



Serbian Development and Economic Migration Patterns

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Abstract

Since the end of the Yugoslav war, Serbia has undergone a number of changes in its population, living standards, and relations with other countries. One of those relationships is with the European Union, which Serbia is now a candidate for membership. These changes may have had an impact on emigrant patterns from Serbia since the end of the war. While many of those who left the country were asylum seekers in need of international protection, there were also economic migrants in search of better employment opportunities. The changing conditions in Serbia could have affected citizens' desire to remain there. This paper will analyze the conditions in Serbia and its status as an EU candidate country at three points in time, 2002, 2011, and 2017. It is hypothesized that in 2002 emigrant patterns would be the highest because of poor societal conditions in areas such as education, employment, and democratic governance. As Serbia progresses through the EU accession criteria, it is expected that emigrant patterns will decrease because of improved societal conditions. This paper seeks to identify and analyze the factors that have influenced these patterns.

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Introduction

The last 30 years for Serbia have indicated a complex past. A main player in the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia's Milosevic attempted to protect Serbian populations in Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but this led to the spread of nationalist tendencies against other ethnicities. It resulted in sharp ethnic divisions between Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosniaks, Muslims living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, each with objectives of preserving their identities against the others. Civil war broke out in the country, Croatia and Slovenia declared independence from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and acts of genocide occurred. The conflict ended in 1995 with the Dayton Peace Accords. Today, all the former republics in Yugoslavia have adopted proportional representation in their elections and are taking significant steps towards democracy.

Serbia officially became a candidate country for membership in the European Union (EU) in 2012. It has so far opened 12 chapters of the *Acquis Communautaire* to meet the criteria for EU membership. It is making slow progress, but still faces challenges to further integration. Its conflict with Kosovo is a hindrance to its membership; it needs to officially recognize Kosovo's independence and remove Kosovo as a territory from Serbia's constitution. It is also still dealing with prosecutions of war criminals from the nineties. Lastly, it must prioritize EU standards for rule of law, a fair judiciary, the fight against corruption and organized crime, and protection of minority rights (Archick & Morelli 2014, 9). This transition may have implications on the conditions of the country as it attempts to improve its political and economic systems.

Serbia's status along with its history and place in the war of Yugoslavia may point to different trends in emigration from the country. Initially, one might assume most emigration consisted of those fleeing violence and persecution as a direct result of the war. However, there are also reasons that support the trend of economic migrants, those who leave the country to pursue economic opportunities in other countries to improve their lives. This group of individuals is not often considered when looking at migration patterns, and this paper aims to analyze reasons for and trends of economic migration from Serbia since the end of the war. It will answer the question, how has economic migration changed in Serbia and what factors contributed to this change? It will be organized first by a review of the existing literature on the topic followed by a section explaining the methods of analysis. Then it will explore case studies of three different periods of emigration, and patterns will be identified between them. Lastly it

will close with a discussion of the findings, inferences about the future of emigration, and conclusions.

Literature Review

Before delving into the case studies, it is important to understand existing literature surrounding economic migration from Serbia that will be useful in shaping the discussion. Much of the current literature focuses on migrants fleeing violence and seeking international protection, those that can be considered refugees or asylum seekers. A few studies on economic migration look at refugees already living in Serbia who want to leave for better opportunities. There are also many studies today about migrants crossing through Serbia to get to Schengen country Hungary and the migration crisis the European Union is trying to manage. Research particularly on Serbian economic migrants is much slimmer. Other studies have looked at the democratic transition of Serbia and the progress it has made since the breakup of Yugoslavia towards achieving more democratic, EU principles and standards. The progress Serbia has made at different points in time will be useful in interpreting trends in emigration. For this paper, the literature on individuals leaving Serbia will be most important.

