

# **NATIONAL, ETHNIC AND POLITICAL BACKGROUNDS OF THE BALKAN CONFLICTS**

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## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

**The lecture deals with the national, ethnic and political backgrounds of the conflicts at the Balkan Peninsula during the last century with the particular stress on the forceful decomposition of ex-Yugoslavia and the wars of Yugoslav succession when a new map of Southeast Europe was constructed. There are different aspects of the Balkan conflicts with the final aim to create united national states in the Balkans and to change the balance within the regional security system. As a result, it seems, that many “national questions” are resolved in favor of the supporters of creation of the pure national states. However, the problems such as national self-determination, historical and ethnic rights to the territories and states could emerge once again at any time among the Balkan nations and peoples and led them another time to ethnic conflicts, national animosities and new wars. This lecture suggests that ideological constructs of the borders of national states in the nineteenth century fostered the practical policies in the twentieth century.**

**It will be covered two main fields: *geopolitical* and *ideological* (confrontation of two ideologies: the historical legitimacy of some nations against the ethnic rights of the others). Those territorial aspirations and ideological-political context are chosen to start the different interpretation of the events shifting the study from the traditional historical approach about the Balkan conflicts. The national unification, or/and liberation, was only one objective; the other and, more serious, aim was to dominate politically, economically and culturally in Southeastern Europe. To legitimize their aspirations the national elites referred to their historical rights**

and justified historical continuity of national medieval states. Therefore, it is important to examine what ideological background was employed to defend the expansionist claims; and more specifically, how ideology of historical rights of one nation eliminated the ethnic rights of the others.

One of the focal topics to be discussed is the ideological background of Balkan/Yugoslav ethnic conflicts, tracing their roots and development from the time of national awakening and creation of ideological concepts of “united” and “greater/great” independent national states, i.e. from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In view of the fact that according to these ideologies, national state borders should follow both the borders of ethnographical dispersion of the nation and national historical state borders, ethnic cleansing was “unavoidable” in the areas of ethnically mixed composition. Additionally, the problem of emigration, forced migration, displaced persons and ethnic cleansing on the territory of the former Yugoslavia will be investigated from the angle of religious wars, as religious nationalism in the Balkans has exceptionally strong impetus on concepts of national identification and nationhood. Newly created national state borders on the territory of the former Yugoslavia are not only “ethnic” borders; they are “religious” as well.

We will use some visual materials such as maps and photographs and power point presentation. Language of instruction is English.

#### **Suggested Readings:**

Banac I., *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1984.

Canak M. (ed.), *“Greater Albania”*: Concepts and Possible Consequences, Belgrade 1998.

Poulton H., *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict*, London, 1991.

Trifunovska S., Yugoslavia Through Documents. From its Creation to its Dissolution, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, 1994.

Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War, Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 1995.

Beljo A., Greater Serbia: From Ideology to Aggression, Zagreb 1992.

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