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SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND ETHNIC HOMOGENIZATION
OF POPULATION IN SERBIA

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Abstract

In the article is going to presented the ethnic picture of the population of the Serbia and the ethnodemographic changes in period 1991-2002, caused by migration, natural movement, changed declaration on national affiliation, as well as some political and socio-economic factors. Ethnocentric migrations (voluntary and forced) primarily influenced on the change of ethnic structure of the Serbia, in the sense of creating nationally more homogeneous region, having in mind the national structure of refugee-population. On the other side, the emigration of some other nationalities which migrated to their mother countries due to political and economic reasons influenced on the ethnic structure, too.

Spatial distribution of population according to nationality is an important aspect of demographic development conditioned primarily by ethnically differentiated natural growth and migrations, but also with the impact of numerous other factors. In Serbia is present an exceptional concentration and homogenization of population of certain nationalities. Due to specific territorial distribution and ethnic domination of relevant national minorities in border parts of the country, the question of their status and territorial-political organization gives special severity and significance to the minority question in Serbia. Having in mind that Serbia is a multiethnic and multiconfessional state, the protection of minorities rights and good inter-ethnic relations are necessary for peace, stability and democratic development of the Serbia and the Balkans region.

Key words: spatial distribution, ethnic homogenization, migrations, refugees, national minorities, Serbia

Introduction

Contemporary spatial distribution of population in Serbia had been formed over a long historical period under the influence of numerous factors which determined the entire socio-historic, demographic, economic, social and cultural development of the Balkan geographical region.

During its eventful history, due to intensive migration of population, ethnic structure and territorial distribution changed, but at the same time the process of forming certain nations and ethnic groups progressed. Thus, “ever since the end of the 14th century, through the Turkish era and up to contemporary times, migrational currents shifted almost the whole population, whereby many ethnic and ethno-biological processes developed at the same time which significantly changed the ethnic picture of the Balkan countries” (Cvijić, 1966).

Due to its specific geographical position, historical heritage, political circumstances, demographic development and constant population migrations, Serbia is a multiethnic, multiconfessional and multicultural country. Radical political and economic changes occurred in the last decade of the 20th century which significantly influenced all segments of social life. The conflict between forming “pure” ethno-national countries on one side and ethnic heterogeneity of former republics on the other side brought about the Yugoslav tragedy, a large number of killed and missing persons as well as changes in the ethnic picture, whereby it was confirmed at the same time, who knows how many times in the history of the Balkan countries, that the formula “one country-one nation” is absolutely inapplicable on the Balkans (Wiberg, 1996). The disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia and the creation of new ethno national countries, war and “ethnic cleansing”, voluntary and forced ethnocentric migrations, a huge number of refugees and displaced persons, caused huge changes in ethno demographic development of the population of Serbia.

Apart from socio-political events and demographic factors (migrations and natural growth), it should be stressed that non-demographic variables were important determinants of changes in the ethnic composition and territorial distribution of Serbia’s population. Above all, it is the principal of free declaration on national affiliation which enables change of nationality, namely a temporary one (due to political, social, psychological reasons) or a permanent one (due to assimilation processes), which influences the population dynamics of ethnic communities. Ethno statistical data ranges may also be conditioned by applied (or changed) census-methodological solutions regarding certain nationalities, which are often a result of political circumstances and decisions. This became especially prominent with the Muslims who were treated different

in the censuses.¹ Similar changes happened with the Yugoslavs as well. Whether they were a specific political category or an equal ethnic entity depended to a great extent on the political background and social circumstances. Yugoslavs do not have a special ethnic origin, and their mutual frame of reference is identification with the country in which they live.² It is also important to note that the final nationality classifications differed from census to census according to modality number, and so in 1991 it was expanded with Bunjevci, Egyptians and Šokci, and in 2002 with Bosniacs, Ashkali, Gorani and Aromanian.

Ethnic homogenization of population in Serbia, 1991-2002

Demographic factors decisively influenced the changes in ethnic structure, spatial distribution, population density and concentration in Serbia, which is primarily manifested in differentiated demographic development of certain ethnic communities, not only in view of natural replacement but in scope and direction of migrations as well. However, as emphasized, non-demographic factors also affected the ethnic picture of Serbia to a greater or lesser degree, such as changes in national affiliation, different methodological solutions during censuses, the awakening of national conscience in certain nationalities, absence of national awareness with others, mixed marriages, assimilation and integration processes, as well as some extraordinary or specific socio-political circumstances. As a result of the stated factors and primarily differentiated natural growth per nationalities, certain ethnic communities increased their number and ratio over time, while others had stagnating or negative trends in the population dynamics which influenced changes in the ethnic population structure.

