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Workshop on Migrations-related research JHA
48668: Sarajevo, 10-11 September 2012

Panel III: Links of BiH Migrants with the Homeland and vice versa: Current Situation and Future Prospects

Trends and Characteristics of Links of Bosnians in Sweden with BiH

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Background

“Conflict-generated Migrants and their impact on peacebuilding in their homelands”

Two-year project grant from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Department for Global Security) (2009-2010)

Participants: Professor in Peace and Conflict research Ashok Swain, assistant professor Roland Kostić, and doctoral candidate Jonathan Hall, Department for Peace and Conflict Research and the Hugo Valentin Centre. (also Dženeta Karabegović, visiting Fulbright scholar at the HVC working on BiH diaspora in Sweden during 2010-2011).

Primary focus: migrants and diaspora associations from former Yugoslavia in Sweden.



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Background

In recent academic and policy discussions about the war and peacebuilding, conflict-generated migrants viewed as less amenable to compromise than homeland populations (Collier 2000b: 851; Collier et al. 2003: 85-86; Collier and Hoeffler 2007: 797; Golan and Gal 2009: 127; Kaldor 2001: 85; Kaldor-Robinson 2002:181; Lyons 2006: 128, 2007: 530; Newman 2006: 96).

Possible reasons: a) reaction to the pressure to assimilate in the host society(Collier and Hoeffler, 2004),

b) alienating and humiliating experience of life in the industrialized world (Anderson, 1991),

c) their experiences during the war and forced displacement (Lyons, 2006, 2007).

Negative impact: a)by controlling websites and cable television, b) by appealing to homeland leaders who are reaching out for their financial and political support, and c) by participating in homeland politics, migrants networks are thought to propagate the “exclusivist” identities that motivate



Aims of our project

Re-examining the existing assumptions about impact of conflict-generated migrants on peace in homeland.

Focus on migrants from former Yugoslavia with emphasis on conflict-generated migrants from BiH as a specific case.

Three stages: a) compare attitudes relating to past conflict and peace among homeland and migrant populations

b) impact of host-land integration on the attitudes of migrants

c) examine the trends and characteristics of migrants transnational activities



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Method

Quantitative:

Survey of attitudes among migrants from former-Yugoslavia living in Sweden (focus on BiH migrants, 46% of ex-Yugoslav migrant population (see Swedish Statistic Bureau 2010)). 710 interviews conducted in 2010.

Survey of attitudes among BiH population, 1500 interviews in 2010 (in collaboration with IPSOS).

Qualitative:

Focus group discussion with the leading persons in Serbian, Croatian and BiH diaspora networks in Sweden (hub organizations) (December 2008, Uppsala).

Interviews with the leading figures in a number of BiH-related diaspora associations (2011).

In depth interviews with migrants from BiH not active in BiH associations



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Trends and Characteristics in activities of Bosnians and Herzegovinians in Sweden towards BiH

- Survey in Sweden conducted during 2010.
- Challenges: in Sweden census data does not include ethnicity, ex-Yugoslav migrants well integrated (no “ethnic neighborhoods”), door to door surveys not feasible.
- Our solution: The three ethnic strata are defined using Bosniak, Croat and Serb family names. Individuals located by searching Sweden’s online public listings (www.eniro.se). The listings are geo-referenced, the survey is able to capture the geographical distribution of Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs in Sweden.
- Searches using common family names return dozens of addresses. Individuals to contact were selected proportionally by location (city/village). The survey included 71 questions and a cover letter providing basic information about the project, and was conducted by mail. This ensured the anonymity and informed consent of respondents. Of the 2580 individuals



Regarding the sample

Response rate of 28 percent is comparable, for example, to telephone surveys conducted by random-digit dialing in the United States (Althaus, Bramlett, and Gimpel 2012).

Also, argued in literature even surveys with relatively low response rates are highly representative of public opinion, and that improving response rates produces only modest returns in terms of representativeness (Holbrook, Krosnick, and Pfent 2007).

66,5 percent respondents with origins in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The mean age is 44.6. 42.5 percent of respondents are women.

67.65 percent are married.

Prior to the war, 70.4 percent lived in an urban settlement. 83 percent consider themselves part of a religious community.



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Regarding the sample

Identification: Bosniaks 28 percent, Serbs 26 percent, Croats 27 percent, Yugoslavs 15 percent, Swedish 2 percent, Other 2 percent.

During the war, 7.79 percent of respondents report being physically wounded and 10.15 percent imprisoned or placed in a camp, and 14.91 percent report having participated in fighting units.

As a result of the war, 68.60 lost property and 41.95 percent are missing a close family member.