Refugees Emigrating Serbia

While there are cases of Serbian nationals leaving the country, Bobic concluded a study focusing on refugees in Serbia from former Yugoslav countries. He analyzed social and economic aspects of their lives and offered possible reasons they would want to emigrate. He found that the refugee employment rate in Serbia was higher than that of the general population, but their overall incomes were lower. He attributed this to their higher risks associated with maintaining subsistence and their need to adapt to new situations quickly (Bobic 2010, 104). His research also revealed that many refugee households were poor, with 49 percent of them having a low wealth score associated with a high risk for poverty. As a result, their standards of living were below average, pointing to what he called, social system inhibition, “their withdrawal to the margins of social life or to the bottom of the social scale, by political and legal means, media, and everyday behavior of the domestic population” (Bobic 2010, 105). The challenges they faced inhibited them from integrating and transforming into regular citizens, which made it easier for them to want to leave.

Bobic continued by suggesting motives that might have led refugees to emigrate from Serbia. The first was the logical explanation for leaving, emigration as a coping mechanism for those experiencing direct effects of the war during the nineties. This “escapism” allowed them to move west and unite with connections they had in other countries. Other contributions to emigration were the pull factors that suggest there are more opportunities to improve living conditions in other countries like the United Kingdom (Bobic 2010, 105). General pull factors include motives like more jobs, a better welfare state, more rights for migrants, and social inclusion. A typical picture of a refugee is one that left everything behind, entered a new country with a family, and simply wants to be able to provide what is best for them. At that point they have little left to lose and will relocate if there is a chance to better their lives.

Refugee Identity and Social Integration

Another study looked at social integration and identity of refugees living in the Serb town, Temerin, in the region of Vojvodina. These are important in understanding what aspects of life migrants prioritize when moving. Through a series of interviews, refugees’ perceptions of their way of life and attitudes towards Temerin were analyzed. The study revealed a positive outlook on the life of refugees. It found that for many of them, the ability to obtain citizenship is a crucial part of being a member of society (Ristic, Kicosev, & Imre 2012, 65). It grants them rights they would not receive otherwise that allow them to fully participate. Another reason for moving to Temerin was the connection to family or friends that already resided there. Having acquaintances facilitates the process of being integrated into society, and many refugees indicated they felt welcome there because of it (Ristic, Kicosev, & Imre 2012, 66). Economic factors also played a role in the reasons for refugees to remain there. Two interviewees mentioned the benefit of cheap real estate, another mentioned the opportunity to provide her children an education, and someone else pointed out the potential for a job (Ristic, Kicosev, & Imre 2012, 67). These factors all impact the lives of refugees living in Serbia and will determine whether they decide to stay and develop a life there or emigrate in search of something new.

While the research highlighted positive aspects of refugees in Temerin rather than reasons for leaving the country, they are useful in considering what causes people to leave or stay. The factors mentioned in Ristic, Kicosev, and Imre’s study can be used to explain further examples of the “pull factors” Bobic found in his work that draw an individual to a new place.

There is hardly ever one reason that drives a person to relocate, but a combination of these elements will surely affect their decisions.

Emigrants from Kosovo

Hoti completed a study that analyzed the different determinants affecting emigration from Kosovo, based on data provided by the Riinvest Household and Labour Force Survey of 2002. One of the main concepts introduced, brain drain, was used to explain Kosovo's large rates of emigration. Brain drain is the idea that highly educated and skilled individuals leave their home country to pursue better opportunities abroad. Another important term for this study was remittance, defined as the money and goods an emigrant sends to his or her family at home (Hoti 2009, 441). From a series of interview questions, Hoti found that 20 percent of households had a family member abroad. He also found that of the working class age, 61 percent of emigrants worked while only 30 percent of non-emigrants did. Furthermore, 25 percent of non-migrants who were not active in the labor market had at least one family member abroad while only 18 percent of non-migrants who were active in the labor market did (Hoti 2009, 445). These numbers indicate that much of the population relies on work in other countries for their income.

