

# What the Balkans can teach other states in conflict

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Professor Neophytos Loizides. Credit: University of Kent

The research, undertaken by Professor Neophytos Loizides and Muzaffer Kutlay of the University's School of Politics and International Relations, and Dr Darren Dinsmore, of its Kent Law School, is published

in a special section of the journal *International Migration*.

Entitled Peace Processes and Durable Returns, the section includes contributions from around the world and focuses on consultation processes and innovative methods to examine the views of victims. The research has led to new projects to address seemingly intractable displacement issues in countries such as Cyprus, where talks at the UN recently ended in stalemate.

The academics highlight both failures and successes in addressing forced displacement, and challenge conventional wisdom on whether forced displacement can be reversed and the absence of lasting solutions to protracted conflicts.

The findings show that gender and age have a major impact on whether people return to areas they were forced to leave that were formerly a centre of conflict. Older people with positive memories of before wartime were more likely to return, while women were less likely to want to go back.

Muzaffer Kutlay's research focuses on the forced migration of the Turks of Bulgaria and their voluntary return in the aftermath of the country's transition to democracy. More than 340,000 Turks were forced to leave the country during the final phases of the Communist regime in 1980s, but almost 40 per cent voluntarily returned to Bulgaria after democracy was restored.

Her research exemplifies that peaceful transition to inclusive democracy and power-sharing, dual moderation between majority and minority leaders and the role of international actors, primarily the EU, account for voluntary and sustainable return.

Dr Dinsmore examines the geographical territory in Turkey previously

populated by Kurds who alleged their villages had been destroyed to move them out. He argues that the Turkish cases are an example of how to use human rights claims to expose situations of impunity for [human rights violations](#) and to challenge state denial.

Despite European human rights law offering protection to those who were forced to leave their homes, he found that the displaced Kurds could not take forward cases without co-ordinated action between local lawyers and outside legal experts in [human rights](#).

His research highlights the crucial role of lawyers and non-governmental organisations after cases have been won as there is a 'genuine risk that dealing with displacement is side-lined by broader efforts at conflict resolution and development'.

**More information:** Peace Processes and Durable Returns by guest editors, Neophytos Loizides, Djordje Stefanovic and Ayse Betul Celik is published in *International Migration*, October 2017. [DOI: 10.1111/imig.2017.55](#)

Provided by University of Kent

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