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Ethnic Conflict and the Right to Return of Limbo Diasporas: Multifaceted Reflections on the Case of BiH

SUMMARY

This paper examines the phenomenon of refugees and resettled persons in the process of forced migrations in the aftermath of man-made disasters. Although some of the ideas presented here could have wider application, the focus is on post-conflict zones within the former Yugoslavia, namely BiH. The paper uses the questions of ethnicity and nationalism within resettlement, dislocation and immigration as a backdrop, into which the issue of globalization is also briefly reflected. The intention here is not to cover a wide range of pressing topics, but simply to relate a number of issues arising in contemporary large-scale forced migrations to a resurgence of cultural specificity and ethnicized nationalism as counterpoints to globalization. The paper introduces the concept of "limbo diasporas" in the case of Bosnian refugees in Sweden through reflection and linkage with the aforementioned concepts. The paper ends with some recommendations and open questions on social rehabilitation and ethnic healing as well as some general conclusions.

KEY WORDS: refugees, forced migration, globalization, ethnicity, limbo diaspora

> *"The longing of exiled people and refugees to return to their homeland, and the importance of the symbolic existence of that homeland, suggests that loss or destruction of place is as powerful an attachment as its presence."*

Irwin Altman and Setha M. Low, from: *Place Attachment*, 1992

Introduction

Millions of refugees and displaced persons throughout the world still remain in exile due to fresh or continuing regional conflicts, civil wars, interethnic clashes and other hostile disputes. Returning to their homes is primarily made impossible because of continuing conflict, political instability and general insecurity. The unwillingness and deliberate obstruction by states, political leaderships and opposed groups and citizens to take these people back, makes the situation even more complicated. If the whole range of bureaucratic hindrances and obstacles are added, along with the general lack of housing and economic prospects, the picture looks very grim. Prolonged conflicts and other inter ethnic and religious violent disputes (whether they be civil wars, inter-state wars, factional fighting or merely an independence struggle, ethnic violence, sectarian strife, separatist fighting or resistance to repression) have turned a considerable group of the world's population into citizens of limbo status.

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According to *Refugees International*, the number of refugees and displaced people in the world now exceeds 35 million, with the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan and parts of Africa staggering under the burden of people who have been forced from their homes by war or drought. The conflicts in Africa, which involved almost a quarter of the continent's countries, have been horrendous, particularly the case of Rwanda. As the consequence of conflict in Former Yugoslavia, over one million people remain ousted and displaced. This region witnessed the greatest and most rapid movement of people in Europe since the Second World War. The current conflicts in the Middle East, if unresolved, could lead to tens of thousands of fleeing refugees, creating perhaps the largest and most protracted group in the world today. An estimated 110,000 Western Saharan people were refugees at the end of 2001. In the 1990's Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chechnya and Rwanda suffered huge waves of ethnic conflicts and consequently bore witness to an enormous forced flow of population.

The phenomenon of immigration, as well as that of refugees, has proved to be somewhat confusing to theoreticians, who are forced to remain within frameworks of rather obsolete concepts, models, assumptions, categories, etc. The main theoretical problem has been that it is impossible to achieve full understanding of contemporary migratory processes relying on one discipline alone, or by focusing on just one type of analysis. Indeed, any serious theoretical approach to the problem requires a complex, multidisciplinary variety of viewpoints, category levels and assumptions. Research in these matters should obviously be multifaceted and include a certain number of disciplines such as sociology, social psychology, politics, social history, economics, individual psychology, political history, etc. Hence this paper emphasizes a multifaceted approach of thematizing around important concepts and linking the issues.

There are some central questions that this paper addresses: to what extent (if any) globalization is related to nationalism and ethnicity? What are the underlying reasons for ethnic (and religious) conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina? What role, if any, can refugees play as the diaspora in the host country and what are the obstacles to both their integration and their return to the homeland? In which way can multiculturalism trigger racism and xenophobia? These issues will be reflected upon using the former Yugoslavia, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a light motif. The recent and ongoing ethnic armed conflicts around the world also impact on some of these unresolved, complex, and, at times, very contradictory issues. Although there may at times appear to be many cross-cutting variables, the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that this is in the very nature of the phenomenon.

Ethnicity, Nationalism and Globalization Reflected in Former Yugoslavia

Ethnie (ethnic communities) may be defined as named human populations with shared ancestry, myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity (Smith, 1997). Taken in this way, ethnicity has functioned throughout history as a way of distinguishing and separating social groups from others who are felt to threaten or oppress them (Holton, 1998). It seems that, for some, ethni-

city offers higher levels of security against threats like forced removal from a certain territory, death, rape and enslavement in conflicts, unemployment and poverty resulting from economic competition, migrant assimilation, etc., than do many other sources of identity. This, instead, offers its members *symbolic* as well as *material* forms of gratification and security. The security of place in history, emotionally charged symbols of contemporary identity, and religious associations are some of the factors accompanying and reinforcing ethnic group membership.

Conflicts that are the result of breakup of multinational entities (usually of an armed nature) responsible for millions of refugees (as in the case of former Yugoslavia), are propelled by an amalgam of ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic, power-political and religious motivations. In the absence of any real democratic tradition and economic prosperity, these conflicts usually explode rapidly and are difficult to stop. After 38 years of conflict in Cyprus between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, the two groups still have deep religious, linguistic, political and ethnic differences. Even if the conflicts were stopped, the reality of bringing about a just and long-term prosperous solution would become a daunting task for the international community and people on the ground (Table 1).

