

Ethnic Minorities and Politics in Post-Socialist Southeastern Europe

Southeast European politics cannot be understood without taking into account ethnic minorities. This book provides a comprehensive introduction to the politics of ethnic minorities, examining both their political parties and issues of social distance, migration, and ethnic boundaries, as well as issues related to citizenship and integration. Coverage includes detailed analyses of Hungarian minority parties in Romania, Albanian minority parties in Macedonia, Serb minority parties in Croatia, Bosniak minority parties in Serbia, and various minority parties in Montenegro, as well as the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, a largely Turkish party, in Bulgaria.

Sabrina P. Ramet is a professor of Political Science at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU, in Trondheim, Norway. Born in London, England, she was educated at Stanford University, the University of Arkansas, and UCLA, receiving her Ph.D. in Political Science from UCLA in 1981. She is the author of twelve scholarly books (three of which have been published in Croatian translations) and editor or co-editor of thirty-two published books. Her books can also be found in French, German, Italian, Macedonian, Polish, and Serbian translations. Her latest book is *Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe: A question of justice*, co-edited with Christine M. Hassenstab (2015).

Marko Valenta is a sociologist and a Professor at the Department of Social Work and Health Science at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU, in Trondheim, Norway. He did his graduate work in Sociology at NTNU, where he also received his Ph.D. in Sociology. He is author or co-editor of three books and more than sixty journal articles, research reports, and book chapters focusing on ethnic relations and international migrations.

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Edited by Sabrina P. Ramet, Marko Valenta

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Edited by

Sabrina P. Ramet

*Norwegian University of Science and Technology,
Trondheim*

Marko Valenta

*Norwegian University of Science and Technology,
Trondheim*



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In memory of Andreas Hofer (1767–1810),
a Tyrolean hero

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Notes on Contributors

DRAGAN BAGIĆ is an Assistant Professor at the Sociology Department of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. His research areas are sociology of migrations, with special interest in refugee studies. In that field he has conducted several research projects in the last several years in Croatia and other post-conflict countries of Southeastern Europe. In addition, his research interests include political sociology and industrial relations. He has published five books and more than twenty papers in international and national journals. He teaches Classical Sociological Theories and Political Sociology.

AUREL BRAUN is Professor of International Relations and Political Science at the University of Toronto. He was a Visiting Professor in the Department of Government, Harvard University from 2012 to 2015, and continues his affiliation with Harvard as an associate of the Davis Center. He is also a Research Associate of the Centre for Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies and of the Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto. Professor Braun has published extensively on communist affairs and strategic studies, with a special focus on the problems of the transformation of the socialist systems in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. He is the author and editor/contributor of several books. These include: *The Soviet-East European Relationship in the Gorbachev Era: The Prospects for Adaptation* (1990); *The Middle East in Global Strategy* (1987); *Small State Security in the Balkans* (1983); *Ceaușescu: The Problems of Power* (1980); *Romanian Foreign Policy Since 1965: The Political and Military Limits of Autonomy* (1978); *The Dilemmas of Transition: The Hungarian Experience* (1999); and *NATO–Russia Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (2008). Professor Braun has written more than fifty scholarly articles and has contributed to numerous collections of scholarly works. His latest book is *Russia, the West, and Arctic Security* (forthcoming).

JANUSZ BUGAJSKI is a Senior Fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) in Washington, DC and host of television

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shows broadcast in the Balkans. Bugajski has authored nineteen books on Europe, Russia, and trans-Atlantic relations, and is a columnist for several media outlets. His recent books include *Conflict Zones: North Caucasus and Western Balkans Compared* (2014); *Return of the Balkans: Challenges to European Integration and U.S. Disengagement* (2013); *Georgian Lessons: Conflicting Russian and Western Interests in the Wider Europe* (2010); *America's New European Allies* (2009); *Dismantling the West: Russia's Atlantic Agenda* (2009); and *Expanding Eurasia: Russia's European Ambitions* (2008). His book with Margarita Assenova is entitled *Eurasian Disunion: Russia's Vulnerable Flanks* (2016).

FRED P. COCOZZELLI is Associate Professor of Government and Politics at St. John's University in New York City. He has researched and written on post-conflict social policy, minority rights in Kosovo, and the politics of the Balkans. Dr. Cocozzelli is the author of *War and Social Welfare: Reconstruction after Conflict* (2009), which analyzed the reconstruction of the social welfare institutions in post-conflict Kosovo. His research on the social policy of Kosovo was also featured in *Social Policy and International Interventions in Southeastern Europe* (2007). Other work has been published in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, *Ethnopolitics*, and *The Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*. Dr. Cocozzelli completed his Masters of International Affairs at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and his doctorate in political science at the New School for Social Research.

