

Euro-Asian Trafficking Connection in Human Beings: Complexity and Contingency of Human Trafficking “Rhizome”

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1 Introduction

Recent years trafficking in human beings has been recognized as world-wide serious problems. Not only Europe and Asia have their own networks, but also there are some connections between them notwithstanding a great distance. In this paper problems concerning these connections will be explored.

We are introduced into the complex problems of trafficking in human beings through the

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report published by Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. It says that:

Trafficking in persons means the transportation of a person within a country or across borders through coercion, deception or illicit influence with the purpose of exploiting the victim. The international community considers trafficking in persons as a modern form of slavery and a gross violation of human rights and dignity.

Globalization is accompanied by an increasing incidence of transnational crime, such as smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons. Most countries are affected, some more than others. Today, women and children are the main targets of trafficking, while adult men may rather be victims of smuggling. Trafficking is thus an age and gender specific phenomenon. Women and children are often trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, mostly for the growing entertainment business and the sex industry in cities and urban areas.

The underlying causes of trafficking in persons are poverty and low status of women and children. Unemployment and lack of education and livelihood opportunities are driving factors. While many people are ready to take the risk of falling into the hands of traffickers in order to improve their prospects, there is a worrying trend in industrial countries to use cheap and undeclared labor as well as to exploit women and children in prostitution and pornography. Women in particular are vulnerable to trafficking due to the "feminization" of poverty and migration. Organized crime takes advantage of this situation.

Trafficking in person may be considered as a comparatively profitable crime since the penalties are relatively lenient, at least compared with trafficking in firearms or drugs. The new information technology and growing flows of capital and people also facilitate these operations (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, pp.5-6).

2 Measuring the Human Trafficking Phenomenon

In relation to the complexities and pitfalls of measuring the trafficking phenomenon, UN report mentions that due to its clandestine nature, accurate statistics on the magnitude of the human trafficking problem at any level are elusive and unreliable. Figures that are available range from the actual number of victims rescued or repatriated to estimates of the total number of trafficked victims in existence.

The lack of reliable statistics can be attributed to a number of factors. Many countries lack anti-trafficking in persons legislation. Even when legislation is in place, laws may only define human trafficking as applying to certain exploitative practices, such as sexual exploitation, and not other forms of exploitative behavior. Moreover, in many countries, the definition of human trafficking applies only to the exploitation of women and children overlooking the exploitation of adult male victims. Further, if comprehensive laws do exist, they are not always enforced and victims may not be recognized as victims of crime but may be seen as smuggled migrants. Victims may be hesitant to provide information or cooperate with authorities often out of fear of harm to themselves and their families by either criminal networks or the legal authorities. Many countries lack a centralized agency or coordinated statistics system so that the collection of trafficking data, if done at all, is done

on an ad hoc basis. While inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations assisting trafficked victim often maintain databases on those who have been assisted, repatriated and reintegrated, these figures represent a small number of human trafficking victims world wide (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, 2006, pp.43-44).

3 Causes of Human Trafficking

3.1 Impact of Globalization

How does the globalization tie into the issue of human trafficking? Joshi explains that globalization created a network of inter-dependency of the world's people at an unprecedented scale. Economies, cultures, technology and governance are affected by globalization. Events occurring across regions affect people in ways undreamed of, and not always to their benefit.

As a result, the push to open up borders for liberalized and privatized market expansion of capital and information has outpaced the capabilities of governance in some areas, creating a widening gap between those who would benefit fully and those who would not. The rights of those on the margins are neglected while the players of profit markets often lose a sense of respect for justice and human rights. The desire of countries such as Commonwealth of Independent States, those in Central and South Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Asia, to push their economies towards market-based economies, has resulted in the alienation and dislocation of a large part of their populations. In order to attract foreign investors and foreign capital, such countries have developed policy geared towards that end. What is created is, however, a society overly connected with money and material wealth. This has widened the gap between rich and poor citizens.