In the last inter-censal period (1991-2002) relevant changes happened in the ethnic structure of Serbia which were primarily conditioned by massive ethnocentric, voluntary and forced population migrations, as well as national and religious revivalism, very pronounced in certain nationalities, simultaneously with the appearance of ethnic “mimicry” present in other ethnic communities.

According to the 2002 census there were 7.6 million inhabitants registered in Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohia), out of which the Serbs, as the majority population, comprised 82.9%, and about 15% of the population belonged to one of the ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, Serbia is not considered as a country with outstanding ethnic heterogeneity and the ratio of national minorities is considerably less than in many East European countries.³ The most significant minorities, according to number and ratio, are Hungarians (293.3 thousand or 3.9%), then Bosniacs (136.1 thousand or 1.8%) who, together with the Muslims (19.5 thousand or 0.3%) comprise 155.6 thousand (2.1%), Roma (108.2 thousand or 1.4%) and Yugoslavs (80.7 thousand or 1.1%), while the others participate with under 1% (Table 1).

¹ The Muslims were treated as “Muslims-uncommitted” (1948) and “Yugoslavs-uncommitted” (1953), then “Muslims in the ethnic sense” (1961), and then in the next census (1971) by political decision they received the status of one of the six constitutive nations of former SFR Yugoslavia. They kept such a status until the last census (2002) when, taking into consideration momentous political changes i.e. international recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent country, and also because of the absence of consensus among the Muslims themselves with regard to commitment, a new modality was introduced in the census classification (along with the existing term) i.e. – Bosniac, for stating an ethnic identity for the same nation in essence. Thus the Muslims, generally, went from being nationally uncommitted, to Yugoslav uncommitted, through a constitutive nation to a national minority (Raduški, 2007).

² According to the census methodology, Yugoslavs were at the beginning in closest ties with Muslims (1953), then as “Yugoslavs-uncommitted” (1961), then they included persons who did not wish to declare themselves nationally (1971,1981), and in the last two censuses they had the status of nationally committed persons. It should be stressed that in the 1991 census they already bore the name of a country that was not what it used to be, and in the 2002 census they probably had the last chance to declare themselves as Yugoslavs, taking the large political changes into consideration, namely it was in this period that Yugoslavia disappeared from the historical-political scene. The introduction of this category into the census classification had otherwise had a significant influence on the changes in the numerosity of other nationalities (Raduški,2007).

³ For example, the minorities form between 20-30% of the population of Macedonia, Georgia Ukraine, Belarus, and from 30-40% in Estonia, Moldavia, 40-50% in Kyrgyzstan and Latvia, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kazakhstan there actually is no majority nation (Brunner, 1994).

Table 1. Ethnic structure of Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohia), 1991-2002

Nationality	1991		2002		Growth index 2002/1991
	Number	%	Number	%	
Total	7576837	100.0	7498001	100.0	99.0
Serbs	6061917	80.0	6212838	82.9	102.5
Montenegrins	117761	1.6	69049	0.9	58.6
Yugoslavs	312595	4.1	80721	1.1	25.8
Albanians	74303	1.0	61647	0.8	83.0
Bosniacs	-	-	136087	1.8	88.2*
Bulgarians	26416	0.3	20497	0.3	77.6
Bunjevci	21236	0.3	20012	0.3	94.2
Vlachs	15675	0.2	40054	0.5	255.5
Gorani	-	-	4581	0.1	-
Hungarians	337479	4.5	293299	3.9	86.9
Macedonians	44028	0.6	25847	0.3	58.7
Muslims	176401	2.3	19503	0.3	11.1
Germans	4745	0.1	3901	0.1	82.2
Roma	90853	1.2	108193	1.4	119.1
Romanians	37818	0.5	34576	0.5	91.4
Russians	2429	0.0	2588	0.0	106.5
Ruthenians	17795	0.2	15905	0.2	89.4
Slovaks	65363	0.9	59021	0.8	90.3
Slovenes	7811	0.1	5104	0.1	65.3
Ukrainians	4957	0.1	5354	0.1	108.0
Croatians	94244	1.2	70602	0.9	74.9
Czechs	2675	0.0	2211	0.0	82.7
Others	11318	0.1	11711	0.2	103.5
Undeclared and uncommitted	9988	0.1	107732	1.4	1078.6
Regional affiliation	4706	0.1	11485	0.2	244.1
Unknown	34324	0.5	75483	1.0	219.9

Source: Census book No.1; National or ethnic affiliation; Population, household and dwellings census in 2002, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade. 2003; Statistical Almanac of Serbia 2009, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade. 2009.

