

**Humanitarian Duty and Security Goals
Intertwined:
The Case of Assisted Voluntary Return and
Reintegration Programs in Bulgaria**

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ABSTRACT

The main components of migration management, namely humanitarianism, seen in the compassionate will to look after those seeking protection, and securitization, seen in the desire to guard and secure the state territory from those that intrude, are often regarded as two opposites that contradict each other. In the pages that follow I analyze the dialectical relation between the two and examine the subjectivities that are being produced in the process and attached to migrants. To do this, I examine Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programs (AVRR) in Bulgaria. I look into the political and economic rationalities behind AVRR and the ways in which the gatekeepers of humanity, seen in the face of human rights non-profit organization, justify their involvement in what has been often criticized as a deportation with a human face.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVR	Assisted Voluntary Return
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
BHC	Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
BRC	Bulgarian Red Cross
CCLJHA	Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs
ERF	European Return Fund
EP	European Parliament
FRONTEX	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
GERB	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MC	Ministry of Councils
MoI	Ministry of Interior
RRC	Reception and Registration Center
SAR	State Agency for Refugees
SHTAF	Special Homes for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners
SIS	Schengen Information System

INTRODUCTION

On May 3rd, 2012, a brand new transit center for asylum-seekers opened doors in Bulgaria. Both nongovernmental and governmental figures gathered to celebrate this new asset to the asylum system in the country. After the place was sanctified by an Orthodox priest, the Minister of Interior, Tsvetan Tsvetanov, cut the ribbon and congratulated the attendees. While answering questions for the media, Nikola Kazakov, head of the State Agency for Refugees declared, “The transit center is proof for Bulgaria’s aspirations to cover the best standards in international protection... but it is also of utmost importance for the security of our country” (Stariat Most 2012). The opening of the center has been long awaited by the NGO sector in Bulgaria as the latter has fiercely criticized the state because of illegal detention of asylum-seekers in the so-called Special Homes for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners (SHTAF)¹, aka detention camps. The transit center, on the other hand, is looked upon as a place, where humanitarian protection is guaranteed for those who seek asylum.

In the quote above the reader can relate to two seemingly separate components in migration management: humanitarianism, seen in the compassionate will to look after those seeking protection, and securitization, seen in the desire to guard and secure the state territory from those that intrude. Intuitively, these two discourses: to secure against “them” and to protect “them,” are contradictive and exclusive from each other. Yet, securitization and humanitarianism have become the two sides of the same coin; the boundaries between the two are often blurred and the management of those who do not belong to the European “us” resembles a hybrid between compassion and security. This hybrid can be analyzed on many

¹ The difference between SHTAF (aka detention center) and transit centers is that the former detains undocumented immigrants and the latter accommodates asylum-seekers. The detention of asylum-seekers in SHTAF goes against the law. The Bulgaria state claims that the country does not have enough physical and financial capacity to transfer the asylum-seekers in RRCs.

levels: from detention and reception centers, to the offices of the numerous NGOs, and in the different governmental technologies of migration management.

To exemplify the hypothesis above, I will analyze a particular governmental technology that has become inseparable from migration management in Europe and beyond, namely the so-called Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programs aimed at undocumented immigrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees². AVRR is a program that aims to support and encourage voluntary return among migrants and often times it includes reintegration schemes that are supposed to prevent further emigration/immigration on part of the returnees. Yet, in order to strengthen my argument, I will not lose sight from all the other physical and symbolic spaces, where this hybrid takes form and shapes lives. These spaces, where migrants are submitted to both humanitarianism and securitization, are often visited by the Bulgarian mission of the International Organization for Migration and NGOs which promote AVRR programs. I argue that AVRR can be looked upon as a bridge that spans both deportation practices, which in the past have been predominantly linked to “forced return,” hence securitization, and humanitarian discourses, so prevalent for the current state of affairs (inter alia Fassin 2010, 2012, Ticktin 2010, Wilson and Brown 2009; Hyndman 2000, Walters 2011). Moreover, I analyze what subjectivities are being constructed and attached to the very objects of the hybrid between humanitarianism and securitization, namely the migrants.

My locus of inquiry is Bulgaria: one of the newest member states of the European Union³. Sites such as Bulgaria are often ignored in the anthropological analysis of migration

² The distinction between asylum-seekers, refugees, and irregular migrants is not of importance for this paper. In fact this distinction resembles an arguably inadequate asylum system in Europe and beyond. People emigrate because of different reasons and classifying migrants in terms of refugees, asylum-seekers, and/or “illegal” immigrants is a political construct that does not take into consideration economic oppression as a substantive reason for protection. In this paper I use “migrant” to specify anybody that is a subject of migration management and does not classify as a privileged citizen (e.g. a citizen from a Western country).

³ Since 2007, together with Romania.

management as they are still transit countries for the many who seek better life in the Western world. Nevertheless, Bulgaria is a country, where the social, economic, symbolic, and physical boundaries of Europeanness are frequently negotiated and contested. This can be seen in the employment restrictions posed on Bulgarian and Romanian citizens; in the European unwillingness to include Bulgaria and Romania in the Schengen agreement, in the scandalous return, “voluntarily” and forcefully, of Bulgarian and Romanian Roma in 2010, among many other developments.

With Bulgaria’s accession into the European Union, the country became an external border of the Union; one of the closest “gates” to the Middle East. As such, the Turkish-Bulgarian border is perceived as one of the most important in the fight against “illegal” immigration and contemporary management of borders in the EU. Bulgaria has been often criticized by non-profit organizations because of human rights violations against immigrants (see Ilareva n.d.; Koleva 2011; Bulgarian Helsinki Committee 2011). But recently the country has been exploring ways to become a human rights defender seen for example in the proposition that Bulgaria can become a resettlement country for refugees⁴. Moreover, Bulgaria is both a client of AVRR programs, meaning that Bulgarian citizens are returned via the programs, and a provider, meaning that third-country-nationals are returned to their country of origin from Bulgaria. And although Bulgaria is still a transit country for those who seek a better life in Europe and holds low numbers of asylum-seekers, undocumented migrants, and refugees, the country intensively explores ways to relief itself from the burden of the “unwanted” and to protect the borders of the Union.

In what follows I first conceptualize humanitarianism and securitization and review relevant literature on the two paradigms. In Chapter 2 I map the different institutions that

⁴ This means that refugees are resettled in another host country. The new host country provides them with legal, social, and psychological support.

work in the field of migration management in Bulgaria and analyze the political spectacle in place as revealed by the developments surrounding the discourses of security and humanitarianism. I overview the ways in which security and humanitarian rhetoric entangle in Bulgaria as seen through the current debates surrounding Bulgaria's im/possibility to join the Schengen agreement. In Chapter 3 I turn my attention specifically to the assisted voluntary return and reintegration programs, their place in the larger context of migration management, the rationalities behind the programs, and their specificity for the Bulgarian context. Chapter 4 is devoted to the NGO sector as one of the actors in the execution of voluntary returns. I make an in-depth analysis of the ways in which AVRR agents construct subjectivities. Chapter 5 concludes the study and point towards the further directions for analyzing the effects produced by the hybrid between humanitarianism and securitization.

METHODOLOGY

My main research was conducted in Bulgaria in a month-time-period. Over the course of the month, I conducted interviews with six individuals and covered four non-profit organizations and the intergovernmental International Organization for Migration (IOM). In addition to the interviews taken in April of 2012, I also carried out interviews with three other people during my preliminary research in December 2011 and January 2012. I conducted semi-structured interviews in order to identify patterns that are common among all the organizations involved in the execution of the programs. Even though I attempted to interview all the organizations involved in AVRR, I did not have the chance to interview representatives from the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. Although the organization has only a sub-role in the execution of AVRR and simply provides potential returnees with legal consultation, their justification of participating in AVRR will be useful for future research.

My sources of information were not limited to these interviews only. In addition to them, I conducted discourse analysis of policies, legislation frameworks, media articles, and different advertising materials produced by AVRR executors. The study of text production is helpful in the observation of certain assumptions (Hall 1975) and also in the analysis of how different actors make sense out of the ideologies put forward in a text (Johnstone 2001).

Partially, my study was urged by my own involvement as a political activist in Bulgaria and as such it needs to be noted that it was not conducted by a value-free expert. Nevertheless, I have tried my best to present the optimal result. Even though I do not give voice to the migrants in the current study, I have inevitably kept in the back of my mind all the stories and experiences that they have related to me in my role of an activist. My intention has not been to leave them voiceless.

CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Migration management in Europe concerns asylum-seekers, undocumented migrants, and refugees and frequently seemingly separate regulatory mechanisms put in place interchangeably influence all three categories. According to Lippert (1999), the emergence of the international refugee regime, often recognized and defined as norms, rules, institutions, and decision-making procedures (Krasner 1983), began around the time of World War I when humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross, Save the Children Fund, and the American Relief Administration, extended assistance to the thousands that had left Russia after the Revolution. As Lippert suggests as a response to the emerging refugee “crisis” and the inability and unwillingness of European nation-states to provide living conditions and work to the masses of migrants, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Nations decided to establish commissioners for refugees under the League of Nations. In Lippert’s account the goal of the commissioners was twofold: on the one hand, relief was to be delivered to those in need and on the other those who lacked proper documentation and were refused entry in European states were screened by the office in order to provide them with an identification document.

In this account Lippert suggests that the category “refugee” was perceived at first as an issue that required humanitarian assistance and relief and examines the surfacing of the category as an endeavor undertaken by private philanthropic organizations such as the Red Cross. Moreover, he situates the emergence of the international refugee regime as an asset that had been undertaken by humanitarian groups and as part of the humanitarian discursive field. Similar accounts can be seen in the works of Cohen (2008: 439), for example, who argues that “humanitarianism functioned as an alternative welfare state for stateless people; it also fashioned modern political asylum policies by sorting out ‘true’ from ‘false’ refugees.”

Contrary to the accounts above however, Malkki (1995: 499) indicates that refugees have not been always approached as a problem related to humanitarian institutions and discourses. In her opinion the displaced populations in Europe at the end of the World War II were categorized as a “combat problem” in need to be controlled and dealt with by the military. For the author, the humanitarian approach towards refugees became only possible with the creation of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. Moreover, Malkki argues that the military was an important factor for the management of migration flows even in spatial terms as when the war ended concentration camps and military barracks were being transformed into “Assembly Centers” for those seeking refuge. Even though Malkki does not go deeper into the problematique revealed by this “new” spatiality, her insight that these institutions were “suited to mass control and care” is of utmost importance for the analysis of today’s detention and reception centers and migration management at large. As it will be seen in the pages that follow the above have remained sites, where both humanitarian and securitization discourses and practices are ensnared and live side by side.

Rendering migrants as an ‘issue’ that requires securitization has resurrected. Undocumented migrants and subsequently asylum-seekers and refugees have been framed as a threat to the sovereignty of the state and popular demands have been circulating around stricter administrative measures that would further restrict movement (see Bigo and Guild 2005). The notion of securitization was coined by Ole Waever to exemplify how the usage of excessive and “exceptional” means is justified in the name of security (Buzan, Waever, and Wilde 1997). The Copenhagen School is the pioneer and most notable producer of reflective and critical perspectives on security. The School has been often prized for uprooting the notion from its “taken for granted” status (Stritzel 2007). In this tradition, securitization has been articulated as a successful speech act in which “intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a

valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat” (Buzan and Waever 2003: 491). As noted by Stritzel (2007: 358) securitization as theorized by Waever and Buzan rests on two main concepts, namely on the trilogy of speech acts, audience, and the securitizing actor and secondly, on “facilitating conditions” that enable successful securitization.

