Turkish citizens live in Germany (Martin, 2012: 130).

## Conclusion

The Balkans are of key strategic and geopolitical importance in world politics. Many wars for supremacy have been fought in this area throughout history. They had their political, economic, cultural, and psychological consequences, primarily reflecting on migration processes. Migrations were caused by the dynamics of political relations that went hand in hand with the military supremacy of individual states, new religious concepts, economic difficulties, ethnic misunderstandings and prejudices, territorial changes of states, etc. In this paper we had the opportunity to see that starting from the 17th century until today we have a constant dynamics of migration trends in the Balkans. During this period, significant changes took place in world politics, which were reflected in the Balkans as well. There was an awakening of national consciousness in Europe and a wave of nation-building. Certain powerful political ideologies such as liberalism have supported such processes. As a result, the once powerful and glorious empires began to collapse. Among the empires that were in great crisis in the second half of the 19th century, and which in one way or another disintegrated in the early 20th century, were the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire. This paper shows that the process of weakening and the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire had a strong impact on the migration processes on the Balkan Peninsula. This caused sad sorrows, personal dramas of people who had to leave their homes and migrate to areas unknown to them until then. These processes continued between the two world wars, as well as after the Second World War, but this time the migrations were not political, but economic.

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