Note: The table shows all nationalities, according to the official classification of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, with over 2000 members in Serbia (without Kosovo) according to 2002 census .

* Growth index (88.2) refers to Bosniacs and Muslims together.

From the ethno-regional aspect, diametrically opposed differences are present between central Serbia, as a relatively homogeneous region, and Vojvodina which presents a real ethnic mosaic of many nationalities which live there.

As regards the ethnic structure of central Serbia, the Serbs, as the majority nation, number 4.9 million (89.5%), which marks this region as homogeneous⁴ and almost monolith, with elements of unimodal type, considering that all the other ethnic communities participate with a very low ratio. The leading national minorities are Bosniacs/Muslims (151.5 thousand or 2.8%),⁵ Albanians (60.0 thousand or 1.1%) and Romas (79.1 thousand or 1.4%), while all others participate with less than 1%.

⁴ Literature mentions divisions into monolith structure (when an ethnic group forms over 90%), markedly homogeneous structure (80-90%), low homogeneity, i.e. low heterogeneity (70-79%), high heterogeneity (60-69%) and very high heterogeneity of population (50-59%). Certainly, these limits can be set in other ranges as well depending on the numerical relations of ethnic groups (Petrović, 1983)

⁵ For the purpose of comparing data in the last two censuses, these two nationalities were taken together having in mind that the modality Bosniac did not exist in the classification of nationalities in 1991, but only Muslim.

As opposed to Central Serbia, the national population structure of Vojvodina is considerably diversified. Due to numerous nationalities which live in this province, Vojvodina represents "Little Balkan". Constant migrations, immigrations and emigrations, have been and remain the main factor of the demographic development of Vojvodina, as one of the most heterogeneous regions in Europe. In 2002, 1.3 million (65.0%) Serbs were registered in Vojvodina, while the numerically most relevant national minorities were Hungarians (290.2 thousand or 14.3 %), then Slovaks (56.6 thousand or 2.8%), Croats (56.5 thousand or 2.8%), Yugoslavs (49.9 thousand or 2.5%), Montenegrins (35.5 thousand or 1.7%), Romanians (30.4 thousand or 1.5%), Roma (29.1 thousand or 1.4%) and Bunjevci (19.8 thousand or 1.0%). All the others participate with less than 1%.

Comparative survey of the results of the last two censuses shows that significant changes happened in the 1991-2002 period in the scope and ethnic composition of Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohia). The population decreased (from 7.6 million to 7.5 million), and as regards by nationality, most of them marked significant changes in the ethno-demographic development. A population growth is noted in majority nationalities (by 150.9 thousand, namely from 80.0% to 82.9%) primarily because of the arrival of an enormous number of refugees (predominantly Serbian nationality),⁶ which proves that strong outstanding ethnic homogenization developed through migration.

Within the minorities, the Roma recorded an absolute increase (by 17.3 thousand, namely growth index of 119.1 points) as well as relative (from 1.2% to 1.4%). The most intensive increase was made by the Vlachs (from 15.7 thousand to 40.1 thousand, namely from 0.2% to 0.5% and growth index of 255.5 points). All other minorities recorded intensive decrease, whereby with some (Croats, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Yugoslavs), it may be characterized as dramatic – the number of inhabitants decreased 22% - 41% in only 11 years.

When large regions are analyzed, the direction and intensity of ethno-demographic changes can be perceived. The number of inhabitants in central Serbia decreased (from 5.6 million to 5.5 million) in the last inter-censal period (1991-2002). The Serbian nation registered an absolute decrease (by 45.6 thousand) despite the influx of a large number of refugees due to negative growth and migrational balance, but also a relative increase (from 88.0% to 89.5%) due to a larger negative rate of increase of other nationalities. Thus, an increase trend of the degree of ethnic homogeneity of central Serbia has been present in the observed period which is also shown by the decrease of the number of nationalities with a ratio over 1%, from six (Serbs, Muslims, Yugoslavs, Montenegrins, Albanians and Roma) to four (Serbs, Bosniacs, Roma and Albanians). Population movements of the members of national minorities indicate negative trends, except with the Roma (growth rate from 1.2% to 1.5%) who owe the demographic dynamism to ethnic alternation, apart from high natural growth, while the Vlachs register an increase (from 0.3% to 0.7%) exclusively owing to the awakening of national conscience and change of national affiliation. Albanians and Bosniacs/Muslims, despite high natural growth, had a negative population rate of increase and decrease in ratio (from 1.3% to 1.1%, namely 3.1% to 2.5%) which indicates emigration.