Women are generally the ones affected the most profoundly in transition economies. Policies implemented by organizations such as the World Bank contribute to the exploitative conditions that tend to increase poverty rather than alleviate it, particularly in rural areas. They are especially vulnerable because they are often without the necessary education, and do not have access to the land or capital that would enable them to take advantage of current economic boom (Joshi, pp.24-25).

3.2 Push and Pull Factors: EUROPOL Perspective

Analyzing the causes of human trafficking in the EU, EUROPOL mentions that the hope or expectations of a more prosperous future and better quality of life are the vulnerabilities that are exploited by the traffickers when they set out to recruit or lure their victims.

The reasons that encourage people to leave one area for another are known as “Push Factors”. The reasons which attract migrants to a particular area or encourage them to leave are known as “Pull Factors”. In relation to trafficking in human beings and the reasons, events or features that lead persons to engage with traffickers, the following is evident:

>Push Factors

- high unemployment;

- labor market not open to women and gender discrimination;
- lack of opportunity to improve quality of life;
- sexual or ethnic discrimination;
- poverty;
- escaping persecution, violence or abuse;
- escaping human rights violations;
- other social and environmental conditions;
- perception of increased opportunities available in the EU

>Pull Factors

- demand for workers within the sex industry and higher earnings;
- demand by men looking for commercial sex;
- better employment opportunities;
- higher salaries and better working conditions;
- improved standard and quality of life;
- no discrimination or abuse

3.3 “Feminization” of Poverty and Gender Inequality

These underlying factors are complex. According to the Swedish Ministry’s report, this complex contributes to the phenomenon of trafficking. However the main structural causes are the poverty, inequality and subordination of women and children.

Lack of income and opportunities makes people vulnerable and more inclined to migrate in the hope of creating a better life for themselves and their families elsewhere. Likewise, it is poverty that makes parents sell their children to traffickers and that makes women become victims of trafficking. There is a trend for more and more women to be left alone to fend for themselves and their children; this is referred to as the feminization of poverty. Their powerlessness is taken advantage of by traffickers who promise them jobs and opportunities, although instead they may end up in prostitution. People who believe they have little to lose may be willing to take great risks.

The unequal balance of power between men and women, reflected in gender inequality and patriarchal attitudes, paves the way for trafficking by leaving women and girls powerless and in subservient roles. As a result women and girls get less education and less access to resources, have a heavier workload and less influence. Consequently the overwhelming majority of the victims of trafficking are women and girls. Furthermore, trafficking has an ethnic dimension in that women belonging to minorities tend to be victims of trafficking more often.

Lack of awareness and respect for the human rights of women and children make them vulnerable to exploitation. States are responsible to their citizens and to the international community to respect, protect and promote the human rights of all. Efforts to strengthen human rights are therefore a cornerstone in the fight against trafficking (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, pp.8-10).

4 Flows and Routes in Human Trafficking “Networks”

4.1 Global Patterns: Origin, Transit and Destination

The United Nations report titled “Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns” published in 2006 offers the newest comprehensive information on human trafficking around the world. It says that even though all human trafficking cases have their individual characteristics, most follow the same pattern: people are abducted or recruited in the country of origin, transferred through transit regions and then exploited in the destination country.

This report analyses at the regional level and finds variations with respect to (sub-) regions and countries as follows:

Asia is mainly an origin region as well as a destination for trafficking in persons. Asian victims are reported to be trafficked from Asia to Asian countries, in particular to Thailand, Japan, India, Taiwan and Pakistan. Trafficking into countries in the region is reported mainly from the Commonwealth of Independent States, followed by South-Eastern Asia, pointing to intra-regional trafficking. South-East Asia is reported to be a crucial point of trafficking both out of and into the region. Thailand ranks very high in the citation index as an origin, transit and destination country.

Central and South Eastern Europe is reported as predominantly an origin sub-region. Victims trafficked out of this sub-region are reported to be exploited in Western Europe. A number of sources also refer to countries in Central and South Eastern Europe as a destination for victims from the sub-region, indicating that intra-regional human trafficking is a problem. Central and South Eastern Europe is reported, to a lesser extent, as a destination sub-region for victims mainly trafficked from the Commonwealth of Independent States. Central and South Eastern Europe is also reported to be a main transit sub-region. Western Europe is reported largely as a destination sub-region.