Stritzel’s criticism against the Copenhagen School can be situated in the nexus of internalist/externalist reading of securitization as offered by this tradition. Stritzel suggests that one of the weaknesses of securitization theory, as established by the Copenhagen School, can be situated in the postmodern understanding that speech act can be scrutinized on its own and outside an existing external context. Stritzel acknowledges that some sort of externality is touched upon in the Copenhagen School’s theorization of securitization, namely what is found in the concept of “facilitating conditions,” structured field where “some actors are placed in positions of power by virtue of being generally accepted voices of security, by having the power to define security” (Buzan cited in Stritzel 2007: 364). Still, the author criticizes the School because of its narrow understanding of the Bourdieuan concept of “field” and calls for a more complete understanding of the social sphere.

Arguably, however, the Copenhagen School plays a role in the reproduction of migration as a security issue. The reproduction of popular views that present migrants as an issue of securitization has not gone unnoticed. Maggie Ibrahim (2005) has criticized the School because of their role in reproducing and contributing to the examination of migration as a security issue. She reveals that migrants have been pinpointed as a threat through the “cultural difference” system of classification and argues that “the securitization of migration” is a new mode of racist discourse. The author indicates that the role that migrants have played in the capitalist extension has been “occluded by a new concern for security” (168).

Jef Huysmans (2000:758) suggests that securitization of migration is a political strategy and its goal lies in the segregation of a particular category in order to reify it as a hazard. He insists that “the securitization of migration is a structural effect of a multiplicity of practices” and it has developed along the lines of three connecting pillars, namely the crisis of the welfare state, and the need for internal and cultural security. Huysmans turns away the attention from the border control as the only institution that renders securitization and through careful examination of institutions such as the Dublin II Regulation and the Schengen Agreement he points to the importance of internal control as a medium that manages migration flows. The author argues that the Europeanization of migration policy has successfully securitized migration by incorporating it into an “internal security framework.” Moreover, he identifies incentives such as work and residency permits, social and welfare stipulations as “undoubtedly more important instruments for controlling, improving or limiting the free movement of people” (759).

The author scrutinizes migration as a centering point in the development of internal security and points that migration has become an exchange currency for debates surrounding the political, cultural, and social (dis)integration of Europe. Security, according to him, is mobilized in the discursive field that treats migration as a challenge to political and social integration throughout Europe. Nevertheless, politico-economic accounts are not absent from Huysmans’ work and he traces the ways in which border control is mediated along lines of class interests and shifts in the labor market. According to Huysmans, as more and more Europeans struggle over the distribution of resources, asylum-seekers’ and immigrants’ economic and social rights to welfare provisions are progressively being challenged. However, these socio-economic uncertainties have been trumped and channeled through security discourses and the framing of migrants as a threat to national security. As a result, migration has been reified as a “problem” that needs a sustainable security framework. In the

account above however, one is left to wonder if “politics of control” can be scrutinized without due respect to “politics of humanitarianism” and the interchangeable effects these two discourses have had on each other.

In the framework illuminated above, numerous European institutions, gathered under the umbrella of a Common European Asylum System, have the legitimate means to decide who is suited to enter or stay on the territory of the Union and who is reified as unwanted and hence “encouraged” to return or forcefully deported. As Hyusmans notes, the decline of internal borders in Western Europe was quickly perceived as a necessity to enforce the external borders of the union. In this light securitization, as it will be seen in the unfolding of this paper, plays a tremendous role in the “political spectacle” and it is often invoked as the necessary challenge before Bulgaria’s successful and further integration into the European community, namely the country’s inclusion in the Schengen agreement. Securitization, however, is not only about the thousands that attempt to cross the traditional border, the border that one finds on the outskirts of the nation-state, but also about those that have already found themselves on the territory of the European Union.

Engaging in a discussion about recent trends in coding state’s sovereignty, De Genova (2010) points to the ever-increasing security measures that are employed in the attempt to prevent the comings and goings of migrants. He reveals what has come to be examined as a paradox occurring in the midst of waning state sovereignty that is increasingly being coupled with draconian regulation of migration and points out that as part of this regulation a “global deportation regime” can be identified that goes counter-intuitive to the historically condemned practices of expulsion and liberal ideals. De Genova declares, however, that “by the century’s end, deportation had become utterly banal (2010:34).” Brown (2010) suggests that the militarization of borders, through the building of walls, in fact proposes state’s increased vulnerability and not an expression of their power. Even though Brown does not

ascribe to post-national studies, for her the (re)building of walls, fences, and borders signifies the decline in the nation-state and waning sovereignty. Matthew J. Gibney (2008) has coined the term “deportation turn” in order to exemplify the increased utilization of deportation of “failed” asylum-seekers throughout liberal states despite the widely held assumptions that deportation is inhumane and goes against liberal norms. According to Gibney this new trend in asylum management reveals the willingness of states to threat non-citizens in an “illiberal way” and he sees an irony in the fact that even though the emergence of the asylum system in the U.K. was based on humanitarian principles, as of now it has actually come to increase the state’s coercive power. Hollifield (2007) identifies the ambiguity between state sovereignty, illebaral practices, and human rights commitments as the “liberal paradox.”

Forced deportations have been fiercely criticized in recent years, and governments and intergovernmental institutions sought new and innovative ways to get rid of the unwanted. One such strategy is the so-called Assisted Voluntary Return program, a subject of this paper. Gibney notes how Voluntary Assistance Schemes have become a “positive incentive” in the larger deportation scheme. Andrijasevic and Walters (2010) distinguish AVR programs as part of Gibney’s deportation turn and they go further to suggest that AVR schemes are in fact a “neoliberal deportation” as they seek migrants’ cooperation in the process and point to new developments in the “economic rationalities of deportation,” a point I will return to in my own empirical examination of AVRR. AVRR programs have been long criticized by both academia and activists as a scheme that “seems to designate an absence of viable options rather than a deliberate choice” (Andrijasevic and Walters 2010, see also Webber 2011). The “voluntary” part of the programs is rightly criticized. Yet, it is insufficient to analyze AVRR only in light of its involuntary character as no choice is voluntary anyways. Hence, I move away from this analysis and map further what is at stake in the implementation of AVRR.

Authors of securitization tend to divide security and humanitarianism in their analysis of European migration management. Often these two paradigms are set aside and examined as two opposites that have somehow found each other in the spectacle of migration management. This tension can be identified in the accounts by Lippert and Malkki to provide us with a genealogy of the “refugee,” but it can also be seen in the accounts of Didier Bigo (2002) who claims that:

The internal debates within this program between securitarian discourses (about blockades, expulsions, deterrence, and surveillance) and humanitarian discourses (about the necessity of welfare state, low birthrates, and human rights for asylum-seekers) hide these general conditions for securitization. Indeed, the second type of discourse – the humanitarian – is itself a by-product of the securitization process (Bigo, 2002: 79)

Bigo has rightly observed that humanitarian discourses, which distinguish between genuine and non-genuine asylum-seekers, often serve their part in the process of securitization as they tend to render some as worthy of protection, whereas others not, thus deeming the latter to gain a status of “unwanted” even by human rights NGOs. Here, however, I argue that humanitarianism cannot be looked upon as a byproduct of the larger securitization scheme, or as a primary source for securitization for that matter. The point when humanitarianism could be looked upon as a byproduct of securitization is long gone and the current state of affairs pressures the scholar to look beyond this division, to analyze not how the former influences the latter, or the other way around, but to render how these two paradigms work together, in the same matrix. I look at the ways in which humanitarianism and securitization work parallel to each other, or “*in concert*,” to borrow Hannah Arendt’s oft cited phrase. As it will be seen, humanitarianism and securitization go “hand by hand” (Fassin 2012), they entangle, and the subjects, spaces, and discourses rendered by these processes often come to produce a hybrid between the two. Humanitarianism cannot be left aside from one’s sight.

In “Ambivalent Hospitality: Governing the Unwanted,” Fassin (2012: 135) reveals the “tension between humanity and security, between compassion and repression.” Examining the notorious Sangatte, a transit center for immigrants in France, he observed a dialectical relation between hospitality and hostility, which to Fassin reveals the current state of affairs in migration management in France. The author suggests that the double imperative between security and humanitarianism; the logic behind the two became “increasingly tense” in Sangatte. I step on Fassin in order to reveal the dialectical relation between the two but through the examination of AVRR I show the ways in which the two pillars in fact collaborate and foster each other. By close examination of the practices of the Red Cross and the riot police, both of which inhabit the space under examination, Fassin demonstrates how the roles of the two institutions are often reversed and where the Red Cross regularly finds itself protecting the order of the place, the riot police frequently extends humanitarian help to the inhabitants of the center. But how does one define humanitarianism?

As observed by Fassin (2007; 2010; 2012) moral sentiments have found their way into the contemporary political sphere; they are not to be found only in the discursive field but they act as a legitimating force behind practices. What Fassin identifies as moral sentiments is not to be studied in the psychological and/or ethical realm; they are of sociological interest as they have found their way into what the author coins as “humanitarian government.” In 2007, Fassin defined the humanitarian government as “the administration of human collectives in the name of a higher moral principle that sees the preservation of life and the alleviation of suffering as the highest value of action” (151). A humanitarian government is grounded in *humanitarian reason*, which often blurs the line between what is governmental and what is not governmental. In his book *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (2012), Fassin extends our understanding about what humanitarian government entails for its subjects. Fassin’s (2012) asserts that humanitarianism should be looked upon as

long gone beyond its traditional meaning of extending aid to Third World countries and the analysis needs to be brought “home.”

In his works Fassin persuasively traces the process of *humanitarianisation* and the state does not escape the scope of his analysis. According to Fassin, the state has started to progressively use humanitarian rhetoric to justify its actions and to weaken the “social division of moral labor.” Fassin explains the humanitarianisation of the state as based on three main reasons. From an anthropological perspective this process can be looked upon as a result from the solid ground gained by compassion in the contemporary world. Yet Fassin also identifies a tactical reason and he emphasizes the symbolic importance of humanitarianism in the public field. Thirdly, despite fierce objections by the NGO sector, the gap between what is governmental and non-governmental becomes slighter and slighter. In my own examination of the processes mentioned above I will reveal what happens when they are being translated into the periphery of the European Union, namely Bulgaria.

A humanitarian government is soaked in paradoxes and contradictions, according to Fassin. These paradoxes are revealed by the tensions one often witnesses between inequality and solidarity, between domination and assistance. Moreover, these paradoxes explain the “compassion fatigue” that is often experienced by the many involved in the politics of humanitarianism. Humanitarianism is not without consequences. Humanitarianism often has a depoliticizing effect and because of its “nature” it leads to new semantic configurations, where “inequality is replaced by exclusion, domination is transformed into misfortune, injustice is articulated as suffering, violence is expressed in terms of trauma” (Fassin 2012: 6).

In the same light, Ticktin’s (2011) book, *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France*, sets out to answer a vital question: How have benevolence and compassion come to let the sexually violated bodies and the sick to travel

across borders while those that are impoverished cannot? Through careful examination of the genealogy of what the author describes as *regimes of care* – “a set of regulated discourses and practices grounded on this moral imperative to relieve suffering (2011:3)”– she traces how these politics have had the unintended consequence to mark the immigrant body as ultimately apolitical and enthralled.

