

DOES SERBIA FACE A NEW MIGRATION ERA?

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Abstract: Almost a century ago, in his capital work in the field of anthropogeography, J. Cvijić recognized migration mechanisms in the Balkans that were the basis of all subsequent large-scale migration, including the most recent, but also a dominant driver in shaping the current population structure of Serbia. However, the forecasting capacity of modern migration studies is seriously limited by increased global mobility of people and the complexity of contemporary migration factors, which subsequently reduce quality and availability of the migration data. In contrast to the Cvijić's time, current processes of population reduction and aging identify the migration issue as a key demographic challenge in the coming decades, particularly in the context of pan-European process of transition from nation-states to multiethnic societies. Such a perspective requires a long-term political response that would address the crucial population issues connected to future migration patterns in Serbia - expected labor shortages, the strikingly uneven spatial distribution of population, and asylum seekers as forerunners of immigration. Using a scenario-based approach to forecasting population dynamics, this communication argues that the forecasts of demographic future of Serbia based on the observed trends, as those commonly reported, may not come true because of potentially significant impact of the migration factor. Such an approach certainly cannot provide a definite answer to the opening question, but it can point out to the major structural changes on the horizon.

Key words: migration, population forecast, Serbia

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