A trend in the decrease of the degree of population ethnic heterogeneity has been present in Vojvodina in the whole observed period (1991-2002). Population had increased (from 1,970 thousand to 2,031 thousand) primarily on the account of the immigration component, namely the influx of a large number of Serbian nationality refugees during the 1990s which even superseded the large colonization of Vojvodina after the Second World War. This significantly changed the ethnic picture of Vojvodina in view of ethnic homogenization and degree of majority nations, namely increasing the number and ratio of the majority nation in total population (from 1.1 to 1.3 million, namely from 57.1% to 65.0% and growth index of 117.5 points). Therefore, the absolute increase noted with the Serbs, despite their negative natural growth, is the result of intensive immigrations (refugees) and change in declaration (decision on Serbian nationality). Depopulation trends are characteristic for all nationalities (except Roma) within the minority populations. The Hungarians decreased numerically (by 43.1 thousand, growth index 87.1) and by ratio (from 16.9 to 14.3%),

⁶ The first census of refugees and war-affected persons, carried out in 1996 (by the Commissariat for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia and UNHCR), registered about 618 thousand of these persons who arrived from war-affected regions (mostly from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina). Over half of them came to central Serbia (the largest number to Belgrade, about 170 thousand), then to Vojvodina, while only a smaller number to Kosovo and Metohia. In the last period, the number of refugees decreased as some obtained citizenship (about 250 thousand), some moved abroad, while a smaller number returned to where they fled from. According to data from 2009, 97 thousand refugees have been registered, which is why UNHCR classified Serbia among the five countries in the world and the only one in Europe in which the status of refugees has still not been solved.

whereby the absolute decrease exceeded negative natural growth which indicates emigration. The Slovaks had a decrease (by 5.6 thousand, and ratio from 3.2% to 2.8%, growth index 91.0 points) due to negative trends in natural movement, while migrations were less significant. The Croats recorded absolute decrease (by 16 thousand, growth index of 78.0 points) and relative (from 3.7% to 2.8%), which is mostly due to negative migration balance. The other ethnic communities in Vojvodina are also characterized by a negative natural growth and by emigration trends as well. Namely, due to the political circumstances in that period (ethnic conflicts, friction, bombing) as well as economic reasons (UN sanctions and other) they emigrated from the country, mostly towards their home countries. Their population dynamics was also influenced by the change in national affiliation – a non-demographic factor which depends not only on the subjective feeling of the individual but on the current political situation and state politics, assimilation processes conditioned by scarcity, space dispersion and large number of mixed marriages (characteristic for Vojvodina) and other factors (Raduški, 2002).

Basic trends in spatial distribution of nationalities in Serbia, 1991-2002

Spatial distribution of nationality is conditioned by differentiated natural growth, ethnic selective migrations, as well as by economic, political, cultural and many other factors. The basic trends in territorial distribution and concentration of certain ethnic communities in Serbia is characterized by certain regional specificities as well as pronounced spatial-demographic polarization. Changes in demographic development and territorial distribution of certain nationalities are demonstrated in outstanding concentration and strengthening the process of national homogenization in certain regions, while on the other hand, there is a high degree of spatial dispersion characteristic for other ethnic communities (Spasovski, 1994).

Certain regional communities are characterized by complex ethnic composition (areas around large regional centers and larger town areas), while ethnic homogenization is carried out in other areas, especially in the region of southern Serbia which is dominated by Albanians, then in the southwestern part (Sandžak) which is dominated by Bosniac/Muslim nationality, in the northwestern part in which the Bulgarians are concentrated or in the north of Vojvodina (district of Bačka) where Hungarians are ethnically dominant. Various spatial mobility of ethnic communities developed together with the population changes in Serbia.

There are distinct differences in the spatial distribution of population, so the real insight into the ethnic processes and compactness of ethnic communities are best illustrated by data from the municipalities of Serbia. We can observe the intensity and directions of ethno-spatial dynamics by following the changes in the scope of territorial coverage of the area in which an ethnic community gained majority. Thus, apart from the majority nationality, five more nationalities (Hungarians, Albanians, Bosniacs together with the Muslims, Bulgarians and Slovaks) have high territorial concentration in certain regions, with absolute or relative ethnic domination in at least one municipality. They are as follows: Serbs (majority in 144 municipalities), Hungarians (8 municipalities), Bosniacs with Muslims (3 municipalities) and finally Albanians, Bulgarians and Slovaks who form the majority in two municipalities each.