Ticktin’s investigation shows that humanitarianism can be a double-edged sword and ultimately lead to gross reproduction of inequalities and hierarchies. She traces how care and compassion have come to hold major role in the management of migrants, how in turn the politics of care are deployed and managed on the ground, and the consequences of such morally legitimated policies and practices of care for both migrants and the “new humanity” at large. The author argues that the migrant has come to exemplify somebody that is inseparable by her/his biological suffering and has reached the point of embodying illness as their political struggle. Ticktin suggests that the regimes of care render migrants not as subjects of equal rights but as bodies in the need of care and compassion, thus hindering collective change from taking place. In her own words: “We do not cure, we care.”

Ticktin analyses the unintended criminalization of *sans-papiers* brings the question of securitization in the front lines. According to Ticktin those that have escaped the range of compassion and have “failed in some important moral way” (184) are not simply left alone but met with policing. By questioning the categorization of immigrants into sub groups, where some deserve their lives to be saved, whereas others are just suspicious, Ticktin’s piece resembles Fassin’s (2010) insightful discussion into “inequalities of life,” where despite NGOs and humanitarian organizations’ efforts and desires to serve to the vulnerable ultimately one is hindered from breaking away from the already structured “inequalities of life.” The latter in turn structures the actions of these organizations as well. But has policing of immigrants become humanitarianised?

What happens when the developments revealed above translate into the periphery of the European Union, in a country, which not too long ago became an external border of the Union? How securitization and humanitarianism mingle in a state, which is given the “privilege” to protect the European “us” and the “obligation” to care for human rights? How the political spectacle of migration management translated in Bulgarian politics? How are migrant subjects redefined by this? These are some of the questions I address in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN BULGARIA

The dynamics surrounding the negotiations of Bulgaria's accession into the Schengen agreement brought migration management into the public sphere for the first time since Bulgaria's inclusion into the European structures. The negotiations for Bulgaria's accession into the European Union and NATO have been inevitably linked to liberalization of the markets and fierce privatization accompanied by stern measures towards the development of human rights practices and structures that would guarantee “decommunization” and “democratization” of the Bulgarian society. The latter have been used by the political elite as an illustration of the transcendent point that proves the country's commitment to Western values of free market and certainly towards the political class's earnestness to protect the liberties of the country's citizens, minorities, and guests. Moreover, it has been often invoked by the political class as to show to the people of Bulgaria that the Western powers are indeed relying on their governance to bring the country out of its harsh socio-economic position.

The political spectacle surrounding the Schengen disputes display similar sentiments. This debate however, brought freedom of movement into the front lines. The current leading party, GERB, Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria⁵, is charged with the responsibility to prepare the country for its accession in Schengen: the “natural” step that Bulgaria needs to undertake in its “rite of passage” into the EU and a proof for Bulgarians’ “Europeanness.” As the country is striving to be embraced by the Schengen zone, more and more debates have entered into the public sphere in regards to “illegal” immigration, refugees, and the role of the government to protect the external borders of the European peoples.

⁵ Abbreviated as GERB in Bulgarian

The refugee “crisis” that took place in the months after the Arab Spring happened in conjunction with the negotiations going at the time for Bulgaria’s and Romania’s readiness to be included in the Schengen agreement. The crisis in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia in 2011 translated in Bulgaria as a battle ground for the opposition parties in their attempt to prove that GERB is not suitable to lead the country into Schengen. According to the leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, Sergei Stanishev, in order for the country to be accepted in Schengen it needs to show its readiness to take refugees and he suggested that “Bulgaria cannot stay aside from the EU's common efforts when there is a serious threat of a refugee wave” (Dnes 2011). On the other hand, the Bulgarian president at the time, Georgi Parvanov, while in his tour to receive support from Heinz Fischer for Schengen, strongly opposed a military intervention in Libya as this, according to him, would have increased the humanitarian crisis and the migratory pressure towards Europe.

Boyko Borisov, Bulgaria’s Prime Minister, was also beating the “refugee crisis” drum in order to receive support for Schengen. He was constantly reminding the public and the EU that if the country does not become a member-state of Schengen, the government will not be able to deal with the immigrants in the country, with the immigrants that attempt to enter the territory, and more so with the “illegal” such. In an interview for BTV, the most popular media outlet in Bulgaria, Boyko Borisov threatened that if the country is not incorporated into the Zone, the state will not be able to get rid of the 4,000 “illegal” immigrants that he believes reside on the territory⁶. The increased preoccupation with “illegal” immigrants and the “mass” of refugees who are knocking on Bulgaria’s gate took place despite the fact that the number of those seeking asylum is extremely low in Bulgaria as compared to other countries in the EU.

⁶ <http://vbox7.com/play/ec77f2a83e> (video in Bulgarian). Date: June 15th, 2011.

2.1. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN BULGARIA

Regulation of immigration flows in Bulgaria is conducted by two main state institutions, namely the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Council of Ministers (CM). MoI is in charge of the so-called Special Homes for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners (SHTAF), or widely known as detention camps. There are two detention centers in Bulgaria, one in Busmantsi, near Sofia, and the other one in Lyubimets⁷, near the Turkish-Bulgarian border. The goal behind SHTAF is detention of undocumented immigrants and the place functions as a security zone for those are deemed “undesired” and “illegal.” These might be people who have been caught crossing the border or arrested anywhere on the territory of the state. Many non-profit organizations criticize the state because the detention centers in Bulgaria at this point also serve to shelter those that have submitted applications for asylum as the state claims that there is not enough capacity to transfer these people in reception center, where they belong by law⁸. The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC), one of the largest human rights organizations in the country, recently petitioned the government and called for the immediate opening of the transit center in Pastrogor in order for the country to better serve the needs of those seeking asylum⁹. The security measures that are undertaken in the detention centers are harsh. The buildings are surrounded by tall concrete walls, barbed wire, and watch towers. The inmates do not have the right to exit the building and their walking hours are restricted as well: one or two hours daily.

⁷ From now on I will refer to the centers as either Busmantsi or Lyubimets.

⁸ Similar situation can be observed in Hungary:
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2113024,00.html>

⁹ <http://www.bghelsinki.org/bg/novini/press/single/pressobshenie-bhk-startira-kampaniya-sreshu-nezakonnoto-zadrzhane-na-bezhanci/>. Text in Bulgarian. Date: December 16, 2011.

The State Agency for Refugees (SAR) is under the jurisdiction of the Council of Ministers and is in charge of the so-called registration-and-reception center (RRC) and the newly built transit center. There are two RRCs in the country and their function is to provide medical and social assistance, registration of newly arrived asylum-seekers but also shelter for those who are in asylum procedure and await decision in regards to their status. Contrary to the detention centers, the people that inhabit RRCs have the right to freely move throughout the city but only between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. Asylum-seekers cannot leave Sofia's perimeters unless SAR approves. The two RRCs have the capacity to shelter up to 580 people, where the one in Sofia takes the largest proportion of asylum-seekers: up to 500. Even though the RRC function as humanitarian places, they have not gone without criticism from the many that are supposed to be its "clients."

Often, immigrants criticize the inability of the center to house everybody, which in turn produces homelessness and many that are classified as "legal" are forced to sleep on the streets or to be left in detention centers until a place opens in an RRC. Some of the inhabitants of the RRC in Sofia have stayed there as long as four years. Such is the destiny of Maria¹⁰, who immigrated in Bulgaria in 2007 and she is still waiting for asylum decision. Her son was born in the RRC in Sofia. Others are just turned away even though their asylum applications are "under revision" and by law they have the right to stay in a reception center. Many of them find shelter in abandoned buildings, whereas others are "lucky" enough to share flats with their fellow asylum-seekers, which may house up to 15 people at times. SAR reasons the humanitarian undercapacity as lack of finances and funds. There is an Integration Center under SAR as well as the structure is entrusted with the development and execution of integration strategies and programs. The transit center in Pastrogor, near the Turkish-Bulgarian border, can shelter up to 400 people and it functions similarly to the RRCs. The only

¹⁰ Interview August, 2011.

difference can be found in the fact that the transit center provides the so-called “fast procedure” in the examination of asylum applications.

In order for the country to be accepted into the Schengen agreement, strict technical measures need to be undertaken in order to secure the border between Bulgaria and Turkey: a crossing point that many European leaders are afraid may lead to potential increase in the flow of immigrants into the heart of Europe. A trump card that GERB plays artfully. In 2010 Bulgaria entered an agreement with the European agency for border control, FRONTEX, and was included in the Schengen Information System (SIS): both of which are preliminary measures for successful accession. Another technical measure that needed to be completed was the opening of the detention center in Lyubimets.

Busmantsi, the first detention center, opened doors in 2006 and the reason behind it was Bulgaria’s negotiations with the EU and the steps that the country needed to undertake in order to harmonize its legislative and technical base so as to better manage refugees, asylum-seekers, and undocumented migrants. This new center was named “Special Home for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners” and it serves the goal to maintain “the experience, practices, and standards of the European migration services¹¹.” In an interview I conducted with the first inhabitant of Busmantsi, whom I will call Haddad, he told me that when he was being transferred from what he coined as a “prison” for immigrants, he asked the guards “why.¹²” The guards assured him that “there will be freedom in Busmantsi. This is not a prison but a home, like a hotel” (interview Haddad, December 2012). This is how Haddad, from a prisoner, became an inhabitant in a home, in a hotel: a discourse so prevalent for today’s detention centers. Today, detention camps are surrounded by a language that deems them “humane,” and where the “dignity” of those inside is protected.

¹¹ http://news.ibox.bg/news/id_253003634. Text in Bulgarian. Date: March 30, 2006. Consulted April, 2012.

¹² The real names of all interviewees are omitted.

Similar was the rhetoric surrounding the second detention center in Lyubimets. The role of Lyubimets is to support the ever increasing number of detained undocumented migrants in Bulgaria and its close proximity to the border is strategic. Yet, Lyubimets is also looked upon as the center, where high quality service for immigrants is provided: meals given three times a day, sport facilities including basketball and tennis courts, pool tables, TV rooms, prayer rooms for both Christians and Muslims, brandy new bunk beds, clean bathrooms, medical center, psychological support. In other words, Lyubimets is state of art in the complex of detention centers. The pride in Lyubimets is tremendous. On the opening day of the center the political elite of the country gathered to celebrate this high achievement and the close proximity of Bulgaria's accession into Schengen. Tsvetan Tsvetanov, Interior Minister of Bulgaria, proudly cut the ribbon, a priest sanctified the place in a sophisticated Orthodox tradition and the political leaders embraced their new child: a brand-new confinement facility.

I had the opportunity to visit the center as a translator for the Bavarian Refugee Council, a non-profit organization situated in Munich, in August, 2011. Yotko Andreev, director of the center, welcomed us into the building and while proudly walking us around the facility he showed off its merits. He even entered the women's bathroom in order to demonstrate to us how the center keeps high profile of hygiene as part of the new requirements for humane and respectful treatment of refugees. While in the facility, Mr. Andreev introduced us to the chef, a woman in her fifties, who stood at attention as in a military formation and recited the daily menu for the detainees emphasizing that the immigrants will be given chicken for lunch with three slices of bread that day. Moreover, volunteers for human rights organizations monitor the detention centers on regular basis¹³.

