**Just The Gateway of Thrace: Migration Management on the Turkey-EU Border (Deniz Sert)**

Thrace, which is called Trakiya in Bulgaria, Thráki in Greece, and Trakya in Turkey, is a historical and geographic area in southeast Europe that currently designates a region spread over southern Bulgaria, northeastern Greece, and northwestern Turkey. Thrace is also the passageway from Turkey to Europe, consisting of the borderland with Turkey’s two European Union (EU) member neighbors: 269 km with Bulgaria, and 203 km with Greece. Borderlands presuppose a territory divided by a physical borderline, which is usually a political construction that does not only divide and affiliates two adjacent countries, but also defines the time and space parameters between societies, nations and sovereign states (Baklacioglu 2004). While national borders are often cited as a source of conflict or cooperation between neighbors, in reality, due to their nature, borders and border-crossings emerge as areas of unresolved issues of governance within and between nation-states. The flows of goods, capital, and people can create problems for the bordering countries and might disturb relations between them. With the current increase in irregular border crossings in the world, the distress imposed upon bordering countries intensify even further. Thus, issues of migration management have taken a front position within their relations. Sassen argues that immigration policymaking needs to recognize interaction effects, develop multilateral approaches, and factor in the changed character of unilateral sovereign authority (2000). Accordingly, although migration management in the past was thought within the scope of the nation-state, today, there are many other actors involved in the process: besides the nation-states, the migrants themselves and the supranational organizations also take part in migration policymaking. Mainly, the rationale behind this proposal is twofold: (1) creating a long-term capacity in fact-finding, policy-debating, and policy-making over the issues of irregular migration, smuggling, and trafficking via Turkey to the EU as well as analyzing the issues of migration management between the two, especially in relation to ineffective operation of the Readmission Agreement between Greece and Turkey, and (2) including the Turkish-Bulgarian border into this debate, which would provide a comparative study of the two borders. Specifically, the aim of this proposal is threefold: First, it intends to generate comparative information which aims at being both sufficiently detailed and reliable to offer a comprehensive picture of the structure and process of irregular migration at two different borders of the Turkish-EU perimeter, on which to base appropriate policy response evaluating the problem of border controls and illegal migration from administrative, financial, legal, economic, social, cultural, and political perspectives. In what follows, it targets to formulate both sufficiently concrete and specific policy options for Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, and the EU to deal with irregular migration, smuggling, and trafficking. Finally, while targeting to become a fact-finding and policy-making document, the proposal also aims to integrate the views of all sides of the border as well as the migrants themselves. Overall, in addition to an extensive literature survey, the research methodology chosen will have an ethnographic character based on participant observation, in-depth interviews, expert interviews, and “life stories”. Accordingly, the interviewees will be composed of four groups: 1) policymakers in Ankara, Athens, Sofia, Brussels, and Warsaw; 2) policy implementers in the Turkish-Greek and Turkish-Bulgarian borderlands of Dereköy/Malko Tarnovo, Hamzabeyli/Lessovo, Kapıkule/Kapitan Andreevo, Uzunköprü/Pithion, Karaağaç/Kastanies, and Ipsala/Kipsala; 3) NGO representatives and academics, such as experts like Karl Kopp, a European Union expert at Pro Asyl, a German human rights organization for refugees and Martin Baldwin Edwards of the Mediterranean Migration Observatory; 4) illegal immigrants in Turkey, mainly in Edirne detention center, Greece, and possibly in Bulgaria. Thus, the range of interviewees will allow the researcher not to focus on the subject from a top-down, but also from a bottom-up perspective.