



SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

# PROGRAMME

Southeast European Studies Student  
Symposium

*3. Edition*

**27-29 March 2025**  
**online via ZOOM**

**MORE INFORMATION**



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supported by:



# Southeast European Studies Student Symposium

*3rd Edition*

2025

# Greeting

Hey!

Following two more than successful events in 2023 and 2024, we are delighted to welcome you to the third Southeast European Studies Student Symposium, hosted by the [Young Southeast European Association \(JSOG\)](#). The symposium is a wonderful opportunity to present and discuss research ideas on various aspects of Southeast Europe, such as its history, culture, politics, and economy, to an engaged and interested community of students.

In addition to the presentations and workshops, we would like to encourage you to use the symposium as a platform for networking both within your profession and in the discipline in general. You can interact with other participants, exchange feedback, share resources, and explore potential collaborations.

You can also join the JSOG, a network of young researchers and students who are passionate about Southeast Europe and contribute your ideas to the various projects we are planning, such as publications, events, and outreach activities.

We wish you three instructive and enjoyable days, and look forward to seeing you again at one of our many JSOG events.

All the best,  
Mara and Philip, the speakers of the JSOG



# Welcome!

Dear Participants of the 2025 SEES Student Symposium,

We would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you who have joined us for this online event. As students in Southeast European Studies, we are fascinated by this region, and we are delighted to have received so much interest in the first edition of the symposium. It is a pleasure to see so many of you willing to share your knowledge and insights but also your concerns and doubts.

Over the upcoming days, we will explore an array of topics related to Southeast Europe, encompassing identity and emotion, remembrance culture, human rights, social justice, the EU's role in regional matters, and much more. Additionally, we will critically analyze South-Eastern European Cinema as a means to unpack antigypsyism. Through presentations, workshops, and networking opportunities, our goal is to foster meaningful discussions and establish new connections transcending borders. All of this centered around Southeast Europe as a unifying theme. Exciting, isn't it?

This symposium is meant to be a platform for respectful debates at eye level and tolerance for mistakes. We intend to connect BA and MA students, as we are all in the same boat, trying to figure out how to do our research, or even what to research. The symposium serves as an opportunity to help us all row forward, share our thoughts and learn from one another. We thus encourage you all to approach the symposium with an open mind and a spirit of curiosity, and with the willingness to challenge your own assumptions and broaden your horizons.

We wish you all two insightful and enjoyable days, and we look forward to seeing the valuable contributions that will come out of this event. Thank you for being a part of this. And now – let's go!

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# Practical Information

This list contains some practical information for the symposium.

- Please [register](#) for the symposium, even if you are already listed as a speaker. The attendance of the workshops is limited. Places are allocated according to the principle first come first serve. Participants who also present have priority however.
- We use Zoom as our video conference platform. **We will sent you the respective links in an email shortly before the event.**
- Please note that all times given in the schedule below are in UTC+1 (Berlin time).
- We have prepared a [Google Document](#) for literature tips you might want to share during the symposium. Please do not delete the suggestions of others.
- If you want share materials or resources with other participants, or if you want to leave your feedback, you can do so [here](#).

# Programme

<b>Friday, 27 March 2025, Room 1</b>		
Time	Speaker	Title
16.45–17.00	Orga Team	Introduction and Greeting
17.00–18.00	Orga Team	Getting to Know Each Other
18.00–19.00	Nikolaos Tzifakis	From the Waiting Room to Full Membership: The Challenges in the EU accession path of the Western Balkans

<b>Friday, 28 March 2025, Room 1, <i>Nationalism, Identity, and State Formation</i></b>		
Time	Speaker	Title
9.00–9.35	Gresa Morina	Unions and Unity. Why the ottoman socialist movement could not stop the nationalist carving of the Balkans
9.40–10.15	Enej Lovrečič	Nationalism and racism in Slovenia
10.20–10.55	Nikolaos Tselentis	The position of Bosnia and Herzegovina between East and West. Actors, influence, and prospects
11.00–11.35	Bilyana Valkovar	The Development and Securitization of National Identity in Bulgaria (1970-1989)
11.40–12.15	Lea Hensch	Nation, Gender, and Memory Politics: The forgotten contribution of women to the building of the Kosovar nation
LUNCH BREAK		



<b>Friday, 28 March 2025, Room 2, Social, Economic, and Political Transformations</b>		
Time	Speaker	Title
9.00–9.35	Amalia Angeliki Theocharidou	The integration of the EU energy market in the southeastern Europe as a diversification mechanism after the Russo-Ukrainian war
9.40–10.15	Haralampos Savvidis	Unions and Unity. Why the ottoman socialist movement could not stop the nationalist carving of the Balkans
10.20–10.55	Alessandro Ieranò	"Montenegro: in the Footsteps of the DPS?" Navigating Partocracy After Dominant Party Rule
11.00–11.35	Liana Popa	"Cunoștea că este gravidă, nu ș-ia dorit sarcina" Maternal Mortality in Romania's Ceaușescu Regime
11.40–12.15	Dionysios Karavitis	"Blue Homeland": Turkey's revisionist strategic doctrine"
LUNCH BREAK		

<b>Friday, 28 March 2025, Workshop Rooms</b>		
Time	Speaker	Title
14.00–15.30	Dr. Andra Drăghiciu	Whose Stories Are We Watching? Unpacking Antigypsyism in South-Eastern European Cinema
14.00–15.30	TBA	TBA
BREAK		
17.00–18.00	Orga Team	Networking Evening