Table 1: Geographic distributions of armed conflicts in 2002

Region	Number of countries in region	Number of conflicts in region	Number of countries hosting conflicts	Number of countries in region hosting conflicts	Number of world conflicts
Africa	50	14	14	28	38
Asia	42	16	8	19	43
Europe	42	2	2	5	5
The Americas	44	1	1	2	3
Middle East	14	4	4	29	11
World Totals	192	37	29	15	100

Source: *The Armed Conflicts 2003 Report*, Project Ploughshares, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

The recent events in the Balkans have brought the question of *nationalism* to the European agenda again, itself a burning, sinewy and unavoidable historical problem. The issue of nationality, and especially nationalism, is present today not only as an inheritance of the past, but as a consequence of new international and national relations in Europe as a whole, and relations within its multinational states themselves. While nationalism as we know it in contemporary Europe does not have the same stature that it has in other parts of the globe (especially in Africa and Asia), it is undoubtedly still apparent to a sufficient degree, and it is often the root cause of many antagonisms of modern day European reality. Today in Europe, it is difficult to find a country without, in one shape or another, the question of nationality and nationalism on the agenda, whether as an internal or external (international) problem. This simple fact seems reason enough for the issue of nationalism to be addressed very seriously, an issue that is ominously present

everywhere and one that still "disturbs" patterns of everyday living for a lot of European inhabitants and even nations as a whole. What makes this complicated problem even worse and aggravates the situation further, as in the case of former Yugoslavia, is the attitude toward nationalism, one that regards it as a largely backward, historically anachronistic and highly negative phenomenon. This only widens the problem, bringing new seeds of mistrust. It seems, therefore, valid to ask if the nature of the problem lies in the understanding of the inner substance and spiritual impetus of national movements – should solutions be sought from the international system which can remove all restraints and restrictions on the development of national *spirit and cultures* and confinements on how national identity is represented and practised?

There is no doubt that today ethnicity is in ill repute; its reputation at perhaps an all-time low in the aftermath of ethnic cleansing in the formerly multicultural and multinational Yugoslavia. It is unfortunate, however, that the fear of aggressive ethnicity of the Yugoslav kind is often seen as a reason for opposing minority ethnicities in Western European democratic states (Rex, 1996).

A common European Union response to the crisis and tragedy in former Yugoslavia and questions of national identity and nation state building has been lacking; this apparent indifference may be due to the domestic political problems that have been burning for long time in Great Britain (Northern Ireland), France (Corsica), Spain (Catalonia) and Italy (South Tyrol) respectively. In the case of former Yugoslavia, as well as other Eastern and Central European countries, liberation from communist rule would not have been possible without the unifying and mobilizing force of nationalism (Schulze, 1998).

Ethnicity and racial differences have often been wrongly perceived as surviving anachronisms, dating from pre-modern, traditional societies. The fact of the matter is that from the late 1980's to the present, there has been a resurgence of nationalism, traditionalism and religious fundamentalism (giving rise to terrorism in its most extreme form) alongside trends toward growing *globalization*. This has manifested itself in the explosion of regional, cultural and religious differences in former Eastern Europe, as well as Africa and other parts of the world. Cultural differences thus became a new source of conflict and an important dimension in the struggle between the global and local, producing lasting confrontations that have proved deeper and fundamental than anybody previously thought (Kellner, 1998). It could be argued that the "recent" revival of nationalism, ethnicity and fundamentalism may be a consequence or a "simple" resistance to the often disruptive, unjust/unfair, impersonal and dividing nature and impact of globalization forces. The logic behind such arguments is quite straightforward: culture is far harder to globalize than technology or economy.

According to Manuel Castells, the forces of globalization are one of the more important factors that could have triggered such a defensive reaction around the world (Castells, 2002). Reactions were often unified around principles of national, territorial and, in recent cases, religious identity, where new conflicts have emerged exhibiting a surge of nationalism and fundamentalism, involving clashes of cultures and even civilizations (Huntington, 1997; Castells, 1997). In this context, feelings of insecurity are further enhanced by the growing multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism of European society, a fact which (coupled with others factors mentioned below) can trigger *racism* and *xeno-*

phobia where people affirm their identity both against a supranational state and against cultural diversification (Castells, 1998). As a consequence of this, or as a strong side effect, direct opposition to globalization now plays a role in the search for *new identity* and *new spirituality*.

Some have suggested that religious fundamentalism is linked inextricably to all this, manifesting itself more strongly at times throughout history when global networks of power, information, wealth and prosperity bypass, disconnect and exclude large segments of societies, regions, nations and ethnic groups (Castells, 2002).

One of the pitfalls of theoretical methodology in this area of study is speculating and manipulating with abstract categories and abstract formulas in a way of abstract intuiting nationalism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic conflict and then applying it to specific situations. While categories must be properly defined, over abstraction will not lead to concrete analysis and answers. Specific differences in, for example, genesis of national historical development should be observed. The truth is obviously concrete and we should refrain of speaking *in abstracto* terms.

The purpose here is not to probe deeper into these matters but rather highlight some of the more relevant aspects that could have caused the ethnic conflict, broken habitation and forced migrations of millions of people in Former Yugoslavia.

When communism fell in former Yugoslavia, it was replaced by an ideological vacuum in a period of uncertainty. Undoubtedly, the historical, social and political background of these peoples had been greatly shaped by the totalitarian regime, which lasted for nearly half a century. This period resulted in the overall material devastation of the country and deterioration in individual standards of living. This was reflected in the collapse of morality, a fall into an ideological, psychological and moral vacuum, leading to hopelessness, apathy, fear, resignation, disorientation and discouragement. Such moral, political and economic devastation provoked enormous inhibited frustrations and animosities that dated back centuries but were frozen during communist rule. The suppression of democratic movements in Croatia and Serbia in the 1970's was another negative factor. The communist regime headed by Josip Broz Tito's dictatorship turned former Yugoslavia into a kind of historical refrigerator of national, ethnic and religious differences, which preserved deep historical disputes and an obvious civilization gap, but which also produced a well functioning buffer between the western and eastern political spheres. The negative energy that accumulated over the decades of Party rule reached "critical mass" during the worst decade of the Yugoslav economic crisis (1980–1990). Unfortunately, that same dissatisfaction and negative energy was harnessed fully by those harbouring imperial tendencies within the Serbian dominated regime, whose aggressive and domineering social ideology was projected on the hopelessness of the submissive masses. The aggression and eventual war that this regime waged, triggered a chain reaction of nationalist, ethnic and religious antagonisms that resulted in a saddeningly great number of conflicts.

It is important at this point to emphasize that *religious antagonism* did not produce *religious fundamentalism* in the form that we are seeing today in the Middle East. The situation in former Yugoslavia was slightly different. Religion and identity did, how-

ever, inevitably become linked over the course of the conflict, although not inextricably, with the former assuming an extremely important role in the public life of the individual nations of the region. This "threat of national identity", for all the wrong reasons, provided a backdrop for the catastrophe that engulfed former Yugoslavia and resulted in suffering and misery for millions of its inhabitants (Cviic, 1997). The nationalistic tendencies of the leaders and groups that were spearheading the conflict often blended with religion, which was then used as a weapon to galvanize support for violent conflicts between groups. Although participation rates in formal religion were low among all three groups, most members of the respective groups did identify themselves with their respective dominant religion (Powers, 1996; Huntington, 1996).