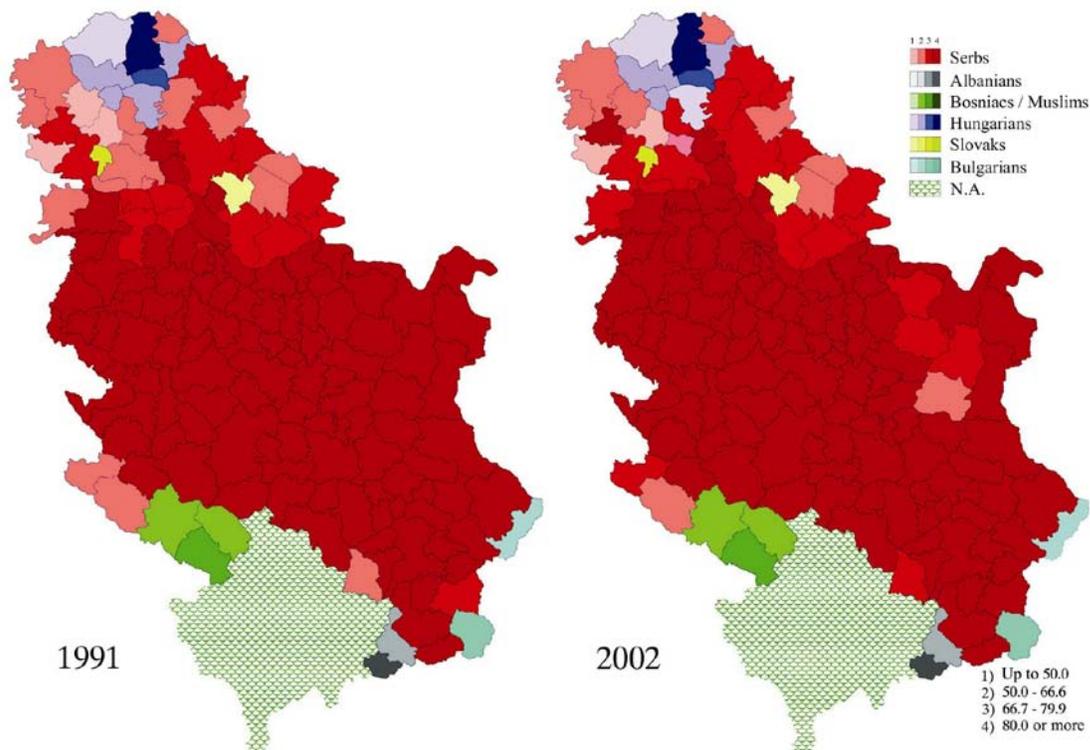
The homogenization process of the national population structure of Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohia) was notable in the 1990s, and the achieved level of ethno-spatial distribution in 2002 may best be perceived on the basis of ethno-static analysis of ethnic majorities on the municipality level.

The analysis shows that of the total number of **Serbs**, over three fourths are concentrated in central Serbia (4.9 million or 78.7%), and about one fifth live in Vojvodina (1.3 million or 21.3%). Very high degree of ethnic homogeneity is characterized by the Serbian population because, out of 161 municipalities, they ethnically prevail in 144 districts. Out of this number, they absolutely ethnically prevail in central Serbia in 109 municipalities (94% of the territory of the municipalities), while in the other seven municipalities they are in second place and record the smallest ratios, such as the three in which the Bosniacs/Muslims dominate (ratio of Serbs varies from 4.3% to 23.5%), two municipalities with Albanian population (ratio of Serbs from 8.5% to 34.1%) and two municipalities with Bulgarian majority (ratio of Serbs from 13.2% to 25.6%). In the last inter-censal period, ethno-demographic changes are reflected primarily in the increase of the ratio of Serbs in all municipalities of Serbia (mostly in the region of Belgrade) due to the inflow of a large number of refugees and, to a certain degree, to the declaring of certain ethnic communities (e.g. Montenegrins, Yugoslavs) for the Serbian nationality. The Serbs recorded a decreased ratio only in municipalities of eastern Serbia because a large number of persons declared themselves as Vlach nationality in the last census.

The Serbs in Vojvodina form the absolute majority in 33 out of 45 municipalities (with ratio from 52.0% to 92%) and a relative in two (Vrbas 47.8% and Bač 46.7%) which represents over three fourths (77.8%) of the territory of the municipalities in Vojvodina. In relation to the state in 1991, the Serbs ethnically prevailed in the same number of municipalities but in 32 municipalities with absolute and 3 municipalities with relative majority (Vrbas, Bač and Kula). Furthermore, there has been an increase in the ratio of majority population in all municipalities in Vojvodina which is an indirect consequence of the inflow of a large number of Serbian refugees, and the number of municipalities in which the Serbs form an outstanding majority, namely over two thirds of the population (from 20 to 25 municipalities), has significantly increased.