<b>Saturday, 29 March 2025, Room 1, War, Violence, and Historical Memory</b>		
Time	Speaker	Title
9.00–9.35	Benedikt Putz	From Partisan Republic to Nation State: Constructing National Histories of World War II Resistance in Post-Yugoslav Slovenia and Post-Soviet Belarus
9.40–10.15	Dimitrije Sekulovic	Evolution of the Police State in Serbia 1987-2003
10.20–10.55	Tomáš Košek	A microhistorical analysis of the local spiral of violence between the Serbian and Bosniak communities in the municipality of Prijedor (22-30 May 1992)
11.00–11.35	Agathe Formanek	The lack of interest in the remembrance of communist prison and labour camps in the Balkans- A case-study of Yugoslav <i>Goli Otok</i>
11.40–12.15	Ben Orendt	A Slave Race. The Enslavement of Roma in Wallachia and Moldavia in the 16th Century and its Causes
LUNCH BREAK		

**Saturday, 29 March 2025, Room 2, Culture, Language, and Religion**

Time	Speaker	Title
9.00–9.35	Philip Piljić	NGOs and reconciliation: History education in Bosnia and Herzegovina
9.40–10.15	Leander Hanssen	Growing ideological interference of both states in cultural policy through mainstream cinema
10.20–10.55	Adrianna Klier	Comparative Croatian prefixed verbs with their semantic counterparts in Polish
11.00–11.35	Anna-Maria Takaliou	Smoke and Soil: An Environmental History of the Tobacco Trade in Early 20th Century, Greece
11.40–12.15	Arlinda Shatri	Religious Syncretism and Identity: A comparative Study of Halvetii (khalwati) Order and Sufism Practices in the Has Region
LUNCH BREAK		

**Saturday, 29 March 2025, Separate Workshop Rooms**

Time	Speaker	Title
14.30–15.30	Dr. Pavel Antonov	SEE! Career Prospects

# Abstracts

## **Aging, Care, and Migration: An examination of the Living Situation of Retirees from Former Yugoslavia in Germany**

Gresa Morina  
University of Regensburg

28 March  
09.00  
Rm 1

This master thesis examines the situation of elderly people from Southeast Europe in Germany, guided by the following question: How do migration experiences shape their perceptions of life in retirement and their needs in old age? The hypothesis is that these experiences bring both individual and collective challenges and resources for care in later life. In the context of an aging society in Germany, the issues of aging and elderly care among migrants are becoming increasingly significant. When the Federal Republic of Germany signed recruitment agreements with Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey in the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of people came, mostly with the intention of working for only a few years before returning to their home countries. The Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s led to further migration. Many of these individuals, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, remained in Germany and have now reached retirement age. Their migration experiences and cultural differences, such as varying perceptions of family, care, and aging, shape both their expectations for life in retirement and their needs for care. Through interviews with elderly individuals from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, and Montenegro, this study provides qualitative insights into their lived experiences and coping strategies.

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## **Nationalism and racism in Slovenia**

Enej Lovrečič  
University of Graz

28 March  
09.40  
Rm 1

With the turbulent events of the 1980s, the different nationalities from other parts of Yugoslavia began facing different forms of discrimination in Slovenia. By the time Slovenia achieved independence, these tensions cultivated into full-blown racism. Slovenia had been an attractive destination for immigrants from other Yugoslav republics. Since the 1960s, waves of people from all republics had migrated to the more developed North of the country in search of better opportunities. There had always been backlash from the locals towards immigrants. However, by the 1990s, considering the historical context, social and economic situation, and the rise of nationalist fervour, the feelings of fear, anger and hatred culminated into wide spread antagonism. This hostility was manifested in the infamous Erasure – the removal of approximately 25.000 people from the register of permanent residents

implemented by the administrative bodies of the Republic of Slovenia. This exclusionary sentiment persists in the present, manifesting in more subtle but enduring forms of discrimination. The focus of this presentation will be on the rise of nationalism and racism in Slovenia in the final years before the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The study will primarily focus on the Socialist Republic (SR) of Slovenia and its transition from brotherly solidarity to distance from other members of the federation. It aims to identify the regime established in SR Slovenia which later enabled a racist sentiment and policy. Additionally, it will analyse how significant events throughout the decade were portrayed by the media. Finally, once a database of information is collected, a central focus will be on the emotional appeals employed to manipulate with the public. Currently, the thesis is in the early-writing phase. By the time of the Symposium, its theoretical framework, methods, and methodology will be fully developed.

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28 March  
10.20  
Rm 1

## **The position of Bosnia and Herzegovina between East and West. Actors, influence, and prospects**

Nikolaos Tselentis  
University of the Aegean

The modern history of Bosnia and Herzegovina is closely intertwined with Western presence and influence. The United States of America (USA) and NATO, initially, and the European Union (EU), later, took on the responsibility of overseeing and implementing the peace process on Bosnian soil, using various means and methods to achieve their goal. However, developments over time diminished the interest of those involved, leading to their gradual withdrawal from the Western Balkans as a whole. On a domestic level, Bosnia and Herzegovina was plagued by ethnic disputes, regressed democratically, and “flourished” in the area of corruption, making its political system vulnerable to the practices of political elites. These elites, holding ambiguous feelings towards the Western factor, forged strong ties with external actors, both traditional and new, who operate in ways contrary to democratic values and ideals. The aim of this presentation, therefore, is to highlight the involvement of external actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to the stagnation of European enlargement and the inertia of the USA and their ability to distance the country from Western institutions. For a more complete understanding of the issue, the presentation will analyse the unique Bosnian federation, followed by an examination of the influence of the West, concluding with the role of third countries in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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## **The Development and Securitization of National Identity in Bulgaria (1970-1989)**