Religion also played a vital *national* role in former Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Serbia, the Orthodox Church carried the banner of national consciousness during Turkish rule, filling the gap of the feudal class, while Croatians had the Catholic Church and their own language as the twin guardian of the national consciousness, considering themselves to be the final outpost of Western Civilization, a defensive barrier against the East. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbian and Croatian ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina felt that their national identity was under threat, this insecurity promoting a need to identify with their Kin countries. The end result was, predictably, a battle for territory. Both wanted to establish strong (i.e. land) connections to their kin proper – Serbia and Croatia. In the case of Bosnians (Muslims), the situation was quite different. In Bosnia, their religious and national reawakening was foremostly a response to ethnic cleansing and the possibility of annihilation at the hands of the Serbs. The nation that had never properly formed and had been defined "negatively" from the outset by the communist regime, was now being identified and established through religion, where one segment of the community set a course for Islamic fundamentalist waters. The overall result could be looked upon as confirmation of Samuel Huntington's thesis on the *clash of civilizations*, where he observes that each nation turned to its nation-proper, having the backing of its kin country (the Western Christian world basically stood behind Croatia, while the Eastern Orthodox one backed Serbia) whereas the Bosnian Muslims were supported by the Islamic world, which represented both a "virtual proper" and kin country (Huntington, 1997). Despite all this, one has to appreciate that these conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina were mainly politically and economically based, with religion playing a minor role. Hence, although it was closely connected with national consciousness, religion was mainly used to mobilize the people for political, economical and territorial interests. Consequently, the Bosnian example should be viewed not so much as a war of civilizations, but more a war of ethnicities and religions.

The ethnic tolerance and harmony that once existed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that unique and impossibly idealistic project of the communist regime, degenerated into the worst and bloodiest conflict since WWII and the division of the country along strong ethnic lines. A cursory glance at the ethnic map of Bosnia and Herzegovina before and after the war gives one a stark reminder of the complexities at hand (Figure 1 and 2). The legacy of this terrible conflict clearly indicates that the Procrustean bed of tolerance and multiculturalism as envisaged by the European Union, cannot be achieved overnight (if ever).

Figure 1 and 2: Ethnic majorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1991 census and ethnic division after the Dayton Agreement, 1997
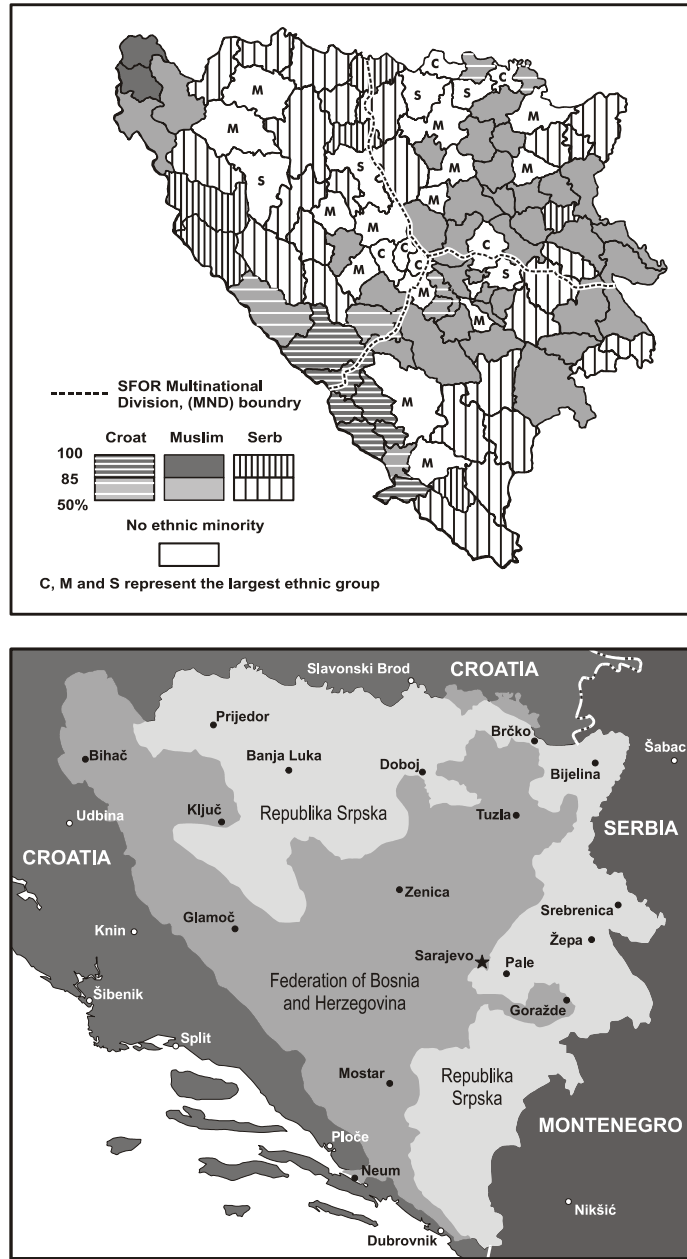
Source: Based on the maps at the Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas, Austin, 2003

Dealing with Forced Migrants and Diasporas

The complex, multi-faceted nature of migration gets even more complicated when interwoven with issues such as armed conflict, ethnic cleansing, genocide, rapid and forced movement of refugees and creation of *ad hoc* diasporas (groups of people, in most cases of original homogenous entity, dispersed from their homelands). The whole process of migration is a natural phenomenon, occurring throughout the history of mankind. People have moved voluntarily to more hospitable and promising locations searching for better access to economic, social, cultural, educational and environmental opportunities.

Civil conflict, persecution, and political instability also impel people from their home countries to seek safe haven elsewhere (Martin and Widgren, 1996). In cases of forced migration, such as the armed conflicts in former Yugoslavia, very few, if any, of these factors are the prevailing ones. After being forcibly ejected from their original habitat, a refugee population is solely concerned with an immediate return to the original habitat. Such a desire is normally incompatible with their dominant need at that moment (i.e. a move to stability, security and safety), which is of paramount importance if their lives are to be saved. Sometimes in these cases, it is difficult to distinguish (especially in the Bosnian example) between refugees, displaced persons and those that are moving for other reasons. One thing, however, applies to all these groups – they are, in one way or another, forced from their homelands into migration. Contemporary use of the concept *homeland* is predicated on the existence of a nation-state; it is presumed that since everyone is a member of a national community, he/she also feels at home there. Nikos Papastergiadis observes, however, that this definition ignores the vast number of people who have become homeless either because they have flown from their own nation or, due to historical reasons, their homeland was never constituted as a nation-state (Papastergiadis, 2000).

