
*Abstract*

For about two thousand years, the Balkan region had acted as a single administrative, economic and social unit under the rule of different “empires” (Macedonian, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman), ensuring the coexistence of different peoples, civilizations, languages and religions. With the emergence of national liberation movements in the 19th century, the Balkan region broke up into smaller nation-states whose borders were not finalized until after the end of World War II. Almost all these countries (except Greece) joined the “Eastern Bloc” after the War. Some of these countries (Bulgaria, Romania) formed, throughout the first post-war period and until the collapse of real socialism, particularly close ties with the former Soviet Union, while others (Albania) suspended prematurely these ties or even kept their distance (former Yugoslavia) forging relations both with the West and the so called “third countries” while allowing their nationals’ mobility.

Using as a starting point the first post-war decade and as an intermediate year (section) the fall of the Berlin Wall (and by extension the collapse of socialist regimes), this paper a) will examine briefly the changes in the population of the Balkan countries – and in their main demographic components – over the last fifty years, and b) will attempt to identify the divergence/convergence of their demographic indices during the present decade.