In Hoti's concluding remarks he revealed that remittances sent back to families in Kosovo were the second largest source of household income behind income from salaries (2009, 455). In determining what kinds of factors lead individuals to emigrate, he found that the likelihood of being an emigrant decreased with age, increased with education but more for women, increased with household size, and decreased with being married for men and increased for women. He attributed this to women often joining their husbands abroad (Hoti 2009, 452). These findings confirm economic theory; individuals try to maximize their well-being, and their interactions with other actors lead to a balance in the marketplace (Borjas 1989, 482). Hoti's indicators for emigration are not uncommon, similar results are present in other studies.

A final relevant piece worth examining is a work by Ivlevs and King that considered resident intentions of leaving Kosovo, comparing responses from Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs. Among Kosovo Albanians, which made up 88 percent of the population of Kosovo at the time, respondents that were male, students, had a university degree, and had family abroad reported higher willingness to emigrate (Ivlevs & King 2012, 90). Young people were more likely to emigrate because of the potential for maximizing their opportunities, and having an

education makes it easier to manage difficulties associated with searching for jobs, such as administrative and linguistic barriers (Ivlevs & King 2012, 91-92).

Emigrant patterns among minority Kosovo Serbs were not different. The study discovered that males, the single, those with family abroad, participants from rural areas, and former migrants indicated a higher willingness to emigrate (Ivlevs & King 2012, 93). Education was not an influential factor, because only few Serbs in the sample had completed secondary and higher-level education. Males, those receiving remittances, and those living in southeast Kosovo were more likely to be “planners” of emigration, while the single, those from rural areas, and residents with connections abroad but without receiving remittances could only be considered “dreamers” of emigration; they did not have substantial plans to leave (Ivlevs & King 2012, 93). These results are consistent with those from the previous study. Having connections in other countries, level of education, and potential for economic advances all significantly impact Serb residents’ decisions to leave the country. Each of these factors will be useful in examining emigration trends from Serbia since the signing of the Dayton Accords.

This paper will be based on the hypothesis that certain progress towards meeting the accession criteria for membership into the European Union will have a negative effect on emigration; emigration will decrease with more progress made. However, it is also possible the recent migration crisis from the Middle East to Europe will influence emigration, because many migrants have passed through Serbia and it may have negatively affected the population. This crisis may contribute to more emigration; living conditions in Serbia may have decreased slightly since its onset, because there is a demand to address the flow of asylum seekers through the country, which citizens have complained takes resources and attention away from improving their own lives.

Methods

Serbia’s interesting history makes it an appropriate country for research. One of the main actors in the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia experienced significant changes in the demographics of its population. Its current status as a candidate country for membership in the European Union also makes it a point of interest. Its progress towards meeting the accession criteria may be an indicator for changes in emigration. Certain conditions in the country may have improved due to its developments thus far. Therefore, the indicators for emigration will be the current stage in the

accession process and any political, social and economic developments Serbia has made. These indicators will be identified in each case study listed below, which will analyze Serbia's emigration patterns at different periods of time.

Because there is a limited amount of available information about population statistics of Serbia, the years 2002, 2011, and 2016 will be the main focus of this research. 2002 and 2011 were the closest years to 1995 for which the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia had collected data. Statistics between 1995 and 2002 is sparse, therefore information cannot be provided for that period. Census data from 2002 and 2011 will be compared to one another, particularly information regarding the number of Serbian residents working abroad. The discussion of findings at the end will also offer a suggestion about current emigration patterns and how they might be impacted by the migration crisis that peaked in 2015. Inferences about whether or not it has influenced emigration from Serbia will be made based off the findings from previous years.

This study will be meaningful in the context of European studies because the European Union is currently in a period of transition; some states are seeing a rise in euroscepticism while the European Union is considering expanding farther east. Additionally, most economic migrants who leave the western Balkans countries seek opportunities in the European Union. As those countries become closer to EU membership, it is possible emigrant patterns may change. Other candidate countries beyond Serbia include Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Turkey. With the prospects of EU expansion to these states, Serbia's history of emigration and current political, economic, and social conditions are important to assess. Trends in economic migration from Serbia over time should reflect both its history after the Yugoslav war and its current societal conditions.