¹³ Report from Open Society in regards to the conditions in SHTAFs (2012, in Bulgarian): http://osi.bg/cyeds/downloads/busmanci_report_Feb_2012.pdf. The report finishes with a commentary from

In such a way the state structures in Bulgaria that regulate immigration are symbolically separated in two: structures that “secure” against those deemed “illegal” and structures that function as humanitarian places, where one is taken care of, despite the humanitarian “undercapacity.” As seen however, humanitarian discourses, even though one can rightly judge them as pure form of cynicism, exist in places like Lyubimets and Busmantsi. On the other hand, securitization, seen in the strict regulation of asylum seekers, has penetrated into the reception centers. Perhaps, this is the reason behind the pure confusion immigrants exemplify in Bulgaria: they often ask why they are being held in prison since they know that this is against their human rights. The humanitarian sector in Bulgaria is quick to point a finger at the Bulgarian state and to demand cessation of practices that detain asylum-seekers. But if one goes against the obvious, critical engagement with the current state of migration management needs to be deployed. A more complex trend emerges: the merging of security and humanitarian discourses and practices.

MoI, which thanks the volunteers for their commitment to monitor if human rights standards are upheld in the “homes.”

2.2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF MIGRANTS IN BULGARIA

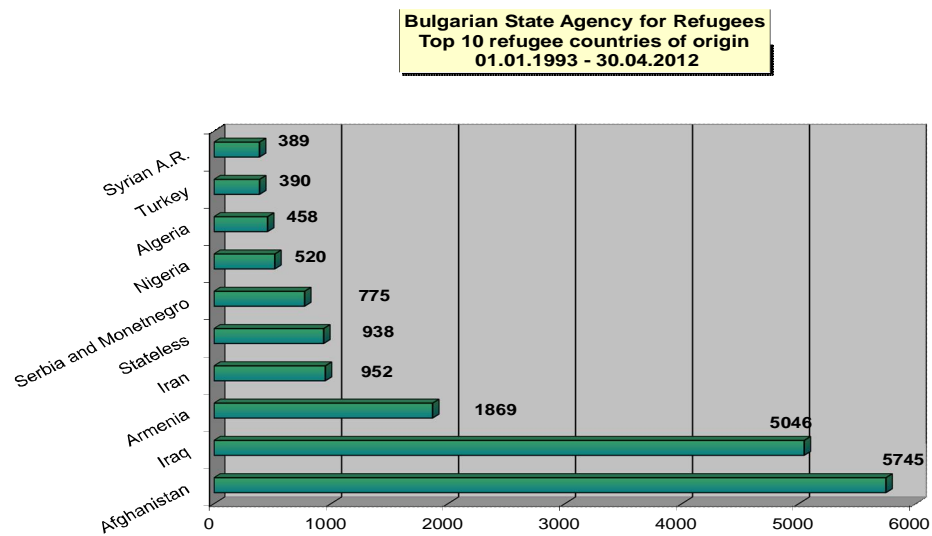


Figure 1 Source: State Agency for Refugees (April, 2012)

The largest part of protection-seekers in Bulgaria comes from Afghanistan, followed by Iraq, and Armenia. In 2012, between January and April, the number of applications submitted by Syrian citizens has increased as compared to previous years largely due the conflict in Syria. The largest number of applications in 2012 comes from Iraq.

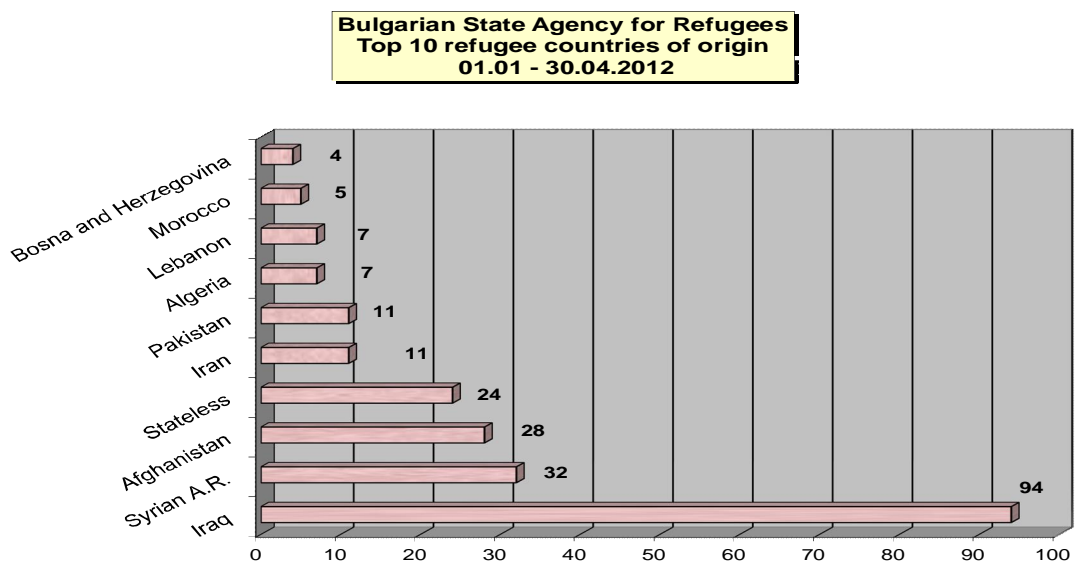


Figure 2 Source: State Agency for Refugees (April,

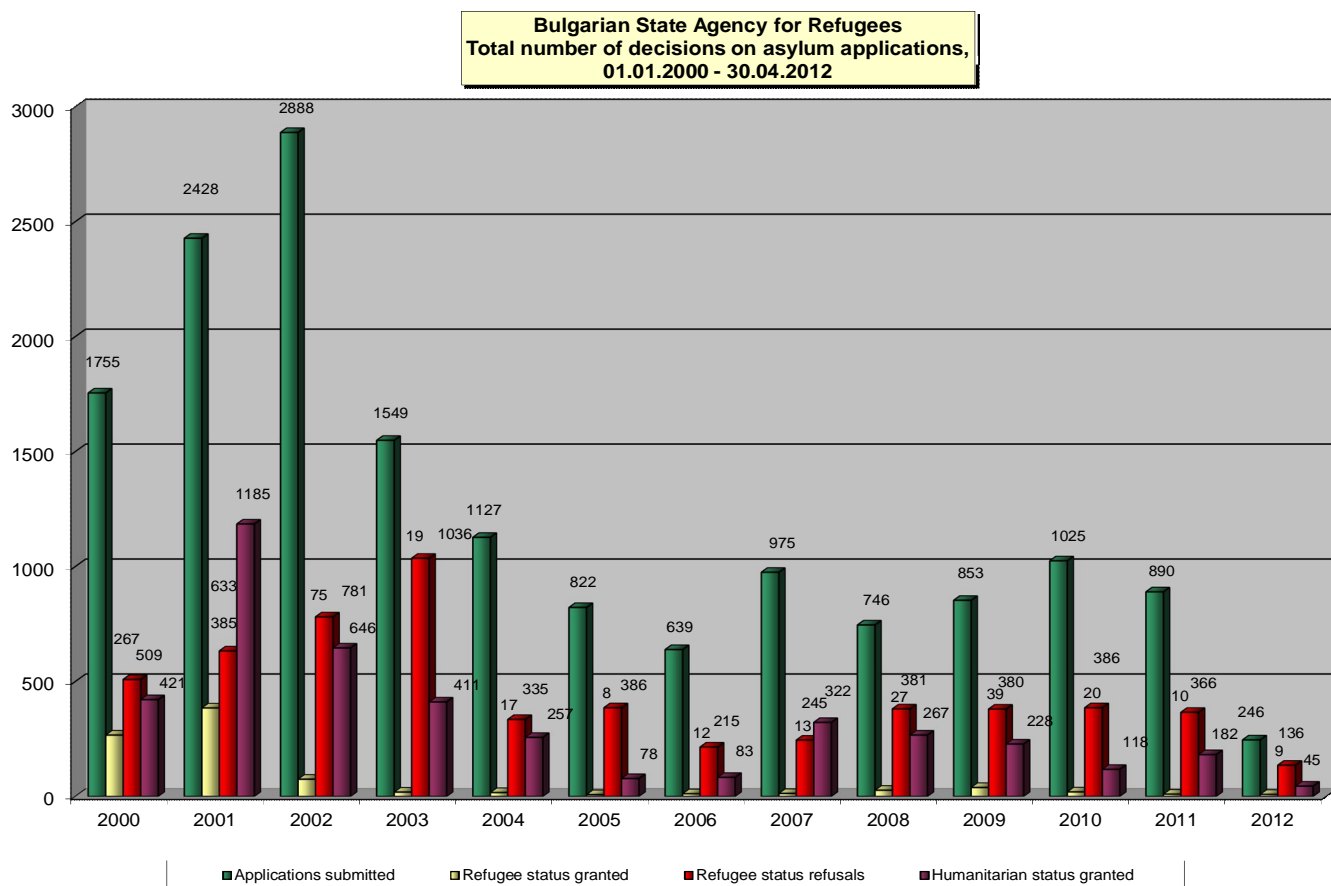


Figure 3 Source: State Agency for Refugees (April, 2012)

As one can see from the figure above, after the increase in asylum applications between 2001 and 2003, largely due to the occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the number of those who seek asylum in Bulgaria is somewhat steady. On average, every year, around 900 people apply for protection in the country, where a very small percentage receive refugee status (e.g. 20 out of 1025 in 2010); somewhat higher percentage receives humanitarian status (e.g. 118 out of 1025 in 2010); and the largest percentage is refused status (e.g. 386 out of 1025 in 2010). The rest are what I refer to “undecided.”¹⁴ They are to be found in the RRCs or, as already mentioned are homeless, inhabit shared flats, or squat empty buildings. They are also the largest proportion of AVRR “clients” in Bulgaria. Representatives from

¹⁴ For 2010 this would be 508 people. But it needs to be kept in mind that the number of the “undecided” is much higher as many people still await decisions from previous or later years.

Caritas Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC), and IOM Bulgaria confirm that the majority of potential returnees come mostly from the reception centers.

When one looks at the website of the Ministry of the Interior (2008) it is clear that the management of migration flows in the country is of high priority. A further reading shows that there are two major priorities weaved into the country's politics when it comes to migration supervision: on one hand the state prioritizes the militarization of its borders in its attempt to stop "illegal" immigrants and on the other it nonetheless "pursues a transparent, balanced and *humane* return policy with due regard to persons' individual needs and to the reintegration situation in the country of origin" (emphasis and translation mine¹⁵). The latter strikes me almost as if the metaphor of the beauty and the beast is on a display in a very peculiar manner. If the beast "welcomes" you at the border, the beauty waves goodbye to you.

In the following chapter I position AVRR in the larger context of migration management and examine the political rationalities behind its existence. Moreover, I look into AVRR's institutional context in Bulgaria and regulatory landscape.

¹⁵ All translations from Bulgarian are mine.

CHAPTER THREE

RATIONALITIES BEHIND AVRR

3.1. AVRR IN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

AVRR schemes are an important tool of the larger migration management milieu in Europe (see Kreienbrink 2006; Black, Koser, and Munk 2004; Black, Collyer, and Somerville 2011). Non-coercive return programs geared towards migrants are not a new phenomena and especially when viewed in the context of the European continent. In the mid 1970s, countries in the West such as the Netherlands, Germany, and France deployed the return programs as a response to the oil crisis in 1973 when OPEC embargoed oil provisions as a result of the U.S.'s decision to re-supply Israel's army. The return programs targeted "unwanted" guest workers mainly from Tunisia, Turkey, and Morocco and often times, as is the case with the French *Aide au Retour* programs, they offered cash to returnees in order for the return programs to be more attractive and to also encourage entrepreneurial schemes in the migrants' home countries in hope that the people were not going to re-emigrate. According to Migration Policy Institute (Black, et.al.2011), the non-coercive return programs of the mid '70s and 80's did not live up to their expectations and were abandoned because of their high financial cost and due to the fact that the number of returnees was small when compared to the expectations of the policymakers (e.g. 60,000 immigrants returned from France between 1977 and 1981).