Migrations do not simply happen. They are produced, patterned and embedded in larger social, economic and political processes. While some individuals may experience migration as the outcome of a personal decision, the option to migrate is itself socially produced (Sassen, 1990). International migration is defined by the UN as movement from one's nation of birth or citizenship to another of the world's 192 nations for a period of 12 months or more. Migration is as old as humankind wandering in search of food, but international migration is a relatively recent development – it was only in the 20th century that the system of nation-states, passports, and visas developed to regulate and record the flow of people across borders (Martin, 1999).

People are forced to move abroad in order to survive, either because their own state is the cause of their predicament or because it is unable to meet these basic requirements. They become in many respects genuine international outcasts, stateless, in the deepest meaning of the term: that is, the sense in which their predicament stems from distinctively political conditions (Sacknowe, 1985). They have "resettled" temporarily or permanently in strange, new and previously unknown places, amongst people that they do not know – often amongst people who do not want to know them. Unfortunately, forced migration and consequent resettlement also happens to a third (new) country. This is sometimes the only way a refugee can be guaranteed international protec-

tion in cases where he or she is denied adequate protection in the country of asylum and cannot repatriate. Such cases were commonplace for migrants from former Yugoslav conflict zones. When large refugee flows occur, resettlement is generally not a realistic option except for a tiny minority of individuals or groups of people. Indeed, it is often undesirable. Many refugees wish to live near their countries of origin, not only because they prefer a familiar cultural and social environment, but also as it lends an air of realism to their ultimate goal, which is to return home. However, although voluntary repatriation is almost always the best long-term solution for most refugees, some will always require resettlement, for political and security reasons, or because of vulnerability. In some cases, there seems to be little hope of any form of repatriation, and at the same time no possibility of durable local integration into the country of asylum. In such instances, resettlement to a third country may be the only feasible option (UNHCR, 2004).

Diasporas can be viewed partly as transnational groups of emigrants living abroad in host countries, whilst maintaining economic, political, social and emotional ties with their homeland and other diasporic communities of the same origin (Faist, 2000; Tambiah, 2000). The concept of diaspora involves the notion of return to an original homeland whereas, in point of fact, many migrant communities have no such intention (Rex, 2001). In the current discourse on diasporas, confusion might arise because of the multiplicity of meanings assigned to this concept. William Safran has investigated major dimensions or parameters that identify key variables applicable to the analysis and explanation of diasporic phenomena. According to him, the diasporic phenomenon is a collective forced dispersion of a religious or ethnic group, often political in nature, where an important role is played by collective memory, which transmits both the historical causes of the dispersion and a specific cultural heritage. These people also feel a sense of alienation in their host country and at the same time an idealization of their homeland as a place to which they will return. Additionally, they retain relationships with the homeland whose existence supports their own ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity (Safran, 1991).

Diaspora is a word most familiar to historians investigating the Jewish community, and it is therefore unsurprising to find a direct ascendant of this term in the history of Jewish dispersion (to describe communities suffering traumatic social and political experience). For our purposes, it means people of any culture who have dispersed from a former concentration, with their own cultures and languages (Mudimbe and Engel, 1999). The main features of diasporas (such as a history of dispersed memories of homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support for the homeland and a collective identity) become even more conflicting and counterproductive in the case of limbo diasporas (the example of the Cuban diaspora in United States being the exception, where positive attitude and contribution to the new surrounding is the norm). This probably presents the gravest long-term consequence for forced migrants in a multi-ethnic, armed induced conflict, where the homeland never attains a level of stability sufficient to ensure a safe return. As such a situation may last indefinitely (as was the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina due to delayed political solutions and prolonged insecurities) the migrants affected tend to gravitate towards the formation of what may be referred to as "Limbo Diasporas", i.e. people who never become fully integrated (for the most part), whilst remaining alienated from their original homeland (even in the cases where they return).

The 1990s were a decade of all-pervasive conflict in ex-Yugoslavia, which took a truly disproportionate toll. Nearly one tenth of the combined population of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a UNHCR-estimated 1.7 million people, remain displaced and in need of a lasting solution. The NATO intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Kosovo in 1999 has created an enormous movement and influx of refugees of not only Kosovars (some 800,000), but also residents of Yugoslavia seeking asylum primarily in EU countries.

Such international forced migration clearly creates detachment from a territory and detachment from one's own ethnic community. The creation of these diasporas is based on foundations of suffering and trauma (which led to the dispersal of members of an ethnic community), who nonetheless aspire to return to their homeland (Rex, 1997b). For those that may never return, integration becomes the preoccupying force of sustainable survival and assimilation – the only other option being complete isolation and inner-segregation. In the case of forced migrants, international refugees, and involuntary displaced persons, i.e. in the case of people from former Yugoslavia, the conversion into real diasporas may well never happen, mainly due to complication arising from their constant outlook on the situation, namely seeing it as a temporary one and envisaging a return to the homeland when the political situation and circumstances change.

"Limbo Diasporas"

One aspect of the problem of immigration of Bosnian refugees to Sweden shall now be briefly addressed, namely difficulties encountered concerning the creation of *social capital* from within that diaspora, which could subsequently be used to support democratic processes and economic recovery in their homeland. This particular aspect has been chosen not because of any specific importance, but because it acts as a perfect backdrop upon which the fundamental features of the limbo diaspora may be highlighted. Needles to say, the possibility of a sustainable return to the homeland is a fundamental precondition for any discussion on these matters.

It would go beyond the framework of our present discussion if this complex and difficult problem was analyzed in great detail, and therefore only a few of the most salient issues shall be dealt with here. The real difficulty in presenting some of these points is, of course, the complexity and multifaceted nature of the subject itself and the inapplicability of definite, precise theoretical schemes and scientific methods to the subject. Therefore, some of the assertions in such a discussion should be taken as amounting to no more than a *declaration of principle*, i.e. without precise recommendations in terms of application or policy making. Having said that, even such a declaration may contribute to decisive determinations arising in decision-making frameworks. Any further talk, though, without precise, quantitative investigation of these determinations would lead us into the realm of unproductive speculation and conceptual confusion. Evidently, an element of speculation is unavoidable, but it would be pointless to discuss these matters without referring to precise quantitative analyses of the diaspora and homeland.