The Commonwealth of Independent States is mainly reported as an origin region for trafficked victims. Western Europe and North America are the main destinations for victims reported to be trafficked out of the region. Other reported (sub-)regions are Central and South Eastern Europe, and Western Asia and Turkey.

Based on these analyses and findings, the UN report follows the process of human trafficking and revealed the countries and regions most widely reported in association with each stage of the process as follows:

The Commonwealth of Independent States, Central and South Eastern Europe, West Africa and South-Eastern Asia, are the most reported origin regions. Countries in Western Europe, North America and Asia, particularly in West Asia, are reported more frequently as destination countries. Countries within Central and South Eastern Europe and Western Europe are highly reported transit regions. Beside Europe, South-Eastern Asia, Central America and Western Africa are also reported transit (sub-) regions.

As for transit countries as the route of transportation, the report mentions that the term ‘transit countries’, in the context of human trafficking, refers to the countries that make up

the transnational route by which a victim is transported from their country of origin to a destination country determined by the traffickers. There may, of course, be more than one transit country along a route, and alternative routes between a particular origin country and a determined destination may vary significantly.

With regard to the citation index, six countries score very high as transit countries. These are, in alphabetical order and by sub-region: Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland (Central and South Eastern Europe); Italy (Western Europe); and Thailand (South-Eastern Asia).

When we follow the route and flow of human trafficking, in my view, transit countries are important “nodal points”.

4.2 Internalization of Human Trafficking in the EU?

According to EUROPOL, most women and children who are trafficked into the European Union for sexual exploitation originate from Central and South East Europe. Additionally and possibly as a result of the expansion of the EU, European citizens are now being trafficked, Member State to Member State. With greater freedom of movement within the EU it was inevitable that trafficking networks would begin targeting EU citizens and EU documents.

Trafficking in human beings is driven by profit and in the same way that legitimate businesses will look at the market place and the opportunities available, so do the traffickers. Victims will be recruited from countries or regions where there is a great supply of women and children who are more likely to believe the lies of the traffickers or, in case of young children, where the parents or guardians are willing to do business with the traffickers. The main source countries of victims who are trafficked to the EU for sexual exploitation are: Moldova, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, Russian Federation, and Albania.

The victims will be placed in bars, nightclubs, locked apartments or kept by their owners in towns and cities across Europe but wherever the demand for purchased sex exists. Consequently the destination countries will be determined by market forces but generally the following is true. The main destination countries are: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, and United Kingdom.

Against such an opinion, the report by Swedish Ministry warns us that trafficking occurs mainly within each region, mostly between neighboring countries, or within individual countries, but it also takes place across continents. It is important to note that internal migration often increases the risk of falling victim to international trafficking.

Information from across the region suggests that a growing number of women and girls are being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation within and into Europe. While within Europe the countries in Central and Southeastern Europe provide the women and girls, women are also coming into Europe from Southeast Asia, mainly Philippines and Thailand, from Africa and Latin America (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p.16 and 24).

4.3 Organized Crime and Trafficking Networks

As the sex industry grows, so does the market for trafficking. The increase in tourism is also linked to the escalating demand for sexual services. Aggressive marketing seeks to

lend an aura of glamour to this lurid business. As long as the demand is there, however, the traffickers will stay in business. Traditional and cultural male behavior, together with the demand for entertainment and sex services, may fuel the sex market and thus feed the trafficking business.

The trafficking of people for prostitution and forced labor is one of the fastest growing areas of international criminal activities. Trafficking is now considered the third largest source of profits of organized crime, behind only drugs and guns. Law enforcement experience shows that, although there is local-scale trafficking involving few individuals, there are also large enterprises and international networks that create a sophisticated and well organized industry in the countries of origin, transit and destination. Cases of corruption of officials have also been reported. There seems to be links with other forms of organized crime. The high profits made by these criminal organizations often necessitate the creation of front companies involved in legitimate activities. Profits are also laundered and fed into other illicit activities, including narcotics and arms trafficking.