Recently however, the non-coercive return programs have reappeared as one of the main instruments in the EU policy towards the "new unwanted" that in addition to the guest workers now include also refugees and asylum-seekers. The programs are widely known either as Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP), Assisted Voluntary Return of Irregular Migrants (AVRIM), the Facilitated Returns Schemes (FRS),

etc. For the purposes of this paper I will refer to the voluntary return schemes as AVRR. In 2007 the European Council established a Framework Programme on Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows for the Period 2007-2013 which set the goal to improve and harmonize migration management in the European Union with focus on four major areas: tighter control at the external borders, return of irregular immigrants residing in the EU, integration of non-European nationals, and prolongation of the European Refugee Fund with stress on adequate asylum policies. The European Council established that there needs to be strengthened solidarity and shared responsibility among the countries in the Union in regards to management of migration flows and the European Return Fund (ERF) is looked upon as one of the main tools in these processes.

IOM is an important actor in the development as well as in the implementation of AVRR programs throughout Europe and beyond. The organization has over 400 offices worldwide that assist migrants who desire to go back home and it has been working on the issues of return for 32 years now. As shown in the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Annual Report of Activities 2010 produced by the organization (IOM 2011), 34,000 people have been assisted to “[return] home in a dignified and humane manner” to their home countries in 2010 alone. AVRR programs can be found beyond the European continent. In Europe however, twenty eight of the EU-member states employ the programs, including Switzerland and Norway. As shown in the graphic, more and more people “take advantage” of AVRR programs, where from 2008 the rise is significant¹⁶. In Germany alone the number of people that have sought AVRR assistance has nearly doubled: from 2,799 people in 2008 to 4,480 in 2010.

¹⁶ As mentioned, in 2007 the European Council establishes Framework Programme on Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows and the ERF starts functioning in 2008.

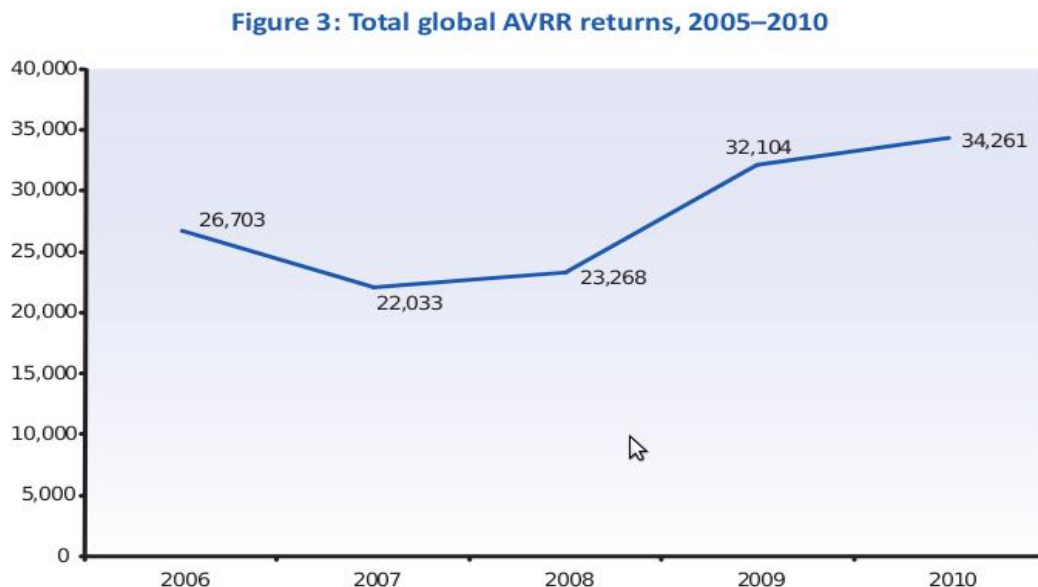


Figure 4 Source: International Organization for Migration (2011)

AVRR must be looked upon in the larger context of deportation schemes within the EU as past practices of forced deportation have been harshly criticized. Deportation of migrants have been described as “discriminatory, confusing and open to abuse,” (Joseph 2010), it has been compared to historical forms of gross expulsions (Walters 2002), and political activists have been extremely active in the prevention of forced deportations¹⁷ to the point that there are developed techniques and guidelines of how to resist a deportation. According to a report¹⁸ produced by the German government in response to an official request submitted by *Die Linke* party, in 2011, in Germany alone, 122 deportations were prevented because of resistance on part of the deportees. Bulgaria Air, for example, has forcefully deported 162 people from Germany with the help of its own personnel. The industry of deportations has been outsourced to private companies and as it will be seen in the

¹⁷ For examples see <http://www.noborder.org/archive/www.deportation-class.com/>; <http://stopdeportations.wordpress.com/>

¹⁸ The report is given on March 2, 2012. Printing pattern 17/8834. Copy of the report upon request. Courtesy to Marc Speer, a member of the board of directors in the Bavarian Refugee Council, for pointing to and translating the report.

case of Bulgaria, the promotion of AVRR was entrusted to a private company as well. The political rationale behind AVRR submits to the criticism revealed above.

As Rose and Miller (1992) propose, the problematic of government needs to be analyzed in terms of *political rationalities* and *governmental technologies*. Political rationalities, according to the authors, have three distinctive characteristics: *moral form* (they do address what are the proper ways of governing); *epistemological character* (they are articulated in relation to some kind of a nature ascribed to the objects to be governed); and *idiomatic form* (they are not mere rhetoric but they do “render reality thinkable”). In such a way Rose and Miller distinguish political rationalities as “morally colored, grounded upon knowledge, and made thinkable through language” (179), and suggest that *programmes of government* emerge in order to address political rationalities. The authors propose that these programmes emerge in the process of translation of political rationalities (moralities, epistemologies, and idioms of political power). In other words, the *programmes of government* articulate *political rationalities*.

AVRR can be distinguished as a governmental program that addresses the political rationale of humane treatment during a removal from the state territory. As noted by Walters (2002: 266), deportation is a subject of policy makers who try to craft it as a more humane strategy. AVRR falls under the same logic. The latter political rationale can be found in an Explanatory Statement given to the European Parliament (EP) by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs (CCLJHA) a year before the establishment of ERF. After framing “illegal” immigrants as victims of modern day slavery, the Statement reads:

The directive makes it clear that illegal immigrants have to leave Europe. It is not the task of the directive to establish illegality but merely to ensure a transparent return procedure. On the other hand, the return procedure is linked for the first time to minimum standards in order to ensure humane treatment... Among other things, a European added value is created. The proposal introduces a ban of re-entry which is valid throughout Europe. This adds value to a strong Europe acting with one voice. However, the key focus is on voluntary return. Member States must

establish structures to support voluntary town (sic.)...One of the objectives of the amendments tabled ... is to strengthen Parliament's role as a champion of human rights and humanity (European Parliament 2007).

Besides the political rationale of making removals more humane, however, there is also an explicit economic rationalization of AVRR. As noted by Wendy Brown (2005: 40), neoliberal political rationalities "submi[t] every action and policy to considerations of profitability, [where] equally important is the production of all human and institutional action as rational entrepreneurial action, conducted according to a calculus of utility, benefit, or satisfaction against a microeconomic grid of scarcity, supply and demand, and moral value-neutrality." The neoliberal logic behind AVRR is not only seen in the rendering of the migrant subject as calculative, as a subject that can rationally submit to the pros and cons of either staying or leaving the host country. AVRR is economically less costly for the member states as well. The latter is exemplified by the following: "[c]ompared with forced return, the implementation of assisted voluntary return (AVR) lowers the risk for human rights violations, preserves the dignity of the returnee, and is usually *less costly financially* and politically for the Government than forced return (IOM 2010, emphasis mine)" Politically AVRR is less costly for member states because of the harsh critique against forced deportations. It is economically less costly because the financial burden of removing migrants is now put upon the EU and not on the member states but also because forced returns are four times more expensive than voluntary such (see European Migration Network 2007, Stancova 2010).

As it can be seen in IOM's rationale behind AVRR, return programs speak the language of humanity, rights, and justice. Yet, the ban on re-entry introduced by the EC aims at further securing the borders of the Union. The voluntary returnees are treated not only as subjects that deserve Europe's humanitarian handling but also as subjects that hide a potential to re-immigrate and hence require securitization.

3.2. AVRR COMES TO BULGARIA

There are just a few institutions in Bulgaria that work with AVRR programs. The distribution of ERF funds is managed by MoI where non-governmental organizations and the International Organization for Migration apply before the state institution in order to execute non-coercive return programs. So far, the institutions that have carried out such projects are Caritas Bulgaria, For You, and the Bulgarian mission of the International Organization for Migration. In addition, Business Agency, a non-governmental organization with headquarters in Varna, signed a contract with MoI in 2010, which entrusted them with the training of administration personnel, such as police and judges, on how to uphold human rights standards in the deportation of foreigners¹⁹.

The headquarters of Caritas Bulgaria are in Sofia and the organization is part of the larger Catholic Confederation Caritas Internationalis. For You on the other hand is a small NGO that operates in Varna and its main work is with orphan children. In 2009, For You undertakes an AVRR project. The NGO is the only actor in Bulgaria that does not work with funds distributed directly by MoI and instead relies on financing from AWO Heimatgarten, a large non-profit organization in Germany. IOM Bulgaria was established in 1994 and the official cooperation between Bulgaria and IOM was ratified in 2000 by the Bulgarian Parliament. One of the main operations of IOM Bulgaria is voluntary return, both of third-country-nationals, who are people without European citizenship, but also supporting Bulgarian citizens who return from Western Europe via other IOM missions. Other NGOs, such as the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) and the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) have secondary function in the execution of AVRR programs. M.P., a Program Manager for the department of Migrant and Refugees Services in BRC revealed to me that they direct

¹⁹ The project is funded by ERF

migrants who have expressed desire to return home to the organizations that work with AVRR. They also exhibit AVRR brochures and posters in their office and participate in AVRR outreach. But the partnership between Caritas Bulgaria and BRC is more solid as M.P. has in fact participated as a consultant once Caritas Bulgaria launched the AVRR programs. The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee provides mostly consultation services if legal issues emerge with potential returnees.

The NGOs and IOM promote the AVRR programs anywhere one can find migrants. The largest campaigns take place in the RRCs and in a big flea market on the outskirts of Sofia, where many migrants, predominantly from Asian origin, work. In addition, IOM Bulgaria goes to the detention centers in order to acquaint the detainees with the option for voluntary return. When I asked Radoy, an AVRR project coordinator for IOM Bulgaria, how IOM encourages voluntary return among migrants, he revealed that the representatives from IOM relate two possible outcomes for the people who are in the RRCs for example. As they are most probably going to receive refusal on their asylum applications they will be left with two options: 1) to become “illegal” which inevitably leads to homelessness, unemployment, harsh socio-economic position, and continuous flight from the police; or 2) they will be detained in either Busmantsi or Lyubimets. “We provide them with a third option for [voluntary return] and this encourages them. We provide them with choice and they take it” (Radoy interview, April 2012). This is an obvious remark towards the involuntary character of AVRR and a preordered assumption that one is not worthy of asylum. But before I go into discussing the very subjectivities that enable AVRR I turn my attention to incentives that deserve our attention and which point to the very normative side of AVRR that brings together securitization practices and humanitarian discourses together.