IRINA CULIC is a Professor of Sociology at Babeş-Bolyai University in Romania and has previously taught at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, University College London, and the University of Windsor, Canada. She has published on nationalism and inter-ethnic relations in Romania and Hungary, the re-writing of history in post-communist Romania, the role of elites in Romania's post-communist transition, on immigration, citizenship, and state-building in Central and Eastern Europe, and on the politics of dual citizenship in Romania and Hungary. Her recent research takes the empirical case of more than a century of Romanian immigration to Canada and the US to approach issues of state power and embodiments of the state, economic and population policy, ethnicity, subjectivity, and ethnography.

SNJEŽANA GREGUROVIĆ is a Research Associate at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies in Zagreb, Croatia. She graduated in Sociology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Zagreb University, where she earned her Master's Degree in the field of the

sociology of ethnicity and her Ph.D. in the field of the sociology of international migrations. She has participated in several research projects and published more than ten scientific and expert papers in the fields of the sociology of ethnicity and sociology of migration. Her research interests pertain to the fields of the sociology of migration, sociology of ethnic relations, and images of the Other.

ZACHARY T. IRWIN, born in Port Jervis, New York, is an Associate Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the Behrend College of Pennsylvania State University in Erie. He received his AB from Hamilton College, his MA from The Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies, and his Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University. He has contributed chapters to several books edited or coedited by Sabrina Ramet – among them, *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, rev. ed. (1989); *Beyond Yugoslavia: Politics, Economics, and Culture in a Shattered Community*, coedited with Ljubiša S. Adamovich (1995); *Democratic Transition in Slovenia: Value transformation, education, and media*, coedited with Danica Fink-Hafner (2006); and *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). His articles have appeared in *East European Quarterly*, *Problems of Communism*, *South Asia*, and other journals.

MILAN MESIĆ was a Professor of Sociology and the Chair of Migration and Ethnic Studies Department of Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, where he taught sociology of migration, sociology of social movements and multiculturalism. Mesic published more than 200 scientific works, including 10 books (3 in English). He was invited to many American and European universities as a guest lecturer and actively participated at numerous international conferences. Mesic had broad research interests: from migration refugee and ethnic studies over social movements, multiculturalism, and political sociology to general social issues. Especially relevant for this book are two works in English: Mesic, Milan, and D. Bagic (2011) *Minority Return to Croatia – Study of an Open Process* (UNHCR, 2011), and an article Mesic wrote in collaboration with Dragan Bagic: “Serb Returnees in Croatia – the Question of Return Sustainability,” *International Migration* (2010). Professor Mesic died in April 2016, while this book was in production.

KENNETH MORRISON is a Reader in Modern Southeast European History, De Montfort University, Leicester, the Co-Director of the university’s ‘Jean Monnet Centre for European Governance’ (CEG), and

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was, in 2011–2012, a Senior Visiting Fellow at the European Institute at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He holds an MA from the University of Aberdeen and a Ph.D. from the University of Stirling. He has written widely on the Western Balkans and is the author of *Montenegro: A Modern History* (2009) and co-author (with Elizabeth Roberts) of *The Sandžak: A History* (2013).

MOJCA PAJNIK is a Senior Research Associate at the Peace Institute, Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies in Ljubljana, and Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Her research focuses on issues of migration, gender (in)equality, and citizenship. She is author of *Prostitution and Human Trafficking: Gender, Labour and Migration Aspects* (2008), and co-editor of several books, among them: *Contesting Integration, Engendering Migration: Theory and Practice*, with Floya Anthias (2014); *Work and the Challenges of Belonging: Migrants in Globalizing Economies*, with Floya Anthias (2014); *Precarious Migrant Labour across Europe*, with Giovanna Campani (2011); and *Nations–States and Xenophobias: in the Ruins of Former Yugoslavia* (with Tonči Kuzmanić (2005)). She has published more than thirty articles in peer-reviewed journals and chapters in volumes published internationally. Among her recent projects is PRIMTS – *Prospects for Integration of Migrants from “Third Countries” and their Labour Market Situations: Towards Policies and Action*, EC, 2008–2010. Currently, she is partner to RAGE, *Hate Speech and Populist Othering in Europe through the Racism, Age, Gender Looking Glass*, EC, 2013–2015.

SABRINA PETRA RAMET is a Professor of Political Science at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU, in Trondheim, Norway. She was elected in 2002 to membership of the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters, and in 2009 to membership of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. Born in London, she earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Philosophy at Stanford University, her Master’s Degree in International Relations at the University of Arkansas, and her Ph.D. in Political Science at UCLA in 1981. She is the author of twelve scholarly books (one of which has gone into a fourth edition and two others of which have been reissued in expanded second editions), and editor or co-editor of thirty-two previous books – among them, *Religion and Politics in Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989* (2014) and *Gender (In) equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe: A question of justice*, co-edited with Christine M. Hassenstab (2015). She has written

more than 100 journal articles and has contributed chapters to various scholarly collections.