Only 14 percent of the migrants came to Sweden prior to the Bosnian War.

57 percent arrived between 1992 and 1995. 29 percent after 1995.⁸



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Regarding the sample

Education

12.2 percent completed at most primary school.

51.05 percent at most secondary school

36.75 percent up to one year or more of university studies.

Employment

11 percent experts and intellectuals

12 percent higher and mid-level management

8 percent civil servants,

33 percent qualified/skilled workers (requiring a professional degree),

10 low qualified workers, 7 students and 11 percent pensioners, 8 other.



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Some insights into migrants activities

Political activities

11 percent involved in diaspora associations,
57 percent keep weekly updated with news in BiH.
26 percent voted at least twice in BiH elections
69 percent voted in the latest Swedish national elections
2010
3 percent member of a BiH party and 2 percent given
money to a party

Social and Cultural activities

72 percent is in touch with relatives on monthly basis, 24
percent discusses politics with relatives on monthly basis.
10 percent gives money to community projects
4 percent member of a social organization in BiH



Economic activities

42 percent reports sending economic remittances to relatives twice a year.

51 percent owns a house in BiH.

20 percent invests in businesses,

16 percent travels and 5 percent conducts trade with businesses in BiH.



Possible explanations

In-depth interviews with migrants in Sweden (ongoing work):

- Economically integrated (first and one and half generation immigrants); little or no time for BiH associations.
- Generally fairly well informed, reading/listening news on internet.
- Socially and emotionally dislocated in relations to the spatial locations of origin in BiH (but associated with BiH itself).
- Dissatisfied with political situation in BiH. Also reported as a deterrent to investment in BiH.
- Politically passive towards BiH, but vote in Sweden.



Migrant associations in Sweden

- Based on focus group work in 2009 and interviews in 2011-2012
- In December 2008 workshop in Uppsala bringing together leaders of the Croatian, Serbian, and BiH national migrant associations in Sweden.
- Pre-condition for the meeting: Only discussing their work and their relations to the Swedish state. Do not mention the war!
- 2011-2012: 14 interviews with the leading members of BiH associations in Sweden.
- National BiH association (BiH Riksförbund), BiH youth association (Hub), Association of BiH women, IZ (Islamic community), associations of the teachers of Bosnian language, BEMUF (MOS-Muslimanski Omladinski Savez- Muslim Youth Associations). Reported 16 000 registered members (30 percent of 54000 Bosnians and Herzegovinians in Sweden).
- 105 regional organizations: Lillian Banialuka association, Islamic



Swedish context

- Funding from the Swedish government. (BiH, Serbian, and Croat associations meet at the application events organized by the Swedish state authorities).
- Semi-professional and professional leadership, the rest of members mainly volunteers. In BiHRF 6 professionals working.
- ‘Donor’ requires and, thus, the focus is primarily towards activities within own communities in Sweden (organize cultural activities, meetings, sport clubs, facilitating introduction and orienteering for newcomers). Money spent has to be justified well.
- Social services on the cheap!
- Youth exchange projects with schools in the countries of



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Background and evolution

Prior to 1990 in Sweden a strong Yugoslav migrant association network and a strong Croatian migrants network.

In 1990s with breakdown of Yugoslavia, split in the Yugoslav migrant association in Sweden: formation of BiH national association and Serbian national association (two Serbian association existing for a while).

Most Croats joined the existing Croatian migrant associations, which with Croatian independence became less political and more cultural association.

Most of BiH Croats coming to Sweden in 1990s (active in associations) joined Croatian association while most Serbs from BiH joined Serbian associations.

BiH migrant associations although multiethnic in character gathers by inertia mainly Bosniaks under their umbrella (in a sense a reflections of



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Political activities:

Raising voting awareness prior and during the elections in BiH
30 percent of BHRF reportedly voted in 2012 elections (4800).
Representatives in BiH Diaspora party

Social and Cultural activities

Education, language, and culture promotion (BiH school on Saturdays,
2500 students, 200 teachers)
Sport clubs, traditional dancing.
Joint celebration of national holidays and commemorative events

Evolution of goals over time!

From assisting integration to keeping members active and culture alive!
Protection of own identity in the context of Sweden.



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Economic activities

Money collection for humanitarian reasons in BiH (e.g. Ispuni mi zelju Hayat TV).

Supporting school projects in BiH.

Lack of clear political and legal frameworks as a major obstacle for investments in BiH.

Conclusions: conflict-generated BiH diaspora (at least in Sweden) not extreme and not hyperactive in relation to its homeland!
(Reduced activity by migrants part of the challenge today!)

Pressures of integration in hostland as well as political situation in homeland deterrents for more activity.



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Thank you for your attention!

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