As revealed by the Explanatory Statement presented by CCLJHA to the EP, voluntary return programs aim at distinguishing the EU as a champion of human rights. Still, the added

value of AVRR is a “strong Europe.” Coded behind ‘strong Europe’ are certain normative technicalities as the ban of reentry, different declaration that the returnees need to sign, the so called “tolerance period,” and last but not least the reintegration programs which all aim at further securitization against potential re-immigration of the “unwanted.” The ban of reentry means that once migrant returns via AVRR s/he signs a document that forbids reentry in the EU for the next two years unless a humanitarian crisis occurs in the meanwhile. Moreover, the way voluntary return works is the following: once a migrant confirms that s/he wants to return voluntarily, s/he signs a declaration that this is an individual choice and the authorities stamp her/his passport or temporary passport and oblige the returnee to leave the territory of the state in a 30-day-period. The NGOs commonly refer to this as a “tolerance period,” which means that “[the immigrants] are not punishable at that time, they cannot be arrested” (M.P., interview, April 2012).

Moreover, if the person is in asylum procedure, meaning that s/he is awaiting decision from SAR in regards to her/his asylum application, s/he is made to sign another declaration that terminates the procedure voluntarily. If a recognized refugee takes advantage of AVRR²⁰, s/he renounces her refugee status and if it so happens that this person returns back to EU, the whole asylum procedure starts all over again. In a conversation I had with a lawyer, she explained to me that such step would inevitably hurt one’s opportunity to receive any kind of status if s/he decides to re-immigrate because judges look upon such cases as evidence that the individual does not have “well-founded fear of persecution.” It is obvious that the language of dignity and human rights is solidly fortified with security measures that aim at preventing reentry in the European Union.

AVRR programs are progressively opening their way into Bulgaria. BGNES (2012) reports that in 2010, 294 immigrants have been taken out from the country compared to 664

²⁰ There is one refugee in Bulgaria that has returned “voluntarily.”

in 2011. According to the same media, the programs for voluntary return are becoming more and more popular among immigrants and the drop in the average stay of undocumented immigrants is due namely because of them²¹. But Bulgaria is both a consumer and a supplier of AVRR. When I conducted an interview with Radoy from IOM, he asserted that between 2000 and 2012 around 5,000 Bulgarian citizens have returned via non-coercive return programs, where 600 were victims of human trafficking. The rest are identified as “young families” who went abroad in search for better life but could never establish themselves. IOM Bulgaria works primarily with Bulgarian returnees that come back from Western Europe²² (Radoy interview, April 2012). The rough estimation in regards to the Bulgarian returnees corresponds to what one can find on IOM International’s website as well. The organization estimates that between 2000 and 2010, 4,091 people have returned to Bulgaria via AVRR.

The number of third-country-nationals who are returned from Bulgaria is significantly smaller compared to the number in other European countries. According to Radoy, IOM Bulgaria has returned 65 people in 2011 and Hristina, an AVRR project coordinator for Caritas Bulgaria, revealed that they have returned 10 people. For You has returned 7 people which brings the number of returnees from Bulgaria to 82 in 2011. Still, the exact number is

²¹ This has in fact been contested by my interviewees because as it turns out it is almost impossible for “illegal” immigrants to be returned via the AVRR. This is due to the sluggish procedures employed by the different institutions in the return of people without documents. As the programs in Bulgaria do not run year round yet and the procedure of returning “illegal” people takes excessive amount of time, pretty much no undocumented people are being returned from Bulgaria.

²² Bulgarian citizens became a subject of “voluntary return” also in light with former French president Sarkozy’s decision to send back Romani people from Bulgaria and Romania to their home countries. According to the French government, 910 Bulgarian Roma have been forcefully deported during the expulsion crisis, whereas those that have taken “advantage” of “voluntary” number 683. A representative from IOM Bulgaria explained to me that one of the ways they return people is through AVR only. The latter means that they only buy tickets for the returnees and give them 150 euro in cash in order for the returnees to have some financial support during the long way back. When I asked the representative from IOM if they have taken care of the Romani people that were returned back from France in 2010 he was quick to assure me that those were not “voluntary returns: the [French] government just gathered them, gave them some money, bought them tickets, and sent them back. This was not part of the programs we work with.” Even though the very normative procedure behind what was executed by the French government on the one hand and what IOM executes as AVR follows the same logic – buying tickets, providing them with little cash incentive – IOM Bulgaria, and the NGOs for that matter, distinguish themselves from the actions of the French government, claiming that these returns were not voluntary.

hard to be estimated as there is no centralized system. Moreover, as revealed by my interviewees, for right now the execution of AVRR programs works “in bulk.” This means that the programs are not executed all-year round but run just a few months a year (e.g. in 2012 they run from March until June). According to the representative from IOM Bulgaria, this is due to the fact that the implementation of AVRR funds has been postponed for two years. Radoy complained that in comparison, Greece returns “voluntarily” around 2,500 foreigners per year. When I turned his attention to the fact that the number of those who reside in Bulgarian cannot be compared to the one in Greece, he assured me that if the programs had run all-year-long, then many more migrants would have taken advantage of them. Moreover, according to Radoy, the priority of the Bulgarian government is placed on the external borders of the country as of right now. This is in fact very troubling to him and even though IOM Bulgaria works “wonderfully with the Ministry of Interior,” they are in constant negotiations with the Bulgarian state in order to push for further and timely implementation of the funds. MoI has assured IOM Bulgaria that the institution will devote more attention to AVRR in the years to come (Radoy interview, April 2012).

But this general tension that I felt does not run only between IOM Bulgaria and the Bulgarian state. In fact the representatives of the NGOs I interviewed shared to me their extreme desire to work with AVRR programs, but this is nearly impossible for them. The way the AVRR funds are redistributed in Bulgaria puts the non-governmental organizations in a situation which prevents them from taking full advantage of the funds. This is because when an organization is approved to execute an AVRR project it receives only 20% of the money in the beginning of the project and 80% after its execution. When Caritas Bulgaria executed an AVRR project in 2011 they had to wait 8 months until the state rehabilitates back the money. The NGOs cannot afford this sum of circulating capital and effectively only powerful organization like IOM can appropriate money from the ERF. Moreover, according

to Hristina, despite the fact that the distribution of AVRR funds in Bulgaria started in 2010, the small organizations were not informed about this. In her own words: “As far as I remember there has been a program that was announced in 2010... but this was not public. And back then only IOM [Bulgaria] has applied.” (Hristina, interview April 2012).

While explaining the ways the programs work in Bulgaria, M.P revealed the same information: “It is only IOM that wins these projects as they are the most powerful and this is their main activity. They do have circulation capital, we do not. The BRC cannot put such capital aside. I cannot even imagine what it is for smaller organization if they decide to work with [AVRR]... they need to have a lot of circulating capital” (interview M.P., April 2012). For You cannot afford to work with the ERF exactly because of the way the funds are distributed. I talked to Linda, who is a head of For You and Manager of the AVRR project, and she suggested that it is impossible for them to work with the ERF because:

The finances that are allotted from the Ministry of Interior needs to cover a project for 20,000 leva [10,000 euro] but what happens is that [in the beginning] they give you the 20%, which is impossible for a small organization like ourselves... IOM for example is a powerful organization, with well-established network, contacts, and connections. So it is much easier for them. The worst part is that they did not agree to cooperate with us (Linda, interview, April 2012).

The insights revealed by the NGOs point to the definite dominance of IOM Bulgaria in the ‘market’ of AVRR and to the appearance of monopolistic tendencies. Still, this is a very different situation than what is revealed in Ashutosh and Mountz’s (2010) article who claim that NGOs are critical and question IOM’s involvement in AVRR programs. In Bulgaria the situation is obviously on the opposite. Furthermore, these circumstances point to the creation of a competitive environment in the field of migration, a characteristic so relevant for the contemporary reality of neoliberalism and its market logic. In such a way the “compassion sector” seen in the eyes of the NGOs is submitted to but also breaths market

rationality, where calculation of costs and benefits is of prime importance. But this neo-liberal logic can also be found on MoI's website which encourages competition between potential AVRR agents.

In the National Program for Voluntary Return, one can read that in deciding the merits of the organizations that can execute voluntary return of third-country-nationals, focus is put upon "projects that offer *especially innovative* ways and means in informing and advising potential returnees for the situation in the countries of origin and/or other *novelty approaches* for stimulating the increase of voluntary returnees, which are based on respecting the dignity of the returnees" (Ministry of Interior 2008:16, emphasis mine). In a conversation with Radoy I asked him what are some of the practices in Bulgaria that could be said are innovative as compared to other countries. He assured me that everything is innovative in Bulgaria as these programs are new for the "market." Still, according to him the practices of voluntary return have been imported from other states as they "know how the system works." The representatives from Caritas Bulgaria and For You gave me similar accounts.

As revealed by Hristina, the organization gained experience in voluntary return programs as far back as 2007. Despite the fact that Bulgaria did not work with AVRR at the time, Caritas Bulgaria participated in international trainings about the advantages and the challenges of voluntary return programs. Moreover, as Bulgaria's legislative framework was unified with the European one, practices of control over "illegal" migration were established as well. In Hristina's own words, "[once Bulgaria entered the EU] the Bulgarian legislative system was harmonized with the European one and the problems that have been identified by other European countries, little by little were identified here as well" (interview April 2012). In fact, the discourses found in the public space, and arguably imported from the West, that display migrants as 'unable to integrate,' as a flow that needs to be controlled, as a flow that

‘we’ need to stop at the border ‘so we do not end up like Greece,’ are easily identified in the NGO sector.

As disclosed to me by Hristina, the trainings proved to be very valuable for them once the execution of the programs started in Bulgaria. Furthermore, a whole online platform has been created between the different organizations that work in the sphere of voluntary return, which functions to this day. The rationale behind the platform is a quick exchange of information about the situation in the countries of origin but also to track if there are representatives and “experts” from Caritas in the countries of origin who will be able to take care of the returnees. According to Hristina, the trainings that they participated in with their partners from Western Europe has been of utmost importance for the ability to apply and execute voluntary return projects once they started in Bulgaria. But the entire objective, normative, and operational level of AVRR programs is not the only practice and discourse that Caritas imported. Subjectivities have also been exported in Bulgaria. But before I go into an in-depth analysis of the subjectivities that are being attached to migrants by the NGO sector in light of AVRR programs, I turn my attention to how migrant subjects are constructed by Globus Bulgaria: a private company that in 2010 produced the largest outreach campaign in Bulgaria in regards to the promotion of AVRR among migrants.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE OBJECT OF AVRR: *ENGUILTED*, *ENCARED*, AND CONTROLLED

4.1. *ENGUILTING*

The beginning of AVRR campaigning and knowledge and truth production through AVRR started in 2010 when MoI ‘officially’ introduced the distribution of ERF funds. That same year, MoI signs a contract with Globus Bulgaria, a private company working in the industry of film production, and entrusts it with informational campaign and promotion of AVRR among migrants. The billboards and the thousand of leaflets that the company produced in 2010 are easily accessible by the public. They can be found on the website of MoI²³ and they are strategically “marketed” at Kapitan Andreevo: a border check-point between Turkey and Bulgaria that has the heaviest traffic of tourists and workers.