Case 1: Serbia 2002

The average population of Serbia in 2002 was 7,500,031 people (Statistical Office 2017). Data revealed that the population of Serbia has been declining since 1991, at which point the population reached 7,822,795 people (Statistical Office 2017). Based off evidence from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, in 2002 there were a reported 414,839 Serbian citizens working in other countries, and the average length of work abroad was for 13 years (Statistical Office 2002). At the time, that was 5.3 percent of the total population of Serbia

(including emigrants), a number that had increased from the previous census in 1991 (South East Europe Programme 2013). In 2002, population was declining and emigration had increased.

It is also important to note the conditions of Serbia at this point in time. Serbia had not begun its application for EU membership yet, but it had taken positive steps to improve society and its government since the end of the war. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had been assisting Serbia with goals of “consolidating democracy and social equity through reform and recovery with special focus on governance and policy advocacy” (United Nations Development Programme 2003, 32). One of the major challenges facing Serbia and the UNDP was poverty. In 1999 the poverty level had peaked to 40.9 percent of the population. By 2000 it had improved, but around 33 percent of the population still made an average of 30 dollars per month (UNDP 2003, 32). The Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP) was created to improve these numbers.

Another major issue facing the country dealt with education; dropout rates were high, quality of education was decreasing, and there was a large disparity between schools in rural and urban neighborhoods. This problem is important for the future of the country, as students need to have a quality education to improve their standards of living. Inequality among women in areas pertaining to employment was also a challenge for Serbia; it was especially present among those working in higher paid positions (UNDP 2003, 33). These were a few of the obstacles the government of Serbia had to address. With the help of UNDP and other international organizations some progress was observed.

One of the major steps Serbia had to make was the transition towards democratic governance. The UNDP identified three areas for improvement that would contribute to democratic governance; these were a capacity building fund (CBF) for reforming institutions, reforming the judiciary, and a program for developing civil society. The objective of the CBF was mainly to enable the government to instill its own institutional reforms by supporting its efforts towards achieving an effective and efficient administration. Acquiring a market economy was also a major part of this endeavor, and this was the institutional area that had been the most successful so far (UNDP 2003, 37).

The next area, reforming the judiciary, was especially important for achieving rule of law, one of the main criteria for EU membership. It focused on the Judicial Training Centre (JTC), which would become the main institution for the judiciary. The purposes of the JTC were

to obtain rule of law, improve education and training for judicial skills, and coordinate tactics for judicial education (UNDP 2003, 43). The area of training and education was successful along with the establishment of the JTC as an institution, but rule of law would require time and practice.

The final step for reaching democratic governance for Serbia was increasing the role of civil society. The main objectives in this category were to strengthen civil society so that it would have a louder voice in the government's decision-making process and to participate in expanding Serbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (UNDP 2003, 44). With more of a voice in the democratic process, people would feel more a part of the political process and would be less likely to emigrate. The progress in this area at the time resulted in an increased capacity of NGOs due to grants and technical assistance, an expansion of civil society organizations, and direct involvement in the PRSP (UNDP 2003, 44). With each of these steps there were new challenges, and Serbia's development towards democratic governance was slow. Poverty was a real problem influencing all areas of society, and it was an important factor in reaching a democratic political system.

Case 1 Analysis

From the information provided earlier, it is clear emigration increased and the overall population in Serbia decreased. This is not to assume causation, but the increase in economic migrants from Serbia to other countries could have influenced the decline in its population. This statement is supported by a book released by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on developments in countries near the Black Sea and in Central Asia. It listed the main reasons for declining population growth in Serbia as, decreases in fertility, rising death rates in the nineties and net emigration (Balafoutas, Bonaglia, Orun, Pomfret, & Tadjbakhsh 2008, 21). Therefore it can be said that emigration was one reason for the population decline.

