Lessons learned? The Balkan states narrations on the Kosovo Refugees Crisis

In 1999 the Kosovo refugee crisis and NATO’s intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia put the Balkan region at risk. During 78 days (between 24 March and 10 June 1999), NATO bombed Yugoslavia in order to force Serbian troops from Kosovo and ultimately to halt Slobodan Milosevic’s policy against the ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) there were more than 750,000 refugees spread across the Balkan states. Albania took in most of them, around 440,000. The total number of refugees and displaced persons from and within the territory of the former Yugoslavia was estimated at more than three million people. Undoubtedly, the Kosovo crisis had an overwhelming effect on the region. Until today it remained unique in terms of its unprecedented magnitude.

The aim of the paper is to analyze the each country’s reaction to the massive influx of Kosovar refugees in 1999. I begin by defining what the narratives analysis is. Next, by using this analysis, I will examine how Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro built its own narrative. Understanding the narrative is essential in explaining the country’s policy too. Finally, I will summarize the paper with some conclusions regarding the need for further research.

Establishing the conditions necessary for large scale migration took a long time and required enormous resources. It was not an easy task for political leaders who work through the appropriate humanitarian response.

Taking a look back at the Balkan states response seems crucial on the occasion of the humanitarian disaster we are facing as the Europeans. Currently, Europe as a whole struggles to table proper proposals on how to deal with the crisis.

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