Only in this way is one able to further elucidate on some of the basic assumptions concerning the scope and value of *social capital*, which can be "produced" by diaspora in

the process of democratization in the homeland. What is decisive here is an evaluation of the real extent and value of such social capital, given the unlikelihood of any sustainable return to the homeland. Therefore, the starting point for our analysis must be firmly rooted in reality, reflecting the situation on the ground as it stands today, rather than concentrating on abstract "what ifs" and predicting future developments.

As has been often repeated in much of the theoretical writing about emigration and refugees, a *diaspora* exists when "an *ethnie* or nation suffers some kind of traumatic event which leads to the dispersal of its members, who nonetheless, continue to aspire to return to the homeland" (Rex, 1997a; Braziel and Mannur, 2003). Although the term diaspora has been loosely used, the above description can be quite accurately applied to Bosnian (predominantly Bosniac – Muslim) refugees in Sweden. Bosniacs as a national (or ethnic) group have been dispersed across many countries (and several continents). Moreover, all these groups from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Serbs, Croats and Muslims alike) have suffered a clearly traumatic experience, and most of them are still primarily concerned with the possibility of a return, sooner or later, to their homeland. The diaspora of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a clear-cut case of dealing with groups of migrants from economically inferior (backward, underdeveloped, etc.) to economically successful countries: Europe, Scandinavia, USA, Canada and Australia (at least in the great majority of cases). It is not quite clear how many of them have a strong desire to return to Bosnia and Herzegovina and how many of them simply seek assimilation in the country of settlement, retaining some kind of *myth of return*.

What then, beyond family, are the other social and cultural links of the diaspora in Sweden? How can its structure be understood? Do they see their present situation as temporary, envisaging a return to the homeland when political, material-economic, and social circumstances change? Given their (geographic) isolation from their fellow nationalists, are they necessarily nationalistic in their outlook? What is the percentage of those who cannot envisage such a change in political circumstances at home (with regard to democratization, the rule of law, legal protection, human rights, welfare state, economic prosperity, living standards, the fight against corruption, crime, etc.) and are committed to finding a new life in the country of refuge? Answers to these questions are not easy to come by. Looking first at the country of origin, the real obstacles to the "diaspora – social capital" should first be identified there. What divisions exist in the homeland in terms of nation, religion, ideology, culture and social psychology? What kind of democracy and political system is at work there? Is multiculturalism really alive? To partly understand these issues, the underlying factors for the migrants their *flight* from their homeland must be established, factors which are connected with both the possibility of return and the socio-cultural and politico-economic context of the host country. Answers to these questions may then provide us with a better understanding of why this group can be considered as a *Limbo Diaspora*.

It is self-evident that these people from Bosnia and Herzegovina moved to new countries against their will; in other words, they were forced to leave for various reasons: prosecution, armed conflict, ethnic cleansing or, sometimes, simply insecurity. They were completely unprepared for integration into a new (Western European) context. Being dispersed outside the traditional borders of their homeland also meant settling in

a place with a completely different cultural and political matrix. The move represented, to use Alvin Toffler's words, a "Future Shock" for this dispersed group, who, on making a jump, were confronted with a completely different situation to the one they left behind. A great number of people lost the essential elements of their livelihood, having no means of returning or reclaiming what was theirs. Already in a state of flux, the group's confusion was further compounded by a cultural, economic, social and intellectual shock. The question was whether these two contexts would work together and, if so, what kind of integration or disintegration could be expected? Sweden generously opened its gates to some 60,000 refugees (migrants) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who, over the course of time (some 10 years), started to "become" part of Swedish society.

The other difficulty facing refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina living in Sweden, is the attitude of the *nation state* towards this diaspora settlement. Are the Swedes welcoming hosts? What kind of nationalism do refugees experience in Sweden? What is the central theme of political culture in Swedish society? There is a number of factors which impact directly on a diaspora group: democracy, open society, welfare state, human rights, equality, equal opportunity, rational and empirical society, material productive civilization, postindustrial and technological, network society, social security, environmental policy, the rule of law, democratic public opinion, free press, etc. At the same time there exist many other aspects to Swedish society which are more reminiscent of the socialist political culture which was prevalent in their former homeland: collectivism, principles of equality, solidarity, anti-elitism, conformity (displayed via reaction against standing out and departure from accepted norms), over creativity, freedom of individual undertakings, etc.

The results and influences of the diaspora of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sweden are to be found mostly in the power of (mono-ethnic) institutions created by them: organizations on different levels, collective groups, clubs, unions, associations, administrations, committees, forums, etc. (all of which are reminiscent of those once existing within the former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, representing a strong link with the totalitarian foundations of the homeland). In terms of an ideological consensus, Swedish society tends to recognize the possibility of separate cultures co-existing, although this is deemed to be a private sphere in which the state should not interfere. Religious tolerance is therefore the norm in Swedish society (as is the case in most western countries). Such a tolerant outlook is the result of a secularization of politics and education. Refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina have created a unique, specific and hybrid diaspora: their ex-Yugoslav collectivist mentality, based on a more rigid style of socialism, has been unable to fully comprehend and adapt to the Swedish (collectivist) model of egalitarian society. Consequently, the diaspora lives in a kind of limbo status: in the middle of nowhere, towards the road to somewhere. In short, having shed their communist social being, the refugees were subsequently incapable of integrating in the freer, democratic society of their Swedish hosts, a society founded on traditions of enlightenment individualism.

What seems to surface as the fundamental problem of the Bosnian limbo diaspora in Sweden is that it has attained some elements of democracy with Swedish *specificum*. Following the fall of communism, this group did not have sufficient time for the consciousness of social being to mature, especially when still carrying the burdens of a tota-

litarian system on its back, a system which for decades had dictated the psychological makeup of its citizens. Accordingly, the totalitarian consciousness becomes more interesting as a socio-psychological category than an ideological one, creating a negative bias in the democratization of post-communist societies like former Yugoslavia, the repercussions of which are clearly visible in the lives of the Swedish diaspora group. Coupled with that, we have the classical notion of *diasporic consciousness* (Cohen, 1997), where the diaspora identifies mainly with the ancestral homeland and with people of their own origin, both in the homeland and the host country. This also creates problems for sustainable integration and interaction and leads to both forced and self-induced alienation and segregation. As Castles and Davidson observe, this is one of the four natural variants of ethnic consciousness, which also include assimilation, separatist consciousness and transcultural consciousness (Castles and Davidson, 2000). The impossibility of reintegration in the homeland, non-acceptance of new surroundings and the loss of an irretrievable system of values belonging to a defunct regime are the main features which combine to confer limbo status upon the diaspora and the vacuum wherein they reside.