Bilyana Valkovar  
University of Graz

28 March  
11.00  
Rm 1

State formation and nation-building are processes that all states go through in an attempt to homogenize their population through the institutionalization of a state language, religion and political, economic and social institutions. Nation-building and the national identity, that emerges out of the process, are topics with great importance in the contemporary world of IR, especially in the light of the Russia-Ukraine war, where identity is presented as a key issue. Through this lens, it is evident that the internal process of nation-building has repercussions beyond the mere state level. National identity is relatively stable – it is continuous and permanent, yet it is subjected to short-term changes. One way of developing it is in interaction with people who do not belong to the same group, as these people represent the so-called “other”. This “other” serves as a means of comparison and contrast, without the “other”, there can be no realized identity. The focus of this study is the development and securitization of the national identity in Bulgaria in the period 1970-1989, and a subsequent comparison to the national identity in the period 2010-2020 with an empirical research on history textbooks intended for students in high schools. The period of analysis of these textbooks will encompass the communist period, to create a baseline of narratives that the Communist Party pushed, with a focus point on the late 1970s and early 1980s as this is the period that saw a rapid rise in nationalism and identity securitization. The second period of analysis will be from 2010 until 2020, still focusing on high school education. The goal here is to see if the narratives that were predominant in the 1980s have outlived the events surrounding them and have successfully become a part of the contemporary Bulgarian national identity.

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## **Nation, Gender, and Memory Politics: The forgotten Contribution of Women to the Building of the Kosovar Nation**

Lea Hensch  
Freie Universität Berlin

28 March  
11.40  
Rm 1

For generations, women have played an active role in independence struggles worldwide, yet their contributions are often forgotten – including in Kosovo<sup>1</sup>. The significance of Kosovo-Albanian women in the resistance movements of the 1990s remains absent from the national master narrative, and the continuity of their agency is silenced in the discourse on national identity and state-building in post-war Kosovo<sup>2</sup>. The following research project challenges this omission by highlighting personal stories of women and their silenced narratives as historically relevant knowledge. Such memories disrupt the male-dominated historical narrative and counteract the erasure of their contributions to the resistance and the construction of the Kosovar nation. In state- and nation-building, the erasure of woman's

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<sup>1</sup>Enloe 1989

<sup>2</sup>Luci Gusia 2015: 206-7, 218; Mujika Chao 2020: 855; Demiri 2018: 1, 35; Krasniqi 2020; Krasniqi 2014: 204

multidimensional memories is not due to a lack of exchange, but a result of the intersection of nation, gender, and militarism. This intersection also shapes the representation of gender in Kosovo's memory culture. While men are depicted as heroic protectors and founders of the nation, women are reduced to symbolic roles – as mothers of the nation or passive victims. These binary, hierarchical gender representations are upheld by the master narrative and current powerholders to secure male privilege in nation-building and to consolidate patriarchal order. The lack of recognition of women's contributions has far-reaching consequences for Kosovo-Albanian women across generations. However, women rarely defend their own stories in public, as internal and external processes systematically silence them<sup>3</sup>. The erasure of their socio-political contributions is further reinforced by international peace-building missions in post-war Kosovo, which also contribute to the consolidation of patriarchal power structures<sup>4</sup>. Through an ethnographic study of memory culture, nation-building, and gender dynamics, this research project contributes to understanding the complex and contested dynamics of shifting gender roles in conflict and post-conflict situations. It aims to demonstrate that gender as a category of social and political organization in Kosovo is not solely the result of a patriarchal legacy, but also reproduced through the nationalization of memory politics and interventions by international regimes.

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28 March  
09.00  
Rm 1

## **The integration of the EU energy market in the southeastern Europe as a diversification mechanism after the Russo-Ukrainian war**

Amalia Angeliki Theocharidou  
University of Piraeus

The Russo-Ukrainian war has caused hazard to the EU's energy strategies, given the fact that Russia was EU's biggest oil and natural gas supplier, until the imposing of sanctions. As a response, EU has applied itself to finding new gateways for the safe supply of the Union, one of them being southeastern Europe, as the REPowerEU strategy guides, one of its domains being the diversification of suppliers, in order to minimize possible energy cut-offs. The southeastern European countries play a central role in these measures, serving as an alternative energy transit hub and a renewable resources provider, allowing the passing of natural gas and oil pipelines and the southeastern European countries' investment in the energy infrastructure and contributing to the general EU energy securitization. But how efficient, cost-effective and competitive is this plan and how it can evolve in the future? This research is conducted through the energy geopolitics and economic concept, using the mixed-methods approach, meaning qualitative elements from the EU reports, published academic researches and official statements from the EU member-states and quantitative elements, diagrams and statistic elements. After explaining the importance of energy as a tool of force and how Russia has encroached it, this presentation highlights the opportunities for the countries of southeastern Europe due to the source diversification actions, passing to the already existing EU agreements, infrastructure and planning of the area, cooperation with the EU instrumental bodies, but also states the hardships of the stated gateway. Furthermore, it compares the state of the southeastern European countries before and after

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<sup>3</sup>Stephens 2014: 127-9; Mannergren Selimovic 2018: 3-4

<sup>4</sup>Balbon 2023: 5; Luci Gusia 2015: 199

the imposition of sanctions, economically and geopolitically, reaching to the conclusion that this mechanism can be efficient if certain conditions of time, funding and cooperation can be met.