The conditions in Serbia play a large part in citizens' decisions to leave. From the UNDP report one can gather that the country was not socially, politically, or economically stable and had serious areas for improvement. Poverty, poor education, and gender inequality are all obstacles a government must overcome and without democratic governance it will not occur. Each of these is a substantial reason emigrants might want to leave a country, especially if they

know the government is unstable. For these reasons, in 2002 it can be said that the gaps in Serbia's government contributed to its high rate of emigration.

Serbia's government, its society, and its population have changed significantly since the end of the war in Yugoslavia. Its emigration patterns specifically seem to have been relatively high for the year 2002. Of the literature examined, emigration is often to pursue a better life in a place where there are more opportunities. This move is more likely for those who have higher educations, a family member abroad, and higher incomes. By 2002, Serbia had not yet recovered from the war and still faced major obstacles to achieving democratic governance, and that may have led more individuals to seek career opportunities in other countries.

Case Study 2: Serbia 2011

In 2011 the average population of Serbia had declined to 7,236,519 people following the trend from previous years (Statistical Office 2017). According to census data from that year, the Statistical Office reported that 313,411 Serbian citizens worked or lived abroad, down from 414,839 in 2002. The average length of work abroad at this point in time was 10.82 years, down from 13 years in 2002 (Statistical Office 2011). From 2002 to 2011 this information revealed that the overall population of Serbia declined, less Serbian citizens worked or lived abroad, and the average time spent abroad also decreased. Emigration from Serbia had shifted to a decline during this period instead of the increase it had from 1991 to 2002.

Since 2002, Serbia had made progress in taking steps towards EU membership. It signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU in 2008, giving the country guidelines to follow to better align themselves economically and politically with the EU before opening negotiations of the Acquis Communautaire (International Organization for Migration 2018). This step indicated that Serbia was making attempts to better the economic, social, and political conditions of the country. Some of these measures included the arrest in 2011 of war criminals Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic and a law passed to increase electoral transparency (Nenadovic 2012). The country still needed to reform much of its government, but it showed the prospect of EU membership through these concrete steps.

In moving towards democratic governance, political conditions in Serbia appeared to improve. Freedom House, an organization committed to promoting freedom worldwide, concluded that Serbia's democracy score improved from 2003-2012. The score was based on

factors of the electoral process, civil society, independent media, national and local democratic governance, judicial framework and independence, and corruption, five of which saw an increase since 2003 (Nenadovic 2012). While the Serbia still faced problems with its political system, the government did show attempts at becoming more “European”. Areas where democratic governance fell included independent media and its judicial framework and independence, so Serbia still needed to make significant progress there. However, every other category saw an increase, bringing its overall democratic governance score up.

One area of concern apart from its democracy levels was Serbia’s education system. A 2012 article from the OECD identified problems that continued to persist with corruption in education. It emphasized that in 2010, corruption in education was prevalent; Serbia ranked 3.6 on a scale from one to five on the Transparency International’s Global Corruption Barometer (OECD 2012, 13). To address this issue, Serbia instituted reforms to its education system with goals of moving towards EU integration. They included ways to improve classroom procedures, measures for making education equitable, and steps to make university level schooling more accessible. Serbia had acknowledged the flaws in its education system, and while its goals were ambitious, it was instituting policies to eliminate corruption and improve the quality of education for children. These steps could have also contributed to the decline in emigration for families who wanted their children to grow up with quality schooling.

Case 2 Analysis

The observations made from 2011 support the initial hypothesis that progress towards EU membership and improvements in societal conditions would lead to a decrease in emigration. The initiation of the SAA agreement with the EU, the fact that war criminals were arrested, and that there was an increase in transparency in the electoral system could have demonstrated to the public that Serbia was moving forward. It saw improvements also in areas of civil society, democratic governance, and corruption in both politics and its education system. In 2002, many of these areas were weak or unstable, and it could have incentivized people to leave, but by 2011 they had improved, which could have caused less people to consider the possibility of living and working in another country.

