Abstracts

Bernd Christoph Ströhm

Too Young to Stay, Too Old to Leave? – Brain Drain and Declining Demography in the Western Balkans

In the 1990s, hundreds of thousands of people from the Western Balkans fled the region due to war and violence – most of them towards the EU. Emigration from the Western Balkans into the EU has not stopped, even though the Yugoslav Wars ended in 2001. Since 1990, more than four million skilled workers have migrated. The Western Balkans is one of the regions in the world most affected by brain drain. This brain drain inevitably slows down the region's economic adjustment to EU standards and makes it more difficult to meet the budgetary criteria for EU membership. The outflow of young, well-educated people from the Western Balkans also promotes a cycle of corruption, negatively affecting the region's EU accession path. Reasons for migration from the Western Balkans to the EU are multifaceted, including the poor situation in the domestic labour markets and disillusionment due to a toxic political environment as well as corruption.

Anastas Vangeli

The Multiple Layers of China's Impact in the Balkans

This contribution focuses on various impacts of the rise of China's presence in the Western Balkans. These impacts are multifaceted: they manifest themselves in the domains of economy and finance, security and politics, technology and innovation, energy and environment, society and culture. They capture both the extent and limitations of power of rising China itself, as well as the different responses to its emergence, local and external, all of which cumulatively shape both Sino-Balkan relations and the context of the Balkan region itself.

Sinem Adar

Turkish Policies toward Southeast Europe – Between Cooperation and Confrontation

Ankara's Southeast Europe policy has been of increasing interest to scholars and policy-makers in the past two decades. Decisive in such attention is Turkey's increasing foreign policy activism under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the transformation of the Turkish political system into an autocracy, and the mounting tension between Ankara and its Western allies. Building on existing literature and primary evidence, particularly in the aftermath of Russia's war against Ukraine, this essay argues that Turkish policy toward Southeast Europe is best defined as a combination of cooperation and conflict.

Turkish ruling elites' post-Cold War aspirations to make Turkey a regional power, the threat perceptions in the Black Sea and the Aegean, and, finally, the interests of the AKP leadership to remain in power, shape Ankara's approach to the region.

Dušan Reljić

Expansion, not Enlargement

The European Union has eagerly integrated the economies of Southeast Europe into Western European value producing chains. Migrants from the region are filling the depleted EU labour markets and the region is tightly embedded into transatlantic security structures. Nevertheless, political EU membership is hardly realistic in the near future for the remaining "Southeast European Six" despite geopolitical musings in the EU.

Melanie Jaindl

Intersectionality and Visual Securitization of Migrants along the Balkan Route – Attacker, Protector, or Coward?

Eight years after the "long summer of migration" in 2015, debates about asylum and migration are still dominating European political discourse. Photojournalistic images of people coming to Europe became engrained into collective memory, underpinning their importance in the securitization of these events. This article explores the visual securitization of migrants in Serbian and Hungarian media in 2015 at the time of the construction of a border fence between both countries. Focus is given to mediatized narratives about gender and its intersections. It shows how discourses construct identities as vulnerable or threatening and how these narratives create realities for migrants.

Dino Tsakmaklis

After the Chortiatis Massacre – Shifting Historical-Political Interpretations in the Context of Greek Post-War History

This article addresses the shifting historical-political interpretations based on the attribution of responsibility for the Nazi massacre that occurred in the Greek village of Chortiatis on 2 September 1944. Drawing upon local eyewitness accounts, lay publications, and professional historiography, this study situates the discourses about the massacre within the context of Greek post-war politics. The evolving discourse regarding these events can be delineated into three distinct phases: First, during the era of the "civil war victors" (1945–1974), a "national-minded" narrative emerged, attributing blame to the partisans for inciting the massacre. Subsequently, from 1974 onwards, a phase of "left-wing revisionism" surfaced, shifting the responsibility towards Greek collaborators who committed the atrocities in the village. Finally, in the early 2000s, the dominant left-wing narrative encountered a series of challenges posed by critical academic historians who re-evaluated the established mythological narratives.

Robert Hodel

Dragoslav Mihailović's Opus in the Context of Political Reception

Every literary work changes over time because its context and the people who read it change. This is especially true for the Serbian-Yugoslav author Dragoslav Mihailović (1930–2023), who published his first text in 1957. He was publicly attacked by Tito in 1969 and received, nevertheless, all his country's major literary awards during his life. Three stages of reception stand out: first the 1960s, marked by the peak of Yugoslavia's liberalization and a shift towards a nationally oriented consciousness; secondly the period after Tito's death, where criticism of Yugoslav socialism fatally coincided with nationalist movements; and thirdly the present, in which a return to a less politicized reception of literature is taking place.

Christian Voß

Greece' Place on the Mental Map of Europe – The Novels of Amanda Michalopoulou

By presenting the literary oeuvre of Amanda Michalopoulou over the past thirty years, we focus on the Greek-German relations in her fiction and autofiction, and more precisely the Greek self-positioning in Europe since EU accession in 1981. Her more than twenty novels and short story collections describe the political history of Greece since the 1970s and tell us the biographies of her westernized and highly mobile generation that had to process the worsening of Greek-German and Greek-European relations with the financial crisis and austerity in the 2010s. Michalopoulou avoids anti-Western and occidentalist narratives that became dominant in Greek society during the crisis and prefers to choose an inner exile in her latest novels "Baroque" and "Her Metamorphosis" by retreating from real time and space and performing formalist or surrealist experiments. This way, Michalopoulou is producing "glocalized" literature addressing key topics of modernity such as identity, gender issues or fiction vs. reality – while keeping a recognizable Greek cultural grounding of her plots.