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## **Unions and Unity. Why the ottoman socialist movement could not stop the nationalist carving of the Balkans**

Haralampos Savvidis  
University of Regensburg

28 March  
9.40  
Rm 2

My bachelor's thesis will address the topic of the multi-ethnic agenda of trade unions and socialists in the Ottoman Empire in the period right before the Balkan Wars. The rapidly growing working population in the tobacco and railway industry, which also included Western workers, organized themselves at the beginning of the 20th century. It is particularly notable that they opposed contemporary nationalism in the trade union newspapers and propagated a class-based identity. In 1908 after the Young-Turk Revolution seized power, a particularly large strike took place in what is now Thessaloniki, which underlined the power of the trade unions at that time. Despite the strengthening of the trade union and socialist movement, the Balkan Wars happened and ended multiculturalism in many places of the border region. Through the newspapers I will explore what the official positions of the ottoman unions were on the topic of multi-culturalism, how they tried to enact on them and why they believe they ultimately failed. I will focus mainly on Greek material to consider cooperation between Ottoman-Greek unionists/socialists and those from Greece and how they reacted to the Greek invasion of the Ottoman Empire.

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## **"Montenegro: in the Footsteps of the DPS?" Navigating Partocracy After Dominant Party Rule**

Alessandro Ieranò  
University of Graz

28 March  
10.20  
Rm 2

This study explores the enduring legacy of dominant-party rule in post-dominant-party systems, focusing on how governance models and mechanisms of political dominance persist even after the electoral defeat of a dominant party. Using Montenegro as a case study, it examines the continued influence of partocracy—a system characterized by informal practices such as political patronage and clientelism—that underpinned the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) during its three decades of competitive authoritarian rule. Specifically, the research investigates the persistence of partocracy after the end of dominant-party rule, analyzing both continuity and change within state institutions, public administration, and socio-political expectations. It addresses how successor governments engage with entrenched informal networks, whether they seek to dismantle or

perpetuate these practices, and how Montenegrin society perceives political patronage in the post- DPS era. Utilizing qualitative methods—including expert interviews and policy analysis—this

study contributes to the broader literature on dominant parties, state capture, and democratization. The findings have significant implications for the Western Balkans, where partocracy remains a persistent challenge that hinders democratic consolidation and EU integration. By examining the resilience of dominant-party mechanisms, this research enhances our understanding of political transitions and the persistence of informal power structures in post-dominant-party systems.

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## **"Cunoștea că este gravidă, nu ș-ia dorit sarcina" Maternal Mortality in Romania's Ceaușescu Regime**

38 March  
11.00  
Rm 2

Liana Popa  
University of Vienna

This project positions itself as active memory work, offering new perspectives on the persistently marginalized subject of maternal mortality during the Romanian Ceaușescu dictatorship (1965-1989) by investigating maternal deaths that occurred in direct correlation with the abortion ban of the regime. During the 23 years of its existence, Decree 770/1966 criminalized and prohibited abortion almost completely. By the 1980s, Romania was recording the highest numbers of maternal mortality in Europe, with abortion being stated as their primary cause. Official statistics reported a total of more than 11.000 maternal deaths, while only taking into account women who had already had at least one child as "mothers" and neglecting to consider cases that were potentially not recorded by official institutions or hospitals. This project aims to shed light on the dimensions of this gender-specific form of repression through a gender-historical lens "from below". On the basis of maternal death files from the Romanian Socialist period, it regards factors such as occupation, age, and family circumstances as important intersectional analytical categories that allow for a closer understanding of these women's cases and stories. The records offer a unique insight into abortive practices during the Communist Regime, as well as into institutional frameworks and processes of medical personnel in their efforts to save these women's lives. Above all, the sources convey the agency and lived realities of the respective women in a period of complete state control and reproductive injustice. The project aims to shift the perspective from that of a collective of victims of oppression to one of individual women's bodily autonomy and agency, supporting the claim that these women resisted the impositions of the totalitarian Regime through their actions, and by that, engaged in passive resistance.

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## **"Blue Homeland": Turkey's revisionist strategic doctrine**

Dionysios Karavitis  
University of Piraeus

29 March  
11.40  
Rm 2

As an undergraduate researcher at the Turkish and Eurasian Studies Laboratory of the University of Piraeus, my area of research focuses on Turkey's foreign policy in relation to the West (EU, USA, NATO). In this context, I recently completed an academic article on Turkey's revisionist strategic doctrine, also known as the "Blue Homeland" doctrine. During the last decades, Turkey's foreign policy has been characterized by illegal and revisionist claims against Greece and the Republic of Cyprus, two member states of the European Union. Turkey's activism appears to be inspired by a comprehensive doctrine, which encompasses all Turkish maritime claims, not only in the Aegean Sea, but also in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Initially developed by Turkish admirals, the "Blue Homeland" doctrine aims to geopolitically transform Turkey into a mighty regional power or even a great power. Through my research, I detected four main pillars of the "Blue Homeland" doctrine: • The dispute of Greek and Cypriot - and therefore European - sovereignty. • The instrumentalization of International Law (lawfare). • The acquisition of research and drilling vessels. • The utilization of hard power, mainly naval power. Furthermore, the Erdogan regime has officially embraced this revisionist doctrine, in the aim of fulfilling its neo-Ottoman ambitions in the region. The entire Turkish political system also supports the Turkish government in this endeavor, despite ideological differences. Indeed, the "Blue Homeland" constitutes a new "National Pact" for the Turkish political system. Similar to the "National Pact" of 1920, through which the last Ottoman government affirmed the political independence of Turkey, before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the "Blue Homeland" affirms Turkey's ambition to become a significant regional power. Finally, the "Blue Homeland" represents a grave geopolitical threat for Southeast Europe and the EU. A revisionist Turkey, aiming to revive its Ottoman past, ought to be confronted with great caution.