Two problems which are to be expected in the long run in any of the *receiving societies* (host country) are those of *xenophobia* and *racism*, with ghettoization as an obvious accompanying phenomenon (opportunities in employment, social networks, etc.) on the one hand, and *assimilation* on the other. An irrational fear of foreigners or strangers appears in situations of economic crisis, high unemployment, protruded social welfare, cultural differences, loss of national identity, etc. In general, the terms xenophobia and racism are quite broadly defined applying to an array of racial issues: racial and cultural abuse, forms of racial and ethnic discrimination, which, for example, deprives immigrants or *invandrare* of equal rights, social and legal rights of immigrants, political rights, minority identities and minority cultures, the right to maintain their own culture, and so on. It is at this point that *multiculturalism* enters the frame.

Multiculturalism involves, in principle, both an attempt to bestow full (equal) rights upon minorities and recognition of their right to maintain their separate cultures. Usually multiculturalism implies the existence of a private and communal sphere within which the government need not interfere. An unexpectedly large influx of refugees and the consequences thereof, coupled with an inevitably manufactured process of multiculturalism, can trigger xenophobia and racism. Recognition of the globalization of economic activity and the need for the protection of immigrants' civil rights and their full integration into the host society is a point made by Saskia Sassen, who states that a nation's attitude towards migrants (i.e. either welcoming them as *guests* or disparaging them as *aliens*), is often based upon the reasons behind their immigration (Sassen, 2000).

The emergence of multiculturalism as a prominent term in Western discourse concerning ethnic conflict coincides with increasing awareness in Western industrial societies, especially over the last two decades, that ethnicity had not lost its saliency in the lives of large numbers of people. This is extremely important for groups such as Limbo Diasporas. In its strict sense, multiculturalism can be workable as a basis for social cohesion and integration. However, it is not the only way in which social cohesion can be achieved within a context of ethnic diversity (UNESCO, 1995). Multiculturalism,

with its three flagships of respect, equality and diversity tends to promote coexistence between diverse ethnic groups in the social structure of society, recognizing its members and communities as equals. It also advocates and ensures that all citizens can keep their distinct cultural identity, take pride in their heritage and have a sense of belonging. This approach, however, can simultaneously heighten ethnocentrism, ethnoexclusion, and ethnonationalism, which amount to a destructive factor in the integration and building of a nation (Watson, 2001). Ethnicity, with its negative offspring (negative ethnic political aspirations, discrimination, violation of human rights, hatred, suppression of minorities, tension, and ethnic conflict and violence) poses a challenge to the fundamental principles of multiculturalism including racial and ethnic harmony, cross-cultural understanding, promotion of innovation and creativity, discouragement of ghettoization, etc.

Any effort to formulate policies of managing ethnically and culturally diverse societies needs to consider not only the specific programs and practices but also the *social context* and the objectives of the State and its citizens. Successful management of multiculturalism and multiethnic societies requires not only a democratic policy, but a struggle against *social inequalities* and *exclusion* (UNESCO, 1995).

There are also political aspects to consider when considering a diaspora's possible return to its homeland. Currently in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the political climate is still opposed to the idea of expatriates coming home. There are also analytical and quantitative problems associated with the possible return of professionals to different areas and positions. Recently, the parliament there, in a decision which is sure to have profound ramifications for its diaspora, rejected the notion of dual citizenship. This unfavourable outcome was yet another cruel blow aimed at the long-suffering diaspora, who now appear destined to become the country's neglected, disregarded and forgotten citizens. It is through such acts of gross insensitivity that the character of the Limbo Diaspora is shaped. The political situation is deeply affected, if not completely defined, by *de facto* protectorate status of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country is a unique phenomenon in Europe: the combination of a former parliamentary democracy and free elections under the "dictatorship" of the *international community*. The government is itself ruled by the dictates of the EU, who maintain a firm control over the protectorate using a heady blend of threats, blackmail and sanctions, the eventual goal being to bring Bosnia and Herzegovina "up the speed" with the rest of Europe. Unfortunately, however, the catastrophic economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its overall material misery are a very weak foundation for the strengthening of democracy, at least when looked upon from social and sociological viewpoint. To make matters worse, the social and individual sociology – *social capital* – is in an unrecognizably poor state. This (post)-traumatized society has lost a great deal of professionals, as well as its young. Those left behind are faced with an uncertain existence: diminished material means, low wages, high unemployment, frustration, apathy, resignation, physical and mental fatigue, despair, hopelessness and physical and mental illness in the wake of the horrible period of war and post-war traumas. Understandably, perhaps, attitudes formed in such a climate towards the diaspora tend to be very negative. The divisions within Bosnian society, mistrust, corruption, the strong communist heritage, political defragmentation and the EU dictate are some of the underlying reasons for the lack of democracy

which aggravates an already volatile situation. Those that can make a change for the better (i.e. create social capital) – the young – seem to have only one strong motive today: to leave as soon as possible, perhaps to join the growing ranks of what appears to be a new migratory phenomenon: the Limbo Diaspora.

Towards Social Rehabilitation, Ethnic Healing and Acceptance

According to the UNHCR, in the past 24 months close to 150,000 refuges have returned to "minority areas"[1] in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is still a very low number and, for reasons mentioned earlier (insecurity, instability and lack of prosperity), this trend is continuing at a very low pace. As the country is still in a state of dysfunction, the international quasi-protectorate will have to remain in place for the foreseeable future until a consensus solution can be found where all those wanting to return can truly do so. It should also be stated that, in the context of a permanent political solution, it would be unjust and counterproductive to try to solve these problems by applying new or other forms of pressure or violence on ethnic communities, as that can only have a counter-effect. The international community can mediate and assist in nation building or even in promoting civil societies, but cannot enforce such solutions by any means. Promoting job creation and prosperity so that people have a productive outlet for their energies and a chance to build a better life is a *sine qua non* for any rehabilitation of these areas and for the return of refugees. The second, parallel factor is the political stability and a just solution for everyone in the coming years.