The former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe have replaced Asia as the main source of trafficked women to Western Europe. Victims come from Russia, Ukraine, and other Eastern European countries. After the break up of the Soviet Union, trafficking from the region has escalated from a minor problem before 1991 into a major issue. As criminal organizations have grown, especially in Russia, they have gravitated to this lucrative business. Russian organizations now play a dominant role not just in the trafficking of Russian women but also women from throughout Eastern Europe. Russian organized crime groups and others including Albanian, Estonian, Czech, Serb, and Italian groups are involved in human trafficking in Europe. Furthermore, Russian organized crime is starting to take over the sex industry in a number of European countries (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, pp.11-12 and 24-25).

5 Complexities and Contingency of Human Trafficking “Rhizome”

There are many factors which easily change the situation of human trafficking. In the following, some of them are examined.

5.1 Political Change and Economic Regression

Dramatic political changes during the last one and a half decade have had severe effects on women’s life. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the transformation of the socialist economies into market economies took place without social security nets being in place. Likewise, the fall of the Berlin wall created new pressure for migration from Central and Eastern Europe into the EU. War and conflicts in the Balkans put further pressure on the women in those countries. The recession of the Asian economies in the late 1990s also had repercussions on the lives of women and children. Armed conflicts continue to afflict parts of the world, leaving many women exposed to traffickers (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, p.10).

Shelley analyzes post-communist transitions and the illegal movement of people and concludes that the smuggling and trafficking out of China and Russia are both consequences

of the difficult transformation in economies that had been, for a long time, centrally controlled, planned, and dominated by a rigid Communist party. Millions have suffered in this transition to market economies where the central state no longer assumes responsibility for all its citizens. Trafficking and smuggling groups have flourished with the decline of police controls and the complicity of past and present Communist party officials and security personnel. Corruption at home, in transit countries, and in recipient countries is also central to the success of the traffickers and smugglers.

The rise of international organized crime has coincided with the collapse of the Soviet system and the profound changes in the Chinese state and society. The crime groups emerging from these communist states are among the most prominent of global international crime groups. Both groups have capitalized on the demand to leave transitional states and the demand for cheap physical and sexual labor in developed countries. Unlike many international crime groups that are almost exclusively focused on the drug trade, Chinese and Russian crime groups have made the illegal movement of people a central focus (Shelley, 2000, p.81).

Moreover, in relation to the changing position in women, she analyzes that the most beneficial features of the Soviet period such as broad access to education and employment for women and social service were dropped almost immediately. The enforcement mechanisms of the Soviet period were no longer operable. Women could no longer ensure the collection of child support through the courts and state institutions. In the face of this enormous reversal in the status and possibilities for women, women retained their sense of responsibility to support their families. In this difficult transition, women had never been less financially equipped to provide for their extended families. Middle-aged women could not support young women in their teens and twenties. Young women, many of them already single mother, were vulnerable to the financial offers of traffickers.

This situation proved doubly advantageous to the crime networks because they placed women in an economically precarious position. Women were left without property, employment or the possibilities to initiate businesses. In many cases, the only "thing" of value that women had left was their bodies. In a market economy, their bodies were turned into commodities on a global scale satisfying an international demand for attractive Slavic women (Shelley, 2002, pp.219-220).

5.2 Peacekeeping Operations and Trafficking in Women and Girls in the Balkans

In addition, we never forget the fact that the increased demand for sexual services at military camps may trigger trafficking in women and girls.

The situation in post-conflict contexts deserves further analysis. There has been a particular focus on Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the presence of the international community and peace keeping forces has not only failed to prevent trafficking but also exacerbated the process. In both locations ample legal basis existed for addressing trafficking, but the problem has continued to expand. It is now widely accepted that significant sex industries have emerged in both Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In many discussions it is taken for granted that this is the outcome of the international

presence, and especially that of peacekeepers (Kelly, 2002, pp.18-19).

