

# Rethinking Serbian-Albanian Relations

Identifying and explaining common views, ideas and traditions, this volume challenges the concept of Serbian-Albanian hostility by reinvestigating recent and historical events in the region. The contributors put forward critically oriented initiatives and alternatives to shed light on a range of relations and perspectives.

The central aim of the book is to “figure out” the problematic relations between Serbs and Albanians – that is, to comprehend its origins and the actors involved and to find ways to resolve and deal with this enmity. Treating the hostility as a construct of a long-running discourse about the Serbian or Albanian “Other”, scholars and intellectuals from Serbia, Kosovo and Albania examine the origins, channels, agents and mediums of this discourse from the 18th century to the present. Tracing the roots of the two ethnic groups’ political divisions, contemporary practices and actions allows the contributors to reconsider mutually held negative perceptions and identify elements of a common, shared history. Examples of past and current cooperation are used to offer a critical analysis of all three societies.

This interdisciplinary publication brings together historiographical, literary, sociological, political, anthropological and philosophical analyses and enquiries and will be of interest to researchers in the fields of sociology, politics, cultural studies, history or anthropology; and to academics working in Slavonic and East European studies.

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The Balkans are a region of Europe widely associated over the past decades with violence and war. Beyond this violence, the region has experienced rapid change in recent times though, including democratization, economic and social transformation. New scholarship is emerging which seeks to move away from the focus on violence alone to an understanding of the region in a broader context drawing on new empirical research.

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# **Rethinking Serbian-Albanian Relations**

Figuring Out the Enemy

**Edited by  
Aleksandar Pavlović,  
Gazela Pudar Draško  
and Rigels Halili**

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# Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	viii
<i>List of contributors</i>	ix
<i>Foreword</i>	xii

## SECTION I

### **Whose land is it? The establishment of Serbian-Albanian hostility** 1

- 1 Forging the enemy: the transformation of common Serbian-Albanian traits into enmity and political hostility** 3

ALEKSANDAR PAVLOVIĆ

- 2 Producing Old Serbia: in the footsteps of travel writers, on the path of folklore** 22

SRĐAN ATANASOVSKI

- 3 “Reconquista of Old Serbia”: on the continuity of territorial and demographic policy in Kosovo** 39

VLADAN JOVANOVIĆ

## SECTION II

### **The Yugoslav experiment: Serbian-Albanian relations in comparative perspective** 59

- 4 The burden of systemic legitimization in socialist Yugoslavia: discursive reduction of Kosovo protests** 61

MARJAN IVKOVIĆ, TAMARA PETROVIĆ TRIFUNOVIĆ  
AND SRĐAN PRODANOVIĆ

vi *Contents*

<b>5</b>	<b>Seeing each other: nesting Orientalisms and internal Balkanism among the Albanians and South Slavs in the former Yugoslavia</b>	79
	ATDHE HETEMI	
<b>6</b>	<b>Conflicted narratives: the 1998–1999 Kosovo war in history textbooks in Kosovo and Serbia</b>	98
	SHKËLZEN GASHI	
<b>SECTION III</b>		
	<b>Intellectuals and war: the mediators of (non-)national justice</b>	109
<b>7</b>	<b>Figure of the Other as an open project: literary works of Albanian authors from Albania and Kosovo translated in Serbia</b>	111
	SASA ĆIRIĆ	
<b>8</b>	<b><i>We, Sons of the Nation</i>: intellectuals as generators of Albanian and Serbian national ideas and programs</b>	127
	RIGELS HALILI	
<b>9</b>	<b>The symbolism of impotence: intellectuals and Serbian-Albanian relations in the post-Yugoslav period</b>	142
	GAZELA PUDAR DRAŠKO	
<b>SECTION IV</b>		
	<b>Can there be cooperation after all: cultural and political cross-border practices</b>	161
<b>10</b>	<b>Serbian-Albanian mixed marriages: when patriarchy breaks nationalist barriers</b>	163
	ARMANDA HYSA	
<b>11</b>	<b>Cultural heritage in Kosovo: strengthening exclusion through inclusive legislation</b>	180
	JELENA LONČAR	

Proof

*Contents* vii

<b>12 “Face to Face”: Serbian-Albanian cultural cooperation in the media</b>	197
ANA BIREŠEV	
<b>13 The community of the dispossessed: Women’s Peace Coalition</b>	215
ADRIANA ZAHARIJEVIĆ	
<i>Index</i>	230

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### 3 “Reconquista of Old Serbia”

#### On the continuity of territorial and demographic policy in Kosovo

*Vladan Jovanović*

The idea of *soil* as the definitive indicator of a community is a part of the “organic political order” and concept of the so-called *national state* that Serbia cultivated ever since acquiring the first signs of its own statehood.<sup>1</sup> As the source of the “founding myth” of the Serbian state, Kosovo is the central toponym both in myths of indigeneness and “the spiritual space of the nation”,<sup>2</sup> in which traces of national history and culture decisively determine the ownership of territory, regardless of its actual political status or demographic makeup. Owing to its unusually strong symbolic potential, Kosovo was rightly marked as a “metaphysical space”, in which the self-victimization has become the “mooring point” of identity.<sup>3</sup>

In order to present the way in which the state policy of Serbia and Yugoslavia corresponded with the “metaphysical” nature of Kosovo spatiality, this chapter focuses on a set of “physical”, that is, administrative-territorial and demographic measures applied in Kosovo from 1912 until the mid-1950s. This chapter goes through several chronological units in following three parallel processes of “de-Ottomanization” that include attempts of territorial recomposition and demographic leveling of the space (by means of colonization and emigration) under several different states, political and ideological systems. Considering that my previous historical research<sup>4</sup> of Serbian and Yugoslav demographic policies in Kosovo has shown a certain overlapping and continuity, this time I would also like to look at the pre-history of the problem, in order to provide a broader chronological framework of my previous findings.

\*\*\*

The terminological designation of the “new regions” annexed to Serbia and Montenegro in 1912 was nothing but the rearranging of geographic borders of a space known in the literature of the time as *Old Serbia*. This term entered wider use in the 1830s, in order to obtain a specific name for a “classical” Serbian region that remained outside the borders of the autonomous Serbian Principality. After the Serbian-Ottoman wars of 1876–78, various authors used to equate the term *Old Serbia* with the Kosovo *vilayet*. On the eve of the Balkan wars, the Serbian historian and politician, Ljubomir Jovanović wrote about a kind of Serbian