The most difficult post-conflict reconstruction is that of the social fabric. Settlements, buildings and infrastructure are usually the priority areas when it comes to rebuilding from the ashes of war. The torn social networks, however, are extremely hard to recreate and often trust lost can never be regained, precluding any real return to normal habitation.

As human relationships come under the microscope and are central to any long-term peace building effort (as well as for the "possible" return of parts of diaspora), they must be guided, as Sultan Barakat points out, by goals of *hope*, *healing* and *reconciliation*. These three factors become underlying tiers in the social reconstruction process (Barakat, 1998). Hope is found in the cessation of hostilities as well as in initial reconstruction, relief operations and sustained involvement carried out by the international donor community. Healing is of a more complex nature and can only be realized through comprehensive mid to long-term multi-faceted strategies for ending violence and subsequent rehabilitation of communities.

The driving force in encouraging (and even initiating) healing is helping the afflicted population to deal with the social, political and economic problems and chaos that usually surrounds them in these cases (Staub, 1996). The important thing is to bring

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[1] According to the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina (September 2002), seven years after the signing of the Dayton accords some 613,700 refugees are still to be found in more than 40 countries around the world. The number is actually much higher if one takes into account those that have received citizenships and that most of these refugees were registered between 1992–1995.

back the feeling of community and stripped spatial identity, whilst simultaneously providing the afflicted population with a sustainable livelihood and economic base. These processes need to be initiated in the *hope* phase.

The creation of significant bonds between the antagonistic groups (ethnic or religious) needs to be facilitated, together with the assistance in dealing with social, political, economic problems (Staub, 1996). On the other hand, *healing* cannot take place in a forced, hasty manner, as the international community attempted in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where such a policy has only resulted in even more tensions, distrust and violence. Instead, the healing process must be administered and overseen in a way that respects and addresses the needs of the individuals and afflicted groups in a just and fair manner, with policy being dictated by the state of affairs on the ground at any given moment, rather than some overall gameplan.

Post-conflict processes also need to address the issue of mistrust and betrayal. The healing process needs to focus around more emotional issues such as mistrust, hatred, fear and grief through activities like testimony (addressing the problem of truth), open dialogue (various ethnic dialogue groups), process of grief (mourning process on an individual level) and forgiveness and reconciliation (long-term process of forgiving not forgetting). In this respect, the healing strategies employed must include individual, family and community levels in order to overcome, or at least alleviate, fear and mistrust. One of the most crucial factors, of course, is *time*, time needed to heal and to forgive. Without sufficient time allowed for healing and reconciliation to occur naturally, the whole effort will be stillborn (Agger and Jensen, 1996).

Reconciliation represents the third tier in the social reconstruction process. It should comprise of initiatives, measures and actions denoting the point of encounter where concerns about the past and the future can meet, i.e. acknowledging and adequately addressing the past as well as envisioning and keeping the future firmly in focus are the necessary ingredients for reframing the present (Lederach, 1997; Barakat, 1998). For this to happen, reconstruction initiatives that bring structural changes with enabling actions (i.e. swift practical mechanisms on the ground) must be invoked in order to deal with trauma, prejudice, discrimination and all other aspects of antagonisms. The keyword "aspect" is focused on building relationships between the antagonists (Lederach, 1997). A profoundly important aspect of prevention and long-term reconciliation is the problem of raising children in an inclusive way (key role of education), also known as positive socialization (Staub, 1996). For the threefold aspect of social reconstruction (hope, healing and reconciliation in the aftermath of ethnic violence) to work, there must be just, equal and adequate involvement of all antagonist parties, while the international (re-construction) community must function as the initiator, mediator and facilitator and not be seen as an imposing entity.

Some Conclusions and Discussion

In former Yugoslavia, the primacy of a nation united by bonds of blood has been demonstrated by violence, atrocities, mass murders and ethnic cleansing. This has led to the mass neurosis of "integral nationalism", to the conviction that the nation inevitably

embodies the supreme values of a community and that this community is manifested only in an ethnically pure state (Schulze, 1998). Subsequently, as passions cooled, it became apparent that national identity and sovereignty alone are not and cannot be sufficient. It appears, then, that integration and globalization of nations and their inhabitants also has role to play, but only if the citizens affected are the subjects (as opposed to the objects) of any such integration. One of the reasons for this integral nationalism might be the fact that most of the people of South Eastern and Central Europe are victims of insecurity, having seen (especially in the recent past) their national identity, language, and historical culture threatened. In Western Europe, most of the major nations have for generations felt secure in their identity within their established nation states. That was not the case for many Eastern Bloc countries, especially not for the nations of former Yugoslavia. There, history has left much unfinished business and has left millions of people cut off from their "home nation".

Partition in the post-ethnic conflict context seems a very unviable solution on paper, as in the cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and even Macedonia. As a remedy, it is rarely sought due to the near impossibility of creating homogenous successor states. In other words, it is extremely difficult to draw clean dividing lines between ethnic groups (Burg, and Shoup, 1999). But, though hard it seems, partition needs to be acknowledged as one of the possible solutions for the situation on the ground if it enables people to return and (re) build new and destroyed habitats. The past 30 years has seen the fragmentation of several countries and states, usually along ethnic lines. In some respects, it is no wonder that "irrational" and artificially created borders are often the roots of many ethnic and inter-state conflicts. The rationale behind any partition can only be found in total consensus of all parties involved, a matter to be resolved by an internationally accepted redrawing of boundaries but foremostly by a *referendum* and *consensus* between the afflicted parties. It seems that in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina these partitions amounted to little more than *de facto* changes based on rights of conquest, and their dubious legitimacy could eventually cause more misery, mistrust, violence and ethnic cleansing. In sharp contrast, the example of almost all European Union countries and their subsequent tranquility post-1945, testifies to painful, but necessary redrawing and partition.

It seems that the Balkan region presents an almost intractable problem for the international community, whose apparent impotence is compounded by the fact that foreign powers no longer have a stake in a land that has lost its strategic value and, at least for the moment, does not offer any strong new business incentive to outsiders. Undoubtedly, progress towards European Union membership will be slow and painstaking, and, in the absence of the necessary capital investment required to kickstart the economy, the global significance of the region has diminished to a seemingly terminal unglamorous and peripheral role, with only their resources to rely on for the foreseeable future (Cviic, 1997).