Focusing on the situation in the Balkans, The Vital Voice Global Partnership raises some issues of concern regarding the connection between trafficking in women and girls and peacekeeping operations in post-conflict zones as follows:

Socio-economic instability caused by war and civil unrest fuels human trafficking. The vast increase in human trafficking activity in the Balkans after the 90' s war has been carefully studied and documented by international human rights groups and non-governmental organizations. According to the White House, nearly 200,000 victims of trafficking each year are transported through the Balkans from Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine. Trafficked women and girls are held in debt bondage, forced to provide commercial sexual services to clients, wrongly imprisoned, and beaten when they do not comply with demands of the brothel owners who purchase them and deprive them of their passports.

According to a recently published report by Amnesty International, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) identified international peacekeeping forces as a causal factor of the increase in trafficking of women and girls in the Balkans as early as 2000. A comprehensive Human Rights Watch report in 2002 also found evidence of involvement in trafficking-related offenses by individual members of several international peacekeeping forces.

Indeed, the mission of international peacekeepers is to safeguard freedom and security in post-conflict regions. Their job is to ensure that basic human rights are respected. If members of these missions themselves are found engaging in or aiding the trafficking of persons, they are undermining the mission and should be liable to appropriate prosecution and punishment under their country's justice system. Currently, personnel deployed to UN operations enjoy immunity and are rarely subjected to any legal prosecution and punishment (Vital Voices Global Partnership, 2004).

5.3 Continuity, Flexibility and Change of Human Trafficking "Network"

Trafficking flows within and to Europe, show patterns of continuity and change, both as sex markets expand in some areas, and routes adapt to law enforcement activities and local political circumstances. Some flows reflect nothing more than the geographical proximity of source and destination countries: Scandinavian countries are focuses for traffic from Baltic countries. Other flows are more far reaching, for example, Russian women are known to have been trafficked into over 40 countries, and it is estimated that over two thirds (70%) of trafficked women from Former Soviet countries end up in Western Europe. The remaining third are taken to the Middle East, Far East and North America. Women from Central Asian republics are trafficked to Middle East, Russia and Turkey.

Preferred routes vary according to whether entry requires a visa, the size and porosity of borders, the links trafficking networks have, and the scale of local law enforcement efforts. For example, a recent Croatian study found a shift from entry through Hungary to Bosnia and Herzegovina following successful law enforcement intervention. This modification was also associated with a widening of the geographical spread of the Croatian sex market from

the capital into tourist area and military bases.

The documented growth of sex industries within South East Europe raises serious questions about the distinctions between origin, transit and destination countries. These transitions from being only a source and/or transit country to also becoming a destination for trafficking, point to critically important policy issues that cannot currently be informed by research. Does involvement of a country in trafficking at any level act as a catalyst in the development or extension of local sex industries? If this is the case, then an urgent question is to uncover the mechanisms involved and how might they be disrupted. At least two possible mechanisms can be found in the details of recent research. One is the deliberate use of transit locations to ‘break in’ women ? both to the sexual exploitation and their relative powerlessness. The other is smaller operators and middle men choosing to exploit women and girls en route, thus increasing their financial gain from the trafficking process. Another possibility is that there are (sex industry) entrepreneurs whose role is to develop new locations and markets (Kelly, 2002, pp.17-18).

5.4 Complexity and Contingency of Human Trafficking “Rhizome”

According to Melrose et al., trafficking is a complex activity that entails several phases and involves deferent social actors at deferent levels of the process. Trafficking is regarded as a serious problem by a number of different groups and organizations although each may regard it as a problem for different reasons.

Government interest in the issue often arises from concerns about illegal immigration, and/or international organized crime, which is thought to pose a threat to national security. Feminist groups tend to regard trafficking as a problem because for them it represents the increasing globalization of sexual exploitation of women and young people. Other Non-Governmental Organizations are concerned with the human rights abuses which those involved in trafficking networks may experience. The “problem” may therefore be variously constructed and understood as a criminal problem, a migration problem, a human rights problem, a public order problem or a labour issue problem.