Therefore, as regards the proportional ratio of Serbs, certain changes have been noted, primarily in municipalities in which the Serbs represent the majority. Accordingly, in the period 1992-2002, the number of municipalities in Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohia) in which the Serbs represent the relative majority decreased (from three to two municipalities), as well as the moderate absolute majority (from 50.0% to 66.6%) from 16 to 10 municipalities. At the same time, the number of municipalities in which the Serbs have a convincing (66.6 to 80.0%) or very large majority (over 80%) has increased. It should be mentioned that Serbs represent more than 4/5 of total population in as many as 112 municipalities (out of 161 municipalities), and out of them they form over 95% of the population in as many as 69 municipalities (map 1). Incidentally, ten municipalities have an exceptionally homogeneous national structure (over 99% are Serbs).

Map 1. Ethnic domination per municipalities in Serbia, 1991-2002



Spatial distribution and ethnic domination of national minorities. One of the essential characteristics of Serbia (excluding Kosovo and Metohia) is co-settlement of various ethnic communities in the same region, therefore, depending on the territorial-political context or angle of contemplation, it is possible for each community to find itself in the position of the majority, as well as the minority. (Janjić, 1995). Spatial distribution of the population shows that the ethnic space of Serbs is substantial and functionally linked, exceptionally homogeneous, whereas there is a high territorial concentration of relevant ethnic minorities in border areas of the country. Minorities settled in border-areas are in question, having specific territorial distribution and ethnic domination, therefore the issue of their status and territorial-political organization gives special weight and importance to the minority's problem (Poulton,1991).

Numerically, **Hungarians** are the most important ethnic minority in Serbia (excluding Kosovo and Metohia). They are almost exclusively concentrated in Vojvodina (290.2 thousand or 98.9%), while only a small percentage out of the total number of Hungarians live in the region of central Serbia (3092 or 1.1%) where their concentration is completely negligible (approximately 0.1%) and mostly oriented towards urban settlements. Geographical distribution of the Hungarian population in Vojvodina is characterized by a tendency of concentration in a small number of municipalities with a high level of ethnic homogeneity, especially in the northern part (the District of Bačka). They absolutely prevail in six municipalities (Kanjiža 86.5%, Senta 80.5%, Ada 76.6%, Bačka Topola 58.9%, Mali Idoš 55.9% and Čoka 51.6%) and represent the relative majority in two municipalities (Bečež 48.8% and Subotica 38.5%). More than a half (59.7%) of the total number of Hungarians in Vojvodina live in these municipalities. Spatial distribution of the Hungarian minority implies high concentration and spatial polarization, taking into account that more than half of the total number of Hungarians in Vojvodina live in two districts only (of Northern Bačka and Northern Banat), where the Hungarian prevailing municipalities are located as well. On the other hand, in the District of Srem (with Serbian population prevailing) Hungarians make only 1.3%. In the observed period, a decreased number of Hungarians was recorded in all municipalities, however, they retained ethnic domination in eight municipalities, whereby in 1991 they absolutely prevailed in seven municipalities and relatively prevailed in one municipality (Subotica). In the central Serbian municipalities concentration of Hungarians is completely negligible and mostly oriented to urban settlements (up to 0.2%).

Bosniacs/Muslims are predominately settled in central Serbia (151.5 thousand or 97.4%), whereas only 4.1 thousand or 2.6% of their total number live in the region of Vojvodina. Ethno-spatial distribution shows that they absolutely prevail in three municipalities: Tutin (28.5 thousand or 94.9%), Novi Pazar (67.2 thousand or 78.2%) and Sjenica (21.2 thousand or 75.5%) where 70.5% of the total number of Bosniacs/Muslims of the region of central Serbia live, which clearly illustrates the level of their concentration in the south-western part of Serbia.⁷ In other municipalities the ratio of Bosniacs/Muslims is less than 1%, except in Prijepolje (41.1%) and Priboj (23.0%), then Nova Varoš (7.6%) and Mali Zvornik (4.3%). In the period from 1991 to 2002, changes in territorial distribution of the population are tending to strengthen the ethnic homogenization process. Thus, Novi Pazar, being the most developed economic and cultural center of the region, records an increase of Bosniacs/Muslims (from 62.4 thousand to 67.2 thousand, i.e. from 75.4% to 78.2%), and a simultaneous decrease of Serbs ratio (from 22.5% to 20.5%). Significant inflow and homogenization of Bosniac/Muslim population took place in that municipality, so according to the data of 2002, 63.5% of the population of that municipality was absorbed (Gagić, 2009). In the other two municipalities (Sjenica and Tutin) an absolute decrease was registered, while the ratio of Bosniacs/Muslims remained unchanged. Moreover, it is necessary to say that in the three above mentioned municipalities only a small number of people ethnically declared themselves as Muslims in the last census and that the Bosnian national idea was accepted to the greatest extent (e.g. in Tutin 223 Muslims, and 28.3 thousand Bosniacs). In contrast to central Serbia, the ratio of this nationality in Vojvodina, contemplated per municipalities, is insignificant