According to Mitko, a consultant for the movie who is from Syrian origin and has been involved in human rights initiatives involving immigrants in Bulgaria, the goal of the campaign was to show to the coming wave of potential asylum-seekers that they would not feel good in a foreign country, as he puts it, “to tell them that they are not welcome here” (Mitko interview, February 2012). Moreover, that same year, Globus Bulgaria and Travel TV, a channel under its umbrella, produced a video clip that aimed at popularizing the AVRR programs among migrant communities. The premiere of the movie took place in Busmantsi, where hundreds of detainees could watch it and embrace the idea of voluntary return.

Travel TV advertises itself as a channel that “aims to popularize cosmopolitanism, ethnic and racial tolerance, cultural diversity on the planet and the aspiration towards knowledge” (Travel TV, n.d.). A video clip produced by the company and called “The World is Global,” starts off as showing an aerial view, blue skies, and a caption that reads *It*

²³ http://www.dmp.mvr.bg/EUFond_za_vrashtane/GP+2008.htm

is good to awaken in another city. After this stunning mid-air view is gone the camera goes on to show an urban area filled with skyscrapers and busy traffic and one can read on the screen *The world is global.* As it turns out however, one can wake up on the other part of the global world and realize that s/he has become to resemble what Globus Bulgaria Ltd. portrays as a “shadow” – somebody being constantly on the run, with no documents, with no chance of becoming a deserving member of society, and with no dignity. This is how Globus Bulgaria Ltd. has depicted the “illegal” immigrant in their movie “Don’t Be a Shadow. Go back Home!”

The video lasts for 16 minutes and starts off as portraying a colorful urban scene with people walking around in a busy street traffic. The camera quickly moves to another sight to show a black and white scene, where one can see a young man, sitting close to a window, with his head resting against his hands and dreamily looking out the window. The narrator sets the scene: “In their homeland, everybody is somebody. What have you got to rely on here?” While the question is asked the camera is still focused on the young man but this time he is anxiously sitting on a chair in the middle of an empty room, his shadow cast on a white wall. The man reads what one assumes is an official document that has brought dreadful news. All of a sudden he tears apart the paper, makes it to a ball, and helplessly throws it to ground. The man smokes nervously and, apparently fallen into an unbearable situation, he takes a sip of water and furiously hurls the plastic bottle into the void. He then takes his head into his hands and stares at the empty floor. While this rather sad scene may invoke feelings in the viewer that resemble compassion and empathy, the narrative behind the scene depicts a different story:

Who are you and what are you running away from? You think that your homeland hates you, but how can we help you if you are just a shadow and we can’t get to know each other? You have no documents, you have no money, you gave it to somebody to take you across the border at night. You

are afraid of being hunted down and do not know what would happen to you. This is what your life would be like from now on. But everything could be different. It could be legal.

The movie is largely separated to represent two territorial dimensions, of “here” (Bulgaria) and “there” (the homeland), and two temporal dimensions – of now and of the future. “Here” is depicted as an insecure place, where one is constantly on the run and hunted down, where one is “nobody” due to the absence of documents, where one has nothing to rely on: one is just a shadow. The metaphor of shadow (*syanka*) in the Bulgarian language can be associated with somebody that is always “in the shadow,” meaning that s/he is a cunning person, working towards illicit deeds, navigating large-scale intrigues and ultimately has the invisible power to alter one’s or the whole society’s situation. On the other hand, however, being a “*syanka*” may mean that this person is constantly chasing somebody else. S/he may not necessarily be a bad person. On the contrary, it may be associated with that a person has fallen in a self-pity and he or she seeks to resemble “you;” s/he is jealous of what you have and s/he imitates you in her or his desire to achieve the same human condition (the latter is not always associated with a material condition but it may be linked to how somebody perceives “success” and/or “status”). This last meaning depicts annoyance and a feeling that you want to get rid of this person that has ultimately become “your shadow.” His/her constant presence is annoying, and ultimately non-desirable. The migrant is portrayed in a way that s/he has become guilty of becoming, but also remaining, a shadow.

Mitko said he agreed to participate in the making of the movie because he felt as if this project would:

contribute towards the dialogue between MoI, as an institution, and the immigrants and the refugees [in Bulgaria] because it seemed to me that in the talks about rights of immigrants we cannot avoid MoI... It appears to me that the institution needs to be influenced in a way that could contribute to the delivery of messages with higher quality... and not to end up with, for example, that if you are illegal you are a shadow or something like that. I, personally, wanted to deliver the desire of MoI to carry out a dialogue

with foreigners... but it clearly did not happen (Interview January 24, 2012).

The movie relates to the viewer the laws in Republic of Bulgaria that foreigners must attend to and a significant part of the movie is dedicated to the official governmental position in regards to migration flows and experiences as seen in the narratives of Alexander Dimitrov, a vice president of the State Agency for Refugees and Yotko Andreev, head of SHTAF. The movie reminds the refugees that just a few receive humanitarian status in the country not because “the people in Bulgaria are bad” but simply due to the reason that the laws in Bulgaria are based on international norms found in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. After a firm reminder that one needs to think carefully before s/he leaves their country and that if one has “entered our country illegally or [one’s] request for refugee or humanitarian status is ungrounded” they may very well become a subject of detention, the narrator goes on to confirm that if you are detained: “Your life ...will not be free. A golden cage is still a cage²⁴.”

The movie goes on to tell the potential returnees that while they are being chased, their compatriots are trying to rebuild and develop their countries. Moreover, the migrants are reminded that while in Bulgaria their loved ones “sleep on mattresses,” they do not have a job, social or medical insurance, their children are taken away the opportunity to receive education or to even play as “normal” children do. Ironically, the narrator represents quite rightly what the situation of those seeking asylum in Bulgaria is. He depicts the structures in place however, in a way that one would think this is solely the migrant’s fault, thus, dispositioning the migrant outside the structural context already in place. Here, I see the movie “Don’t Be a Shadow! Go Back Home” as an archetype of popular representations of

²⁴This is in fact an obvious remark of the way detention centers are perceived by the public: as prisons for sure, but where high quality and humane service is provided.

migrants which attempts to situate the migrant subject in a framework that necessarily criminalizes one's decision to leave their "homeland."

What is interesting in the narrative portrayed above is that the migrant subject is not "guilty" solely before the Bulgarian institution for his/her "crime" to cross the border "illegally" or to attempt to stay unlawfully on the territory of the state, but that crime is invoked as a misconduct directed towards the migrants' co-nationals. The "guilt" of the migrant is in fact threefold: firstly, because s/he has "illegally" crossed the border; secondly, because this act is linked to the inability of the migrant to help his/her co-nationals in their efforts to "rebuild" the nation-state; and thirdly, because the migrant prevents his/her children from taking advantage of the good future that the rebuilding of the nation-state would potentially provide them with. In such a way the migrant is portrayed as "guilt-loaded." S/he is *enguilted*, the guilt is all-encompassing and irremovable from the subject. But there is a 'cure' for the guilt portrayed upon the migrant subject, namely "voluntary" return. In the empty space created between the interpretation of guilt and the possibility to be redeemed, AVRRE enters the picture. AVRRE offers that redemption is being possible through a "dignified return," "through a dialogue;" a language so prevalent in humanitarianism. This is how AVRRE, as presented by Globus Bulgaria, renders its objects: as people who are constantly on the run, securitized and chased; as shadows whose only salvation would come through "voluntary" return.

However, not everybody is deemed worthy of return. The guilt that has been imposed over migrants has in fact translated as mistrust. When I asked Hristina how they decide who to include in the program, she explained that these need to be people who they can trust. The representative gave me an example with a lady from Afghanistan who came to their office and threatened that she would commit suicide if she were not returned back to her country of origin. Yet, the employees in Caritas knew that they could not trust her because they were

familiar with her case and as told to them by an employee from the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee this woman had been saying completely different stories about her past life and why she has left Afghanistan. The mistrust can come largely from one's understanding of the "market of asylum stories"²⁵ but it can also depend on the subjective presupposition that one can misuse reintegration funds, that one would return to Europe, and moreover, that one would change her/his opinion about return at the last moment. According to Hristina:

We did have the opportunity to recruit the people that we can trust because as I told you some would blackmail us. And it was clear we cannot trust them. For example this Afghani woman I told you about. In this sense these people can decide, in the last moment, to refuse to be included in the program. I would say that there was some kind of a psychological recruitment of people that we can trust and of people that will stick with the plan to the very end (Hristina, interview, April, 2012).

Mistrust has been exported in Bulgaria as well. While describing how a consultation day with potential returnees goes, Hristina explained that they had to listen to many tragic stories about killed parents, political repression, and war. "But after all it is all very contestable because frequently when we contact the German Caritas, which has worked with experts in Iraq before, and this expert from Germany told us that many of the [asylum-seekers] create these stories in order to receive refugee status. Certainly these stories do not come from good," said Hristina and continued to speak about how hard the work is with such target groups.

I turned Hristina's attention back to the Afghani woman and asked if the situation that the woman endured was as bad as to bring thought of suicide. As seen through the eyes of Hristina:

No, no, no. It is just a mentality, this is psychology but also mentality of these people. They are used to achieve things through some kind of

²⁵ "Market for asylum stories" refers to the understanding that many people who seek protection use false stories that have been proven to be valuable in order to boost their opportunities to receive status. Nobody from my informants questioned why such "market" would exist.

aggression or through ... you know, this is a kind of emotional aggression because you can imagine how the social worker felt. (Hristina, interview April 2012)

Guilt and mistrust are not the only subjectivities constructed by the executors of AVRR. In fact guilt is interconnected with security. *Don't Be a Shadow! Go Back Home!* portrays this interrelatedness. Still, while there is an identified need to secure migrants' movement, they are also part of humanity that deserves our pity and we are willing to give them back their dignity, to convert them through return.

In the study of the unintended consequences produced by anti-trafficking *regimes of care* in France, Ticktin (2011: 181) identifies three major effects: complicity with anti-immigration politics; production of subjects rendered as victims; and amplified policing. These all are more or less effects that can be identified not only in the case of France but beyond. I further develop Ticktin's insight onto the effect of increased security as this is central for the argument presented here. According to the anthropologist, those who fail to become objects of compassion are not simply disregarded but they become objects of surveillance and policing. For Ticktin, policing is the flipside of regimes of care as the two are reliant on logic of exception and unrestricted power. I take Ticktin's idea further and look at migration management not as an expression of either care or control but both care and control. In my own examination of regimes of care in Bulgaria, I deepen Ticktin's insight in order to show that the tactic of policing is entwined with a humanitarian twist where those that have morally failed to "integrate" have become targets of "dignified return." As Ticktin reveals, the anti-trafficking campaigns render some subjects more deserving than others which in turn results in deportations, violence, and imprisonment. Basing her argument on a speech delivered by Sarkozy in regards to traffic victims, Ticktin suggests that "humanitarian duty [is] to deport without asking," as seen through the state's rhetoric. But removal from the state territory is now subject to humanitarian discourses and practices, where the complicity

of the returnees is sought after, where possible; where we do not simply coercively remove but we encourage those that have failed to “integrate” to return home, and moreover, we care for them in the process.

4.2. ENCARING FOR AND CONTROLLING AVRR SUBJECTS

Reintegration schemes have a function that is twofold: on the one hand reintegration schemes are perceived as the humanitarian responsibility of NGOs to help those in need, but on the other hand, they are a tool that function as means for preventing further “illegal” migration, hence successfully “guarding” the European borders.