This paper has tried to give an overview of some of the key themes in the current discussion related to ethnic conflict and especially the plight of refugees and displaced persons. It is advantageous to tackle these issues, even though one realizes the difficulty of dealing with this subject, its nature and complexity of scope. There is an

obvious need for more research in this field, to study these multifaceted issues and see how much bearing they have on the discussion of forced migration and refugees. The paper tried to cover a rather wide range of very important topics, seeking to relate the large scale forced migrations of the contemporary period to a resurgence of cultural specificity and ethnicized nationalism as counterpoints to globalization, then reflecting this upon the new concept introduced here – that of Limbo Diasporas. Although the scope of this discussion covered many crosscutting variables, such is the nature and extent of the phenomenon and a failure to address all the relevant issues would be to underestimate the complexity of the problem.

It seems that more emphasis needs to be given to a novel argument that attributes the revival of nationalism and ethnicity, especially in the light of the fairly recent explosion (after the events of 11th of September) of *religious fundamentalism*, to a surge in resistance to the disruptive, impersonal impact of globalization (Castells, 2002; Scruton, 2002). The hard logic behind this train of thought lies in the fact that local culture seems much harder for globalization to subsume than had been previously thought. Indeed, the feelings of fear and insecurity shared by many small nations suffering identity crisis have, in recent times, often mutated into something much more sinister, resulting in a strong revival of ethnicity, nationalism, and even international terrorism. The process of globalization cannot be solely blamed, but the gap it has produced between the "haves and the have nots", has not helped, leading instead to a growth in poverty, dictatorship and autocratic regimes, as well as religious fundamentalism and conservatism and the exclusion of whole fragments of societies, with each factor in turn reinforcing the other. Religious fundamentalism is an inevitable consequence of perceived threats to a nation's ethnicity, identity and character, filling the ideological void created where political oppression, cultural and intellectual stagnation have set in and social and economic despair cripple the people.

Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson have observed that an important aspect of globalization is that it has undermined the ideology of relatively autonomous national cultures, constituting a force that works, and therefore against nationalism itself. In many respects, autonomous national cultures were largely a myth as virtually every nation-state is made up of a number of ethnic groups, with distinct languages, traditions and histories (Castles and Davidson, 2000). On the other hand, the increasing impact of globalization and the dynamic changes involving population movements will inevitably produce newer forms of ethnic contact and dynamic pressures for internal changes. The potential for ethnic conflict to remain a major social phenomenon is unlikely to end (UNESCO, 1995).

The resurrection of ethno-nationalism could also have been motivated to some extent by a rejection of homogenization and westernization associated with some forms of globalization. A raising of regional, ethnic and local levels of self-consciousness may be seen as a reasonably efficient means to prevent some of the unwanted effects of globalization. The difficulty is that globalization can also provide solutions for underdevelopment, backwardness and provincialism, democracy and human rights. It is also true that in such a complicated world of global networks, people tend to regroup around their primary identities: religious, ethnic, territorial and national.

The paper tried to avoid, as much as possible, falling into the trap of over-normativism and has ignored the currently fashionable notions that "certain questions do not even need to be asked at all" and "we do not have to create unnecessary problems for ourselves". Its purpose was to create an arena for analysis, a thinking discourse, which would take the most pertinent components of discussion into consideration, making them the focus, i.e. *thematizing*. Even though this was beyond the scope of the paper, the discourse nonetheless tried to stress these complex issues, as well as provide pointers for the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a place of diverse ethnic groups, different religions, separate lives and of dispersed and lost citizens in limbo status.

Acknowledgments

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Tigran Hasic

ETNIČKI SUKOB I PRAVO NA POVRATAK LIMBO DIJASPORE: VIŠESTRUKI POGLEDI NA SLUČAJ BIH

SAŽETAK

U članku se razmatra fenomen izbjeglica i preseljenih osoba u procesu prisilnih migracija kao posljedice velikih nesreća koje je prouzročio čovjek. Premda neke ovdje predstavljene ideje mogu imati širu primjenu, težište je na postkonfliktnim zonama bivše Jugoslavije, odnosno BiH. Pitanja etničnosti i nacionalizma u okviru preseljenja, premještanja i imigracije u članku se rabe kao pozadina na koju se kratko reflektiraju i pitanja o globalizaciji. Namjera nije pokriti širok raspon vrlo važnih tema, nego samo prikazati probleme koji se javljaju u suvremenim masovnim prisilnim migracijama do ponovnog oživljavanja kulturne posebnosti i etniciziranog nacionalizma kao opreke globalizaciji. Uvodi se pojam »limbo dijaspore« za bosanske izbjeglice u Švedskoj slijedom refleksije i povezanosti s prije navedenim konceptima. Članak završava nekim preporukama i otvorenim pitanjima o društvenoj rehabilitaciji i etničkom liječenju, te donosi neke opće zaključke.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: izbjeglice, prisilna migracija, globalizacija, etničnost, limbo dijaspora

Tigran Hasic

CONFLIT ETHNIQUE ET DROIT AU RETOUR DES DIASPORAS « DANS LES LIMBES »: REGARDS MULTIPLES SUR LE CAS DE LA BOSNIE-HERZEGOVINE

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article étudie le phénomène des réfugiés et personnes déplacées dans le processus de migrations forcées, conséquence des grands désastres provoqués par l'homme. Bien que certaines idées présentées ici puissent s'appliquer de façon plus large, elles sont focalisées sur les zones d'après le conflit en ex-Yougoslavie, plus précisément la Bosnie-Herzégovine. Les questions de l'ethnicité et du nationalisme dans les déplacements, la réinstallation et les immigrations des communautés apporte ici une toile de fond sur laquelle se réfléchit également la question de la globalisation. L'intention de l'auteur n'est pas de couvrir un vaste spectre de thèmes brûlants, mais seulement de mettre le doigt sur les problèmes qui se manifestent dans les migrations massives contemporaines, jusqu'à la résurgence de la spécificité culturelle et du nationalisme ethnicisé en tant que contrepoints à la globalisation. L'auteur introduit la notion de diaspora « dans les limbes » pour les réfugiés bosniaques en Suède, à travers une réflexion et une mise en rapport de ce cas avec les concepts précédemment exposés. L'article s'achève par quelques conseils et questions ouvertes sur la réhabilitation sociale et la cicatrisation ethnique, et fournit quelques conclusions générales.

MOTS CLÉS : réfugiés, migration forcée, globalisation, ethnicité, diaspora « dans les limbes »