Concerning trafficking routes, they mention that the evidence that is available suggests that some countries such as Thailand, for example, are involved in trafficking simultaneously as “source”, “destination” and “transit” countries. A study recently undertaken in Finland found that of 36 countries studied, 8 (or 22%) were areas of destination. These were Cyprus, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. A further 7 countries were identified as areas of destination and transit. These were Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Turkey and the UK. Seven countries, namely Belarus, Bosnia, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Macedonia and Slovenia were identified as areas of transit. Five countries, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Moldova, Russia and the Ukraine were identified as source countries. A further four countries, Estonia, Greece, Latvia and Lithuania were identified as source and destination areas while three, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia were identified as areas of source, transit and destination. Two countries, Albania and Romania, were identified as source and transit countries.

In Thailand and other areas of South East Asia, women are often transported from rural

areas to established sites of sex markets in Britain and/or Japan. On the other hand, some women are trafficked from rural areas to sites of established sex centers within their own countries (such as in Thailand and Cambodia) before being trafficked to sex centers in other countries. Trafficking routes appear to have been established to transport women and young people from Albania into Italy and/or Greece (and via these countries into the UK). There are indications that Lithuanian, Hungarian and Ukrainian women are also trafficked through these countries into the UK. Women from Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and East and West Africa appear to be transported directly to the UK or via other European countries into the UK. Women from these countries are also transported between, for example, Thailand and Japan and Cambodia and Thailand. The routes are extremely complex and as existing routes are discovered, so new ones are developed. Whether the trade in women and children takes place within national boundaries or across them, the flow of traffic tends to be from rural to urban areas, from areas of low capital density to areas of high capital density (Melrose et al., pp.13-14).

As we have seen above, it is difficult to classify countries into three categories: source/origin, transit and destination because the relationships among these countries are so complex like “rhizome” . Depending on occasional conditions, they in a sense contingently connect each other and play their roles by ear. These relations are so fluid and unstable as to change easily through an unexpected occurrence, in certain circumstances even through a tiny incidence.

6 Conclusions

“Complexity”, “contingency” and “rhizome” are useful concepts for the analysis of present-day human trafficking.

While much has been learnt over the past decade, Kelly insists, there remain unanswered questions and new challenges to understanding. Future research needs to move beyond simply establishing that there is a problem, to more nuanced studies of the organization of trafficking, its impacts on individuals, gender relations and communities, and begin critical assessment of counter-trafficking initiatives.

Patterns of in-country trafficking and how these are linked international movements, both in terms of organization, exploiters and dynamics, deserve detailed attention in the near future.

In addition, moreover, the organization of trafficking between countries deserves more detailed attention. Is it highly organized, disorganized or a combination? How are the various links in the chain connected? How are they disguised/hidden? In particular, to what extent are state officials (border guards, immigration, police, embassy staff) and employees of companies (such as travel agencies, airport staff, airlines) involved? Each of these represents potential pressure points and targets in counter-trafficking, but we lack detailed knowledge that could inform well-targeted training and anti-corruption programmes.

There are just some of the most obvious gaps in our knowledge although the need for research is most pressing, in order to ensure that counter-trafficking draws on accurate

local and international base. In the absence of such knowledge, policy and practice may, inadvertently, serve to deepen, rather than loosen the factors that make trafficking both so profitable and difficult to address. The issue of re-trafficking is a case in point, since mass removals may not act as a deterrent but merely result in the recruitment and exploitation of even more

At last, she warns us as follows: since trafficking is now global in its reach, it has become even more essential that professionals in the state and NGO sectors understand the contexts and motivations within which women and girls are located when they are recruited. Both the factors which make women and children vulnerable and their possibility for re-integration in the country of origin vary. Lack of understanding of the local and individual contexts result in generalized, rather than specific interventions, which are less likely to be effective (Kelly, 2002, pp40-44).

Note:

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