⁷ The area of south-western Serbia is usually called Sandžak. The term „sandžak“ comes from the Turkish word „sančak“ - the flag, and used to stand for administrative-territorial units within the Ottoman Empire. Although these units had ceased to exist since the 16th century, the term “Sandžak“ remained widely used and designates a region with specific geopolitical position, historical and ethno-demographic characteristics. According to the territorial-administrative division on the day of the 2002 census, Sandžak included seven Serbian municipalities (Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Tutin, Nova Varoš, Priboj, Prijepolje and Raška) that were divided into two districts – the District of Zlatibor and the District of Raška. Out of the total of 262.5 thousand inhabitants of this region, more than a half, namely 143.7 thousand (54.7%) are Bosniacs/Muslims, and 115.9 thousand are Serbs (44.1%). The basic characteristic of this region is the traditional separation of the population into two dominant ethnic groups – Serbian and Bosnian/Muslim, whereby Serbs prevail in four, and Bosniacs/Muslims in three municipalities.

(approximately 0.1%), whereby the great majority declared themselves as Muslims, and only a small part as Bosniacs.

Albanians are almost completely concentrated in central Serbia (60.0 thousand or 97.3%), and a small percentage in Vojvodina (1.7 thousand or 2.7%). From the territorial aspect, they absolutely ethnically prevail in two municipalities of the central Serbia: Preševo (31.1 thousand or 89.1%) and Bujanovac (23.7 thousand or 54.7%) while their ratio is significant in the municipality of Medveđa (2.8 thousand or 26.2%). As many as 96.1% of Albanians from the region of the central Serbia live in these municipalities, whereas in other municipalities they are dispersively settled and have very low ratios (approximately 0.1%), which indicates the distinct process of their national homogenization in the south of Serbia. In the period from 1991 to 2002 the Albanians had negative trends in the population development, but they retained absolute ethnical prevalence in the two above mentioned municipalities, whereby in one of them (Preševo) the number and ratio were decreased (from 60.1% to 54.7%). The number of Serbs decreased in these municipalities as well, although their relative ratio increased due to the higher negative rate of increase of other nationalities. In the municipalities of Vojvodina, the Albanian minority has marginal ratios and spatial distribution is oriented mostly to larger urban settlements.

Out of the total number of **Slovaks** on the territory of Serbia, a small number (2.4 thousand or 4.0%) live in central Serbia, whereas their main concentration zone is in Vojvodina (56.5 thousand or 96%), where, after the Hungarians, they represent numerically the most significant ethnic minority. Despite negative trends in demographic development, they retained ethnic prevalence in two municipalities: absolute in Bački Petrovac (9.8 thousand or 66.4%) and relative in Kovačica (11.5 thousand or 41.1%). In other municipalities their ratios are low, characterized by dispersive settlement (except in Bač, 19.8% and Bačka Palanka, 9.6%) and significant mixing with other nationalities (especially with Serbs and Hungarians).

Members of the **Bulgarian** nationality are predominantly settled in border-area municipalities of south-eastern Serbia, towards Bulgaria. Out of the total number of Bulgarians, 91.9% live in the central Serbia, whereas 8.1% live in the territory of Vojvodina. They record a high level of ethnic homogeneity and prevail in two municipalities. These are: Bosilegrad (7.0 thousand or 70.9%), and Dimitrovgrad (5.8% thousand or 49.7%) in which over two thirds (approximately 68%) of the total number of Bulgarians from the region of the central Serbia are concentrated. Compared with the year 1991, the Bulgarian ethnic minority recorded decrease in both municipalities, whereby they retained ethnic prevalence, but in one of them (Dimitrovgrad) they lost their absolute prevalence. At the same time, Serbs recorded an increase, whereas the ratio of Yugoslavs significantly decreased, because in the last census majority changed their ethnic affiliation (they most likely declared themselves as Serbs).