Less Serbians were working abroad and those that were spent less time doing so, which complements the statements made earlier, that with better societal conditions more people would

stay. Another important factor to note as well, though, is that the population continued to decline in Serbia, which could also be a reason for less emigration. It was suggested previously that more emigration could contribute to the population decline, but the population rate has continued to decline at a relatively consistent rate since the mid-nineties.

Serbia's Statistical Yearbook for 2012 offered one explanation for this trend. From 2002 to 2011 the youth population decreased while the population of working individuals and those aged over 65 increased. The average life expectancy increased, the number of births decreased, and mortality rates increased (Statistical Office 2012, 25). The population was continuing to age, while births were not occurring at the same rate. Each of these patterns contributes to a decreasing population size, one that is projected to decrease until 2042. This relates to emigration because with a smaller population, there will be less people with the possibility of leaving.

There are other factors that could have played a part in the higher emigrant levels in 2002. As mentioned before, the impact of the Yugoslav war could have lasted until then, leading people to leave Serbia. For individuals who had fled during the war and were integrated in other countries by 2002, their families could have joined them. There is also the possibility that at that point in time people still felt uncertainty about the future in Serbia, and that they could pursue another, better life elsewhere. In 2002 the Yugoslav war was still recent, which could have given citizens more of a reason to leave if the poor societal conditions alone were not enough to convince them. By 2011 many of those conditions had stabilized, and consequently emigration decreased.

Case Study 3: Serbia 2016

By 2016, the average population of Serbia had declined to 7,058,322 down from 7,236,519 in 2011 (Statistical Office 2017). Unfortunately, because there was no census for this year, there is no information available about emigrant patterns, but in the analysis inferences will be made based on past trends. It is also expected that the population size in Serbia will continue to decrease with time.

In terms of the progress Serbia has made towards EU membership, by 2016 Serbia had opened six of the 35 chapters of the *Acquis Communautaire*. These were chapters 32 on finance and 35 on other issues in 2015, 23 on judiciary reform and fundamental rights, 24 on justice, freedom, and security, 5 on public procurement, and 25 on science and research in 2016 (EU

Delegation 2017). By this point in time Serbia was showing clear signs of moving towards accession to the EU, and demonstrated its willingness to improve its political system. In 2011 it still had problems in many of these areas, so the fact that Serbia was able to open chapters pertaining to judiciary reform and justice and freedom, for example, shows that it had actively taken steps to improve them.

To assess the status of democracy in Serbia by 2016, Freedom House was consulted using the same indicators for democratic governance as those in 2011. Areas of its electoral process, civil society, local democratic governance, judicial framework and independence, and corruption remained constant from 2011, however, national democratic governance and independent media saw a decline, bringing its overall democratic governance score down. Prime Minister Vucic concentrated power at the national level and had begun limiting independent media sources indirectly through control over advertising and funding, leaving little room for independence (Damjanović 2016). Serbia seemed to be backsliding in these areas, slowing the process towards EU membership that could have accelerated further.

By 2016 Serbia had also been instituting economic reforms and experienced an overall improvement in its economic freedom since 2011. Economic freedom is large factor for those that consider leaving the country to pursue better economic opportunities. Breaking this concept down, in areas of business freedom, monetary freedom, and investment freedom Serbia saw a consistent increase until 2016. Other areas such as property rights, judicial effectiveness, government spending, and trade freedom also increased, but were not as constant from 2011 to 2016. One interesting area of economic freedom to note is government integrity, which increased from 2011 to 2016, but began decreasing after 2015 (The Heritage Foundation 2018). This could have been impacted by increasing control by Vucic, and it will be interesting to see how it will continue in the next coming years. Nevertheless, Serbia had made significant progress improving its economy, another explanation for a potential decline in emigration.

Case 3 Analysis

Serbia showed significant improvements from 2011 to 2016 in many areas. It opened six chapters for negotiation for EU membership and was expected to open more in the next coming years. These demonstrated that it was moving further towards EU integration. More interestingly, the decline in its democratic governance score because of the increased

government control and weak media independence raises some questions. It is possible these changes could give citizens reasons to search for new opportunities elsewhere, however, in 2016 they were fairly recent, and do not seem to be enough to cause a surge in emigration. Should democratic governance continue to decline, one could expect emigration to increase.