When I asked Radoy to describe the ways in which consultations with potential returnees work, he related to me four steps: presenting the work of IOM; identifying the desires of the potential returnees; explaining in detail the AVR program; discussing the potential obstacles to return. “And this is when the process of *обгрижване* [care] starts,” he told me. *Обгрижвам* [obgrijvam] roughly translates as the verb “to care” in English but its meaning in Bulgarian is “care loaded” as opposed to simply *грижа* (to care). The word communicates a very paternalistic relation, in this case between the organization that executes AVRR and its very object. Coded behind *encare* is the providing of social and psychological counseling, revealing information about the country of origin, securing transportation not only to the Bulgarian airport but also from the airport in the destination country, talking and motivating the potential returnees if they start wondering if return is in fact the best idea, providing them with 150 euro cash to support them throughout the long journey home – all reasons behind the desire of IOM to return their clients as “tourists” and not as “violators” (Radoy, interview April 2012). *Encarement* does not stop with the migrants’ flight from Bulgaria, however. IOM, For You, and Caritas extend their care to

returnees once they arrive in the country of origin. The returnees are “taken care of” by representatives of the organization responsible for their well-being and the process of *encaring* continues this time on part of the partners overseas.

Encaring is especially important for Caritas and For You. I see these two NGOs as institutional components of “regimes of care,” first of all because they work in the field of human rights; they extend humanitarian help to vulnerable groups and because they truly and genuinely believe in the “moral imperative to relieve suffering” (Ticktin 2011:3) Their work with AVRR programs is provoked by a genuine understanding that it is better for the migrants that find themselves homeless, jobless, and desperate, to go home, to be freed from their misery in Bulgaria. According to Linda, they “take every single case by heart and work until the very end to make sure that this person will go home successfully, with a good integration program” (Linda interview, April 2012). There are certain subjects that deserve unconditional compassion, however. Such is the case of Anastasia.

In an interview I conducted with the representatives from For You about the emotional weariness that they feel when working with “difficult cases,” the organization shared with me a story which exemplifies how thin the line is between forced deportation (measure of security), and voluntary return (the humanitarian will of NGOs to assist those that suffer in order to return home “with dignity”). Elana related to me the story of a 75-year-old woman, whom I will call Anastasia. Anastasia is originally from Turkmenistan but she has lived in Bulgaria for the past 30 years. She suffers from a light form of dementia and she is almost blind. According to Elana, Anastasia did not have any close family, children, or a husband in Bulgaria and nobody could look after her. She did not have proper documents either. One day Anastasia found herself in Busmantsi where she spent two years awaiting deportation. A few months ago Anastasia sought For You’s help in order to start a procedure for voluntary return and Linda and Elana took her case “with hearts wide open.” Anastasia

signed the declaration for voluntary return and For You “stroke a deal” with the Bulgarian authorities for Anastasia to be moved to a reception center, where she could be somewhat free and live under better conditions. The intentions of the NGO were to provide Anastasia with care while she awaits her return. They supplied her with eye glasses and were in constant contact with the lady in order to make sure Anastasia was taken care of: “She is such a sweet old lady, well, everybody that is need is just... you know, sweet” (interview Elana, April 2012). This is how from an object of strict detention and security, Anastasia becomes an object of kindness and compassion.

While investigating the ways in which Anastasia could be helped once in Turkmenistan, it turns out that the organization could not find any relatives or people who could care for the woman. Linda contacted IOM Turkmenistan in order to see if they could help anyhow but they refused based on the fact that Anastasia was not a client of IOM Bulgaria. Moreover, while the investigation was taking place, For You’s partner, AWO, refused to finance Anastasia’s return because according to the German representative this would have inevitably placed Anastasia from one vulnerable situation in another. “Steam was coming out of my ears,” the representative of For You told me, “we tried our best, and we told the people in AWO that if we don’t return her and ensure that at least some kind of help is provided for the woman she will be deported. They still said ‘no.’” Anastasia was deported a few days later.²⁶

But AVRR programs are not seen by the NGOs as only extending humanitarian help to the returnees but also as prevention of “illegal” re-immigration. The ambiguity between security and humanitarianism can be seen in a case revealed to me by Elana, who is a social worker in For You. Elana works with both foreigners that return to their home countries via

²⁶ For You has no information about Anastasia’s whereabouts and they do not know what has happened to her.

AVRR and with Bulgarians that return from Western Europe. The case concerns a young woman from Kirgizstan whom I will call Svetlana. The dilemma of either to return Svetlana or not came from the partner organization of For You, AWO. As it turns out, while in Bulgaria, the girl won a full scholarship from a Hungarian university but because of financial difficulties and lack of documents she was not able to go back to her home country in order to work on receiving a visa to Hungary. Linda and Elana took her case and wrote to AWO in order to receive an approval for her return. AWO said “no.” The reason behind AWO’s refusal to return Svetlana was simply the fact that the girl was not going to stay in Kirgizstan. Battled by AWO’s decision, Linda and Elana decided to fight for the girl as according to them otherwise this would be a “wasted life.” They define the Kirgizstan girl’s case as follows:

Although AWO told us “no,” we decided to push forward and to intercede for her. Even though, by contract, we cannot finance her return, we interceded and told them that this is a person that has the future in front of her; she will be able to build her life on the one hand but also we will prevent her illegal migration, she is here illegally. This to me *is* prevention of illegal immigration (Elana, interview, April 2012).

AVRR work both as an expression of compassion, seen in the genuine care for one’s future, but simultaneously as a security measure against “illegal” immigration. In the case revealed above the prevention of “illegality” was concerning the territory of Bulgaria as seen by Linda and Elana. But as revealed by AWO’s reason for refusal, the largest concern is identified in her further movement, even though the immigration would be “legal” in this case. Movement control is an essential part of the reintegration schemes as revealed by Hristina as well. Nevertheless, as is the case with For You, Caritas Bulgaria wants to return people back to their countries of origin so they can “save” them from the vicious circle this people find themselves in. In the process, however, the NGOs effectively secure the

European borders from further “illegal” immigration. The same logic can be identified in the reintegration schemes as well.

Caritas and IOM give to returnees 2,000 Euros as part of their reintegration program which is spent based on preliminary plan that maps precisely how the returnees need to spend it (e.g. food, rental expenses, medical expenses, etc). Yet, in this way, the organizations are able to control out the possibility that the money is not “wasted” on paying ‘smugglers’ in order for the person to re-enter a European country. In Hristina’s own words:

According to the experience of our partners, this money should not be given directly to the returnee because many times he can use it to return back. When somebody is returned to their country of origin, more or less you lose control over him; he is not a prisoner, or at a place where you can control him. As this is all voluntarily, he can abuse this money. This is why the philosophy of Caritas is to have experts [in the country of origin] or through its network to support reintegration scheme but the money to be given to the experts themselves (Hristina, interview, April 2012).

The circumstances described above are certainly not unique to welfare situations, where finance control and care are brought together. Still, the welfare provisions that NGOs give to returnees must be looked upon as going beyond financial control of resource distribution but as a mechanism that effectively secures the European frontiers. The “control function” is certainly taken seriously by the NGOs but, as seen, normative aspects of securing the border are not absent from the picture either.

These cases are not an exception in the blending of humanitarian and security discourses and practices in larger scheme of migration management. Rather, the latter has become the rule. This can be seen in the constant moving of people from detention to reception centers and back; in the penetration of humanitarian discourses into places serving the function of strict confinement; in the security measures that reach the reception centers, which are often thought of as places that protect and serve the needs of those seeking protection. The question that turned out to be impossible to be answered by my interviewees

in For You was either if Anastasia returned voluntarily and forcefully. At the end, was she an object of security, or of humanitarianism? Or both?

One can certainly argue that the humanitarian determination of Caritas Bulgaria and For You is pure form of cynicism and the language and discourses employed by the organizations function as a mask behind gross reproduction of inequalities, restriction of movement, and deportation practices. As Fassin (2012: page) suggests “humanitarianism has become a language... [that] serves both to define and to justify discourses and practices of the government of human beings.” In Fassin’s treatment of humanitarianism one can easily see how the state may co-opt humanitarian language in order to justify coercive practices. As seen in the chapter human right organizations in fact use humanitarian discourses in order to justify their involvement in the removal of people from the state territory, even if it is a “removal with a human face.” But furthermore, in this way the NGOs legitimize practices of migrants’ removal and deportation from the territory of the state in particular and from the EU in general.

To portray somebody as guilty of a crime gives validation to state actions. It also attaches certain subjectivities to migrants that allow the gatekeepers of human dignity to care after the ‘victims’ and to regulate their movement at the same time. The NGOs involved in AVRR close the circle already structured by an inadequate international asylum system (see Hyndman 2000; Dauvergne 2008). Ultimately, AVRR executors secure the European “us” with their “hearts wide opened.” Securitization and humanitarianism foster each other and in the process the hybrid between the two produces certain types of subjectivities that are attached to what Standing (2011) has depicted as the most precarious class of our times: the migrants.

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION

Critical engagement with migration management in Bulgaria, located at the periphery of the European Union, where Europeanness is a much contested issue, was and still is urgent. Many questions remain to be answered, and future research needs to focus on how migration policies such as AVRR enable “nation-states” like Bulgaria to be both European and not-European at the same time. What are the structural tensions that enable such countries to be considered marginally European but at the same time to carry out very European policies in the regulation of movement? How does the complex intertwining of security and humanitarian goals influence possibilities for mobility and resistance?

In my thesis I stepped on Didier Fassin’s (2012) claim that a tension between humanity and security is apparent in issues surrounding immigration. I have humbly tried to extend the understanding of the dialectical relation between securitization and humanitarianism and to show that the seeming tension between the two has been blended and relieved. In the pages above, I showed how humanitarian duty and security goals mingle when examined through the lens of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration in Bulgaria and in the process produce a hybrid logic which underlies contemporary migration management. This hybrid engenders certain types of subjectivities that are attached to migrants in which they are rendered as guilty and not to be trusted. Still, humanitarian organizations view AVRR as the best possible option for those who are not able to “integrate” and their humanitarian duty thus compels them to send these migrants back home. Through this perceived humanitarian duty, the human rights organizations that are involved in the execution of AVRR effectively assist in securing the border of the European Union.

The very nature of AVRR that contextualizes migrants, both documented and undocumented, as objects that deserve humane treatment and at the same time as objects

whose movement needs to be controlled and prevented, has a tremendous impact on the political. AVRR contributes to the depoliticizing effects of *regimes of care* by refocusing the attention from the political struggles of migrants towards social, economic, and political rights to the moral duty of relieving anguish through return. If we lift the veil that covers this ambiguous space between humanitarianism and security, perhaps we can come closer to recognize what it means to act politically on part of the migrants.

The NGOs in Bulgaria that are involved in the execution of AVRR projects provided me with a lens through which to examine the ways in which securitization has been humanitarianised and how humanitarianism on the other hand sustains and submits to a logic of securitization. But to render how humanitarianism and securitization work together requires more examination than what I have modestly tried to present in this thesis. In Chapter 2 I mentioned that many of the immigrants in Bulgaria often ask why they are being kept in prisons when they know that this goes against established norms of human rights. This is an issue that requires more problematization, I believe. The question for me remains: what is the migrants' response to the developments I have identified during the unfolding of the thesis? In what ways is the hybrid between securitization and humanitarianism embodied by its very objects?

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