Out of other ethnic minorities, from the aspect of spatial distribution, it is important to mention the **Vlachs** who are characterized by a high territorial concentration in eastern Serbia, although they do not ethnically prevail in any municipality. Vlachs are the nationality that showed ethno-religious revivalism to the greatest extent in the observed period, so the positive trends in their national development were crucially affected by a subjective factor – change of national affiliation, namely, declaration for their ethnic group. They are concentrated almost exclusively in central Serbia (99.7%) and an insignificant percentage in Vojvodina (0.3%). The main concentration zone of Vlachs is the eastern part of Serbia, where approximately 38.0 thousand live or 94.3% of their total number in the territory of central Serbia. They have the most significant ratio in the municipalities of Kučevo (5.2 thousand or 27.7%), Boljevac (3.2 thousand or 26.3%) and Žagubica (3.3 thousand or 22.0%), in which the ratio increased from two to over eight times in relation to the previous census. Moreover, more significant ratios of Serbs were previously recorded in the same municipalities, as well as the larger number of Yugoslavs who most probably changed their ethnic affiliation in 2002 and declared themselves as Vlachs. Due to the significant decrease of ratio and dehomogenization of Serbs, ethnic homogeneity of the said municipalities of the eastern Serbia was increased.

Conclusion

When speaking of the population movements in Serbia, as well as on the territory of former SFR Yugoslavia, we cannot overlook large changes in the distribution caused by voluntary or forced population migrations, armed conflicts and ethnic cleansing, and one of the momentous demographic consequences of these events are territorial homogenization and decrease of the degree of ethnic heterogeneity of almost all former Yugoslav republics. Although politically motivated and ethno-centric migrations occurred even during the existence of SFRY (e.g. Serbs from Croatia and from Kosovo and Metohia), they took dramatic forms in the 1990s. In the region of former SFRY, the greatest ethnic homogenization took place in Serbia and Croatia and within Serbia primarily in the region of Vojvodina due to the inflow of Serbian refugees, but also to a certain extent due to the decline in the number of members of national minorities. Forced migrations in which Serbs took part, mainly had ethnic homogenization of both republics as a consequence, although emigration of both non-Croatian, namely non-Serbian nationalities contributed to this as well.⁸ Is further ethnic homogenization an inevitable destiny of the former Yugoslav republics? It is uncertain whether such trends will continue or cease, but it is quite certain they will not be opposite. Although there is a certain positive correlation between political instability and ethnic heterogeneity, a high degree of homogenization is still not the most optimal for development of a country, since ethnic dynamics is missing which results from the richness of diversity, contacts with other nations and cultures.

Generally observed, it may be concluded that ethnic homogenization and spatial distribution of population in Serbia at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century were influenced by massive migrations, ethnically differentiated natural growth, national-religious “awakening” of many ethnic communities, more or less pronounced assimilation and integration processes, as well as a complex political and socio-economic situation in that period. It is justifiably assumed that the tendencies of changes in ethnic population structure are not finished, nor the processes which condition them. However it is not possible to foresee what the changes in ethnic composition will be in the forthcoming period, primarily because of unknown trends in population reproduction, and the even more unclosed questions of the direction and intensity of future internal and external migrations, stability of national determination of certain ethnic communities and similar. In any case, the question of ethnic structure and ethno-demographic changes is sensitive and should not be left to spontaneous demographic trends, as the consequences of such trends are numerous, diverse and long-term.

It should be emphasized that the minority question is of exceptional importance in Serbia as a multiethnic country. This refers not only to the numerosity and territorial distribution of national minorities but to the existence of large distinctions in view of their demographic development, socio-economic, religious and cultural and civilization characteristics, national emancipation and political organization. From the regional aspect, the minority matter is of great importance in central Serbia, although ethnically homogeneous, having in mind the specific spatial distribution and process of ethnic homogenization of the most relevant minorities who live in the border regions of the country, which makes this matter additionally complex. On the other hand, Vojvodina represents a real ethnic mosaic of various nationalities exceptionally differentiated by their ethnic-cultural characteristics, so good majority-minority relations, national minority rights protection and ethnic tolerance are the key to stability in this province.

The end of the 20th century is marked as the “era of migration” due to massive global and increasingly differentiated migrational trends, as well as the “time of nationalism” having in mind the awakening of ethnicity and “explosion” of national identity with many ethnic communities. Because of this, multiculturalism, namely the policy of diversity, represents an alternative to the assimilation policy today. The perspectives of multiculturalism in the Balkan countries will depend on multiethnic relations, respecting of human and minority rights, as well as on the political stability and strategy of democratic and economic development of Balkan region.

⁸ Ethnic changes in Croatia were primarily a consequence of the decline in the number of Serbs (from 581.7 thousand or 12.2% in 1991 to 201.6 thousand or 4.5% in 2002), while the share of the majority population rose from 78.1% to 89.6%. Even though the proportion of the majority population increased in Croatia and Serbia, the Croats experienced ethnic homogenization as a success, while for the Serbs it was a consequence from losing the war.

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