More positively, the economic reforms Serbia made provide another reason for citizens to remain in the country. The World Bank confirmed that a better economy allows for more economic opportunities through its October 2017 assessment of Serbia. “The government’s economic reform program focuses on ensuring economic and financial stability, halting further debt accumulation, and creating an environment for economic recovery and growth to foster employment and raise living standards” (The World Bank 2017). Each of these goals prove Serbia’s commitment to improving its societal conditions and becoming closer to EU membership. Through better living standards and more opportunities, citizens would see their lives improve and be less inclined to emigrate.

Discussion and Conclusion

Serbia has made substantial progress since 2002; during that time it was not yet a candidate for EU membership, was politically, economically, and socially unstable, and faced problems with poverty, inequality, poor education, and weak governance. It was also still recovering from the recent war that had only ended seven years beforehand. Each of these factors could contribute to a high level of emigration from the country. They all affect the living conditions for citizens, and those who had families in other countries, for example, could have imagined they would find better opportunities elsewhere.

By 2011, Serbia continued to improve towards becoming an EU member state. It had signed a SAA and saw improvements in its political system. Freedom House reported that most areas of its democratic governance improved, with only two areas falling behind. Additionally, Serbia recognized the need to improve its education system, and had initiated reforms to eliminate corruption in education. After these changes, it is not surprising that emigration from 2002 to 2011 decreased.

Moving to 2016, Serbia was becoming further integrated into the EU as it had opened six chapters of the *Acquis Communautaire*, showing further signs of improvement. On the other hand, its democratic governance, while it did improve from 2002, slowed because it decreased

from 2011 to 2016 in areas of national democratic governance and independent media. However, all other areas remained stable and it can be said that this time was not long enough, nor had large enough of an impact on the population to cause people to leave. The inexistent status of Serbia as a candidate country for EU membership, its poor societal conditions, and high emigrant levels in 2002 paired with the improvements made by 2011 and the decline in emigration suggest that by 2016 emigration should have declined even more.

It is also important to remember the fact that the overall population in Serbia has been declining and is projected to decline at least for the next 20 years (Statistical Office 2017). Population birth rates and death rates, for example also influence the number of people in the country. The decline must be considered when examining emigrant patterns, as less people in the country would mean there are less people with the potential of leaving. This research was also limited in a number of ways, which could have also influenced the findings. First, the census data available was limited as it was only collected in 1991, 2002, and 2011 for the purposes of this paper. Second, it was also calculated differently; the methods used in 2002 were different from 2011 and the same information was not provided for both. Finally, the data differed depending on which source it was taken from. The World Bank, the OECD, and the Statistical Office of Serbia had their own population data, so to be consistent the averages and estimates from the Statistical Office were used.

Finally, the research and analyses confirm the initial hypothesis. Serbia had high emigrant patterns in 2002, but it was still recovering from the war and faced challenges in the areas of democracy, inequality, and education. By 2016, however, Serbia did progress towards EU membership through the signing of the SAA, its candidate status, and the opening of chapters of the *Acquis Communautaire*. It also saw improvements in democracy, education, and societal conditions overall, and in 2011 emigration had declined. The migrant crisis in 2015 was not mentioned in any of the research examined to obtain information about the status of the country in 2016, which does not mean it did not have an impact on Serbia and its population, but it was not useful for this study. The connection between the migrant crisis and economic migration could be another interesting area of study for future research.

To conclude, from these observations it could be said that the above factors contributed to a decline in emigration in 2016 as well, but that information is not yet provided. Serbia has demonstrated it is actively seeking EU membership though the progress it has made on the

accession criteria, and does not show signs of retreating in the near future. Therefore, it is expected its living standards will improve through further development, and economic emigration from the country will continue to decrease.

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