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## **From Partisan Republic to Nation State: Constructing National Histories of World War II Resistance in Post-Yugoslav Slovenia and Post-Soviet Belarus**

Benedikt Putz  
Freie Universität Berlin

29 March  
9.00  
Rm 1

This study explores the development of national memories of the partisan movements in Slovenia and Belarus, two countries that experienced significant resistance movements during World War II, and how these have been commemorated and used to shape national identity after independence in 1991. It is evident that despite commonalities in their wartime resistance, Belarus and Slovenia have diverged significantly in their post-independence trajectories, with Slovenia emerging as a liberal democracy within the EU and Belarus as a post-Soviet autocracy. This divergence extends to their treatment of wartime memory, with Belarus integrating the narrative of the Partisan Republic more centrally into both its Soviet and national memory, compared to Slovenia's more nuanced integration into its Yugoslav and later EU-oriented identity. The study employs a comparative analysis which focuses on the

manifestation of these memories in monuments, museums, public commemorations, and educational curricula. It seeks to answer the question: How do the national cultures of remembrance of the partisan conflicts in Slovenia and Belarus since 1991 resemble and differ from each other? The study critically examines how these memories are curated and propagated, and assesses their impact on contemporary national identities and broader socio-political narratives. By examining these narratives in two under-researched countries, this study seeks to contribute to understanding how nations selectively use history to construct identity and the role of memory in post-conflict national integration. The findings will provide insights into the wider dynamics of memory politics in post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav spaces.

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29 March  
9.40  
Rm 1

## **Evolution of the Police State in Serbia 1987-2003**

Dimitrije Sekulovic  
University of Moscow

With the disintegration of the state apparatus and federal institutions of Yugoslavia, Serbia, like all the republics of Yugoslavia, faced an uncertain process of reintegration. This process involved reinventing and rethinking Serbia's role and position in the structure of Yugoslavia. The research seeks to trace the evolution of the police state from Slobodan Milosevic's rise to power to the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. The main thesis of my research consists in the claim that the "anti-bureaucratic" or "yogurt" revolution was not exclusively the coming to power of a new political elite, but the beginning of the creation of a police state in Serbia. Both through the opening of archives and through court proceedings, the issue of the police state has begun to be considered with caution in historiography, bearing in mind the historical distance of the given period. With the arrival of the new leadership under Slobodan Milosevic, there is an increasing consolidation of power in Serbia and the abuse of the police and state structures in achieving political goals through the use of wider popular masses and propaganda. This showed the potential of executive power as a branch of the party. Using eyewitness reports, state instructions, newspaper articles as well as the work of politicians, the research explores the extent to which the police state covered politics in Serbia. The methodological approach allows us to explore the experiences of individuals, how they themselves perceived their role in the state. This puts the focus on political actors as one of the main factors in maintaining the police state. The conclusions as well as the results of the research have a wider importance for understanding not only the current political situation in Serbia, but also for dealing with social traumas from the given period.

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## **A microhistorical analysis of the local spiral of violence between the Serbian and Bosniak communities in the municipality of Prijedor (22-30 May 1992)**

Tomáš Košek  
Charles University

29 March  
10.20  
Rm 1

My research leading to the diploma thesis focuses on microhistorical analysis of the local spiral of violence between the Serbian and Bosniak communities in the municipality of Prijedor in the critical period of 22–30 May 1992. Based on testimonies before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, it examines the emergence and dynamics of violence, which escalated from initial sporadic clashes into a systematic military offensive against the Bosniak armed resistance and resulted in the establishment of the internment camps of Omarska, Trnopolje and Keraterm for the deportation of the non-Serb population. The case study is based on the theoretical and methodological approach of Max Bergholz based on microhistorical analysis and the concept of the spiral of violence. The research results are confronted with the Serbian, Bosniak and Western international metanarrative of the emergence of violence in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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## **The lack of interest in the remembrance of communist prison and labour camps in the Balkans- A case-study of Yugoslav *Goli Otok***

Agathe Formanek

Erasmus Mundus Master: University of Tartu (Estonia), University of Glasgow (UK), University of Sarajevo (BiH)

29 March  
11.00  
Rm 1

The project focuses on the lack of memory culture surrounding the Yugoslav political prison complex on Goli Otok, the so-called “barren island”. The prison was established on the island in 1949 after the Tito-Stalin split and was used until 1956 to imprison Yugoslav Stalinists, former partisans, and other dissidents. Although the island’s name has become synonymous with political persecution and torture in Yugoslavia, a pervasive silence surrounds both the

island and its victims in all post-Yugoslav states. Especially political actors across the post-Yugoslav republics hardly show any initiative to commemorate the victims publicly. This work

seeks to identify the specific political and social factors that contribute to the absence of memory culture, both on a collective as well as institutional level, by conducting expert interviews with artists, journalists, activists and historians who engaged with Goli Otok in different professional contexts. Through these interviews, different factors and potential explanations for the absence of commemoration, such as present-day “Yugonostalgia”, historical revisionism, but also the ethnic composition of the victims as well as the presence of more recent traumatic collective experiences during the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, will be connected and discussed. The project furthermore wants to situate the case study of Goli Otok in the general state of memory culture in the post-Yugoslav states and use this as a starting point to critically reflect on the working hypothesis that there is a limit to the capacities a society has for collective and public remembrance of traumatic experiences and their victims.

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29 March  
11.40  
Rm 1

## **A slave race. The enslavement of Roma in Wallachia and Moldavia in the 16th Century and its Causes**

Ben Orendt

Friedrich Schiller University Jena

I aim to examine the historical roots of the enslavement of Roma in the former principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. I argue that the majority of Roma initially migrated voluntarily to this region between the Carpathians and the Danube and Dniester rivers – from the fourteenth century onwards, when the principalities emerged. By law, Roma were the property of the voivode and had to pay him special taxes. Some were lent to monasteries and later also to the nobility, the so-called boyars, who were given the right to collect and keep these taxes. From the sixteenth century onwards, a racial discourse developed in the Danubian principalities that reflected a similar discourse throughout Europe. This discourse placed Roma outside of Christianity, whiteness and therefore outside of humankind. As an example, I analyze a deed in which a boyar family donated an enslaved boy to a monastery. The boy's beneficent donation was intended as a sacrifice for the salvation of a deceased member of this noble family. These and countless other documents show that the racialized devaluation of Roma also served to valorize Whites. Secondly, I argue that the enslavement of Roma enabled the monasteries to maintain their economic power as the largest landowners. The interplay of these two factors, the economic dependence on Roma slave labor and the racialization of Roma as non-Christian and non-white resulted in the monasteries being at the forefront of the construction of an early modern society where being Roma became synonymous with being a slave.

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29 March  
9.00  
Rm 2

## **NGOs and reconciliation: History education in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Philip Piljić

University of Graz

My master's thesis, which is still in its very early stages, is based on the assumption that history education has the potential to play a key role in fostering reconciliation in so-called post-conflict societies such as post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. In BiH, the education system tends to serve ethnonationalist aims more than the fostering of a civil, multicultural identity, with the three

largest ethnic groups, the Bosniaks, the Serbs and the Croats, all teaching certain subjects, so-called national subjects', using their own curriculum. Thus, history education in BiH is more

of a dividing force than one that brings Bosnian citizens, and especially the newer generations, together, hindering both reconciliation and civic integration. Different from most of the currently existing literature, the thesis aims at balancing the narrative of international and EU influences with local agency, acknowledging that external frameworks, respectively implementations, may not always align with on-the-ground needs. Thus, the thesis highlights the role of NGOs and how they contribute to shaping how key historical events are taught and commemorated within BiH's post-war education system. My thesis concentrates on the war period, emphasizing particularly the Srebrenica genocide. While EU conditionality and international standards are considered, my work foregrounds the local and international NGOs

that collaborate with schools, curriculum developers, and policymakers. Their initiatives often aim to promote inclusive historical narratives and inter-ethnic dialogue in classrooms.

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## **Growing ideological interference of both states in cultural policy through mainstream cinema**

Leander Hanssen  
Ghent University

29 March  
9.40  
Rm 2

Taking processes of national identification and positioning towards the West as criteria, the (geo)political development of Russia and Serbia since the fall of the Soviet bloc in 1989-1991 can be divided into three periods, which to a large extent are similar for both countries. In the period 1989-2000 – the ‘Yeltsin period’ in Russia or the ‘Milošević period’ in Serbia – both countries go through chaos and turmoil, but at the same time develop the desire to move towards Western democracies, with economic and civil liberties. Between 2000 and 2012 – the first Putin (Russia) or post-Milošević (Serbia) period – the chaotic 1990s are left behind and political efforts are made to move closer to the West. However, this process does not go as aspired in both countries, which leads to disappointment and, eventually, growing resentment towards the West. This culminates in a turn inwards since 2012, the second Putin (Russia) or Vučić (Serbia) era, a period is characterised by growing nationalism, authoritarianism and anti-Western views, as well as the convergence of Russia and Serbia. While this development is primarily visible on the level of geopolitics, it also seems to be reflected in mainstream cinema, with there being significant parallels between Russia and Serbia. Films of the Yeltsin/Milošević era are often self-critical and pro-Western. In the cinema of the first Putin/post-Milošević era, we see a healing sense of national self-worth. In the second Putin/Vučić era, then – the period of turning inwards in terms of geopolitics – we see the rise of ‘hardcore’ nationalist blockbusters, lashing out at the ‘other’. That the Russian and Serbian states and their increasingly anti-Western attitudes have a hand in all this seems obvious, but to what extent is a major question. The proposed research will examine the growing ideological interference of both states in cultural policy through mainstream cinema.

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## **Comparative Croatian prefixed verbs with their semantic counterparts in Polish**

Adrianna Klier

University of Leipzig, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, University of Katowice

29 March  
10.20  
Rm 2

The presentation elaborates on a topic of a seminar paper which I intend to extend in my master thesis. I aim to compare Croatian prefixed verbs with their semantic counterparts in Polish. In theory, this comparison can yield different results: (i) Both the verb stem and the prefix are equivalent in the two languages (e.g., Croatian *ot-ići* – Polish *od-ejść* ‘leave’); (ii) Only one part is equivalent (e.g., *od-govoriti* – *od-powiedzieć* ‘answer’); (iii) There is no equivalence whatsoever (e.g., *ob-ići* – *od-wiedzić* ‘visit’). An additional feature to be considered is [±reflexivity], as it can change, too (e.g., *na-učiti* – *na-uczyć się* ‘learn’). My goal is to

determine the percentages of the above groups (i), (ii) and (iii), respectively, and to reflect about what these percentages might tell us about the linguistic (especially morphological) distance between modern standard Croatian and Polish. However, the approach comes with several possible difficulties that I would like to present and discuss with the audience. Thus, one and the same Croatian verb can have multiple meanings, each of which can be encoded by an individual verb in Polish (e.g., do-dati – do-dać ‘add’; or do-dati –

po- dać ‘pass’). This raises the question which criteria should be used to choose from a range of several

possible equivalents. Another question is where to draw the line to separate semantically similar equivalents. Finally, there are a large number of prefixed verbs whose lexical meaning has moved far away from their source verb with the result that they no longer form a pair from a synchronous perspective (e.g., Polish wiedzieć ‘know’ – powiedzieć ‘tell’). All these aspects shall be taken into consideration in my paper and master thesis. I am looking forward to inspiring questions and constructive feedback.

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## **Smoke and Soil: An Environmental History of the Tobacco Trade in Early 20th Century, Greece**

28 March  
11.00  
Rm 2

Anna-Maria Takaliou

University of Graz

This research explores tobacco production in late 19th- and early 20th-century Greece, with a focus on the region of Macedonia and Thrace during the late Ottoman period and its post-Ottoman transition, through the lens of environmental history. This research aims to examine the road of tobacco from the production to the international markets and its effects to trans-regional trade networks and local livelihoods. As an alternative to view tobacco solely as an agricultural product, this research examines the complex social structures, trade networks, and cultural landscapes shaped by its cultivation, processing, and commerce. The commodification of tobacco influenced communal structures and reconfigured class relations within labor production. Moreover, the cultivation of hemp played a crucial role in integrating the large refugee population resettled under the Lausanne Convention, redefining the interconnections between tobacco, people, and the environment. The case of oriental tobacco highlights the resilience and adaptability of small-scale workers and factories in response to shifting international market demands, positioning them as integral components of a global economic network. Grounded in environmental history, political ecology, and cultural history, this research analyzes how power structures and ecological transitions— particularly state and local policies—shaped land use, resource management, and labor practices. By tracing the relationship between the environment, global trade routes, and cultural exchanges, this research focuses on Eastern tobacco as a significant case for understanding broader economic, social, and environmental transformations. Drawing on archival material, trade records, and secondary literature, it aims to uncover human experiences throughout the life cycle of tobacco in a period marked by economic transformations, globalization, and political change.

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# **Religious Syncretism and Identity: A Comparative Study of Halvetii (khalwati) Order and Sufism Practices in the Has Region**

Arlinda Shatri

"Hasan Prihtina" Prishtina University

29 March  
11.40  
Rm 2

In this research paper, I aim to explore the interplay of religious syncretization and identity within the context of the Halvetii order in the Has region. Employing anthropological and ethnographic methodologies, the study delved into the practices, rituals, beliefs, and rational context of decision-making of the locals in collaboration with the Shehu (the imam). I aim to communicate how these religious traditions, beliefs in the afterlife, and religious rituals influence the social and cultural lives of the residents in Has. I also aim to explore how the syncretization of elements of these traditions has shaped their shared norms, values, and practices. Through in-depth ethnographic research, interviews, and participant observation, this research aims to shed light on the dynamics of religious belief and the construction of religious identities in the Has region, an area known for its rich history of pluralism and religious traditions. A wide range of research methods has also been used, including the analysis of books and writings by various authors who have explored this faith, and historical research to arrive at the question; how has Sufism in a historically and culturally rich area managed to become part of the lives of the inhabitants and how they perceive Sufism.

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# Workshops and Lectures

## **Getting to Know Each Other**

Orga Team

27 March  
17.00  
Rm 1

Meet your fellow SEE students! The networking event will be the first item on the programme and takes place on Friday, 27 March at 5 p.m. We want to offer you the possibility to meet online, exchange your experiences with the studies, the field, the region as well as your expectations towards the symposium. Since we want to connect students from various places interested in the same region, we thought of a Zoom session with breakout rooms. You might know someone already and want to catch up online!?

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## **From the Waiting Room to Full Membership: The Challenges in the EU accession path of the Western Balkans**

Dr. Nikolaos Tzifakis

University of the Peloponnese

27 March  
18.00  
Room 1

The EU's determination to welcome new member states from the Western Balkans within its ranks has been galvanised since 2022. The EU is not eager to leave a 'grey zone' or a 'no man's land' in Europe. However, there are several challenges ahead. The EU should carry out internal reforms to become 'enlargement ready' without leaving candidate countries indefinitely in the waiting room. It should also accelerate the accession process without compromising on its norms-based conditionality. In addition, it should substantially increase its pre-accession assistance to Western Balkan countries to improve the region's economic convergence with EU member states. Overall, the EU is urged to increase the effectiveness of its enlargement policy to integrate the Western Balkans quickly. If the EU fails to promote its objectives in its own 'inner courtyard', it is doubtful whether it may assert itself geopolitically elsewhere in the world.