FILIP ŠKILJAN is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies in Zagreb, Croatia. He graduated in History at the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Zagreb University, where he earned his Master's Degree and his Ph.D. in the field of the Croatian history of the twentieth century. He worked in the Jasenovac Memorial Area from 2003 to 2006 and in the Serbian national council from 2006 to 2010. He has published ten books about World War Two in Croatia and national minorities in Croatia, and more than thirty papers in the field of the history of the twentieth century and the history of national minorities.

MARIA SPIROVA is Associate Professor of Comparative Politics and International Relations at the Institute of Political Science at Leiden University, the Netherlands. She has published on issues related to party development, patronage, minority policy, and ethnic politics in the post-communist world. She is the author of *Political Parties in Post Communist Societies: Formation, Persistence and Change* (2007) and co-editor of *Party Patronage and Party Government in European Democracies* (2012).

ZAN STRABAC is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway. His main areas of research are quantitative methods, ethnic relations, and peace studies. He has several publications that focus on the Yugoslav successor states. His articles have appeared in *European Societies*, *Sociological Quarterly*, *Social Science Research*, *Politics and Religion*, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, and *Südosteuropa*.

JELENA SUBOTIĆ is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Georgia State University in Atlanta. She holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2007). She is the author of *Hijacked Justice: Dealing with the Past in the Balkans* (2009), as well as numerous scholarly articles on human rights, transitional justice, and identity politics in the Balkans.

MARKO VALENTA is a Professor at the Department of Social Work and Health Science at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU, in Trondheim, Norway. He is also a Senior Researcher at the NTNU Social Research. Born in Zenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina, he studied Law at the University of Split, Croatia, and Sociology, Social Science, and Geography at NTNU. He earned his

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Ph.D. in Sociology at NTNU. He is author or co-editor of three previous books, and author or co-author of more than sixty journal articles, research reports, and book chapters focusing on ethnic relations, international migrations, and the Yugoslav successor states. Valenta is a member of the European IMISCOE Research Network and board member of Nordic Migrations and Ethnic Relations research network. He coordinates the International Migrations and Ethnic Relations Research Network for Southeastern Europe.

ALEKSANDER ZDRAVKOVSKI is a Ph.D. fellow in Political Science at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway. He received his MA (2008) from the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland. His area of interest is religion and politics in Southeastern and Central Europe. He has authored a number of articles and chapters for edited books.

Preface

Southeastern Europe is among the most ethnically heterogeneous parts of Europe. Several million people who are members of different ethnic minorities live in the region, and the issue of ethnicity, ethnic relations, and the position of the ethnic minorities has emerged as one of the most prominent issues in the post-socialist transition of the countries in this part of Europe. In the post-communist period, this region has experienced tremendous political and socioeconomic transformations. New states and political and economic systems have been established. In conjunction with these developments, leading figures in local ethnic groups have established nationalist political parties, often with mutually exclusive political agendas. In some cases, minorities have wanted to improve their position within the existing institutional frameworks, while in other cases they have fought against emerging institutions of state and even displayed overt secessionist ambitions. The most ethnically heterogeneous country in the region, Yugoslavia, disintegrated in the 1990s, and, in the process, different ethnic groups came into conflict in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo. These conflicts resulted in loss of human life, migrations (both within the region and beyond), atrocities, and extensive damage to infrastructure, damaging local economies. Although the socio-political situation improved gradually in the post-war period, the nationalist political parties have continued to influence political life in most of the states that emerged in the course of the collapse of Socialist Yugoslavia. People in other countries of Southeastern Europe did not experience ethnic conflicts, but the ethnic dimension in local politics nonetheless became more prominent there too, with several political parties that represented the ethnic minority groups emerging throughout the region. In several of the countries, the ethnic minority parties have even played an important role in national politics.

One cannot fully understand the course of the post-socialist transition in the countries in Southeastern Europe without coming to grips with inter-ethnic relations and ethnic minority politics in the region. This

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volume explores various dimensions of the ethnic relations; among other things, we provide the first comprehensive overview of the major political parties that represent the ethnic minorities in this part of Europe. There are several people and institutions that have directly or indirectly helped us in our work with this volume. First of all, we want to thank the Norwegian Research Council, which provided support for establishment of the researcher network for scholars sharing an interest in the international migrations and the ethnic relations in Southeastern Europe. We also wish to thank The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, the Department of Social Work and Health Science for its financial support for the preliminary copyediting of certain chapters. Chapter 6 is an abridged version of an article which appeared originally in *Serbian Political Thought* (The Organisation and Political Position of Serbs in Croatia, *Serbian Political Thought*, Vol. 5, No. 4/2012, pp. 23–55). It is reprinted here by permission of the author and the publisher.

Valenta came up with the original idea for this volume and together with Ramet recruited the contributors. Ramet proposed expanding