

# Dynamics and Policies of Prejudice from the Eighteenth to the Twenty-first Century



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Edited by

Giuseppe Motta

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# THE SAVAGES ATTACK FROM BEHIND: ANTHROPOLOGICAL STEREOTYPES ABOUT ALBANIANS IN SERBIAN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

VLADAN JOVANOVIĆ\*

Ethnocentric societies are a suitable environment for nurturing prejudice against the neighbours, but they are also prone to generating authoritarian regimes, as the recent Balkan history has shown. Even though Kosovo has no ethnic designation (as presented in literature and media), general ideas about long-lasting conflict and the inferiority of the “other” still resonate among the Albanians and the Serbs in the region. Kosovo became a “metaphysical entity”, a metaphor for suffering, though the conflict was not the result of incompatible cultures or innate hatred. On the contrary, it was consistently generated by “power shifts that allowed one group to dominate over another”, as Helena Zdravković points out in her book (2005, 234-238).

Looking at ethnic stereotypes as “generalizations about the characteristics, attributes and behaviour of the members of ethnic groups”, a young sociologist Vujo Ilić (2015, 177, 180) points to an article by Green and Seher (2003, 509-531) which shows a positive correlation between ethnic stereotypes and the various stages of ethnic conflicts. Accordingly, my central hypothesis in this paper is that ethnic prejudice usually intensifies before major political changes or wars: in this context, prejudice represents a purely political construct and a dangerous weapon of nationalist regimes. By examining the correlation between the intensity of ethnic prejudice and political upheaval, I will look at several key periods, primarily focusing on the Serbs’ negative stereotypes in their contemporary perceptions of Albanians and how those stereotypes led to mutual hostility.

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