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## **Whose Stories Are We Watching? Unpacking Antigypsyism in South-Eastern European Cinema**

28 March  
14.00  
Workshop Room

Dr. Andra Drăghiciu

*Critical Film and Image Hub, Research Center on Antigypsyism, Heidelberg University*

Have you ever stopped to question the way certain communities are portrayed in film? Movies like *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (Petrović, 1967), *Time of the Gypsies* (Kusturica, 1988), and *Black Cat, White Cat* (Kusturica, 1998) are celebrated as cinematic masterpieces, but whose stories do they really tell? Created by filmmakers from the majority, these films construct and reinforce stereotypes about a minority—shaping audience perceptions and impacting real lives. In this interactive workshop, we will sharpen our critical media literacy skills, learning to spot the subtle (and not-so-subtle) ways antigypsyism is embedded in film. Through self-reflection, discussion, and eyes-on film analysis, we'll explore how cinema constructs power dynamics and racialized identities. We will draw on Radmila Mladenova's concept of "gypsy-themed films" to understand the mechanisms behind these representations and their social consequences. By the end of the workshop, you'll not only watch films differently—you'll gain the tools to challenge harmful narratives and see beyond the surface.

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28 March  
17.00  
Rm 1

### **Networking Meeting**

Orga Team

On Friday afternoon, we invite you to gather in a shorter meeting after the presentations and workshops. Join us, meet your fellow participants, exchange ideas and connect!

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29 March  
14.30  
Workshop Rm

### **SEE! Career Prospects**

[Dr. Pavel Antonov](#)

Co-founder and Executive Editor of BlueLink, Civil Society Advisor to the Minister of Environment and Waters of Bulgaria

Discover diverse career paths related to Southeast Europe! In just one hour, gain insights from humanities and social science graduates who have successfully ventured into culture, academia, politics, media, business, and civil society. Tailored for students and doctoral candidates with a thematic focus on Southeast Europe, these talks offer a glimpse into career opportunities in or related to the region. Join us and be inspired by their experiences!

Pavel Antonov | Co-founder and Executive Editor of the BlueLink Foundation - a civic think-and-action network for Central and Eastern Europe, based in Sofia, Bulgaria. Antonov is also a Board Member of the global Association for Progressive Communication and of the national Tobacco-Control Coalition in Bulgaria. He is the former civil society Advisor to the Minister of Environment and Waters in Sofia, and was the Chief Editor of Green Horizon magazine at the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe in Hungary, which was also published in Turkey as Yesil Ufuklar. As a PhD graduate from the Open University,

Milton Keynes (UK), Pavel Antonov leads BlueLink's applied research of the state of civil society and civic participation in decision making, in the context of increasing corporate grasp of democratic institutions and mass media. Some of his most recent work analyses the engagement of social movements and journalists with issues of collective interest, such as environmental, climate change and tobacco control, and the role of digital communications. Since 2024 he teaches Manipulation at the Milestone Institute in Budapest.

BlueLink | The BlueLink Foundation's mission is to uphold democracy, European values and nature protection by enhancing civil society coordination, exchange of information and knowledge, particularly by using digital tools.

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## **Where to Go Now? – Informal get-together**

Orga Team

29 March  
20.00

That was a long ride, wasn't it? We hope it was informative, engaging and enlightening. But the fun does not have to stop here! You are in Graz or Regensburg at the moment? Don't be shy and let the symposium come to an end together with us at a local bar in the evening. Drop us a DM on Instagram if you are interested. Be as spontaneous as you wish, all participants are welcome!

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# Team

We are the organisational team. Feel free to contact us anytime!

Email: [symposium.see@gmail.com](mailto:symposium.see@gmail.com)

Insta: @see\_student\_symposium

- **Enej Lovrečić** is a MA student of History at the Southeast European Studies in Graz. He is interested in the history of emotions, nationalism, and ideas of Balkan unification – with a focus on post-World War II Yugoslavia and its breakup.
- **Johannes Nüßer** studied the MA Eastern European Studies (history and slavistics) at the University of Regensburg until January 2024, with a focus on Romania and the region of former Yugoslavia. Now he is working at a German relief organisation for Central and Eastern Europe
- **Anna Charlotte Richter** studies East European Studies (International and European Law, Linguistics) at the University of Regensburg. Interested in minority rights, human rights, transitional/transformational justice and constitutional law.
- **Fabio Ashtar Telarico** is a researcher and PhD student at the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia). His portfolio includes policy-oriented and academic publication on Bulgarian studies, political economy, and statistics including the development of software packages for the programming language R.
- **Antonia-Annamaria Varga** is an MA student in European Studies at the University of Regensburg. Previously she studied South-Eastern European History (MA) at „Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca. Her research interests align with the following: 19th century international relations, the construction of informational networks, eugenics and Romanian identity formation.
- **Jessica Barboni** is currently studying for a Master’s degree in European Studies at the University of Regensburg. Her main areas of interest lie in the cultural and linguistic aspects of intercultural encounters.
- **George Alatsidis** comes from Thessaloniki, Greece. He has a BA in Political Science, and an MA in Comparative Politics. His research interests focus on post-communist party systems and elections in Southeast Europe. He is currently occupied in the Public Opinion Research Unit of University of Macedonia.

# Acknowledgement

We would like to wholeheartedly thank the following people for contributing to the symposium:

- Dr. Nikolaos Tzifakis
- Dr. Andra Drăghiciu
- Dr. Pavel Antonov

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the invited speakers, those who made the SEE! Career Prospects possible, and all the presenters. A special thanks goes to the Southeast Europe Society for their funding and organizational support. We also wish to extend our appreciation to seeFField for their exceptional contribution to this event, which has been instrumental in ensuring the success of the conference. Lastly, we are grateful for the recent addition of the Turkish and Eurasian Studies Laboratory (TES Lab) at the University of Piraeus. Their collaboration has further strengthened the organizational efforts, and we look forward to their continued partnership.

Thank you all for making this event possible!

The organisational team

This booklet was assembled using the "A Basic Conference Abstract Booklet" template by LianTze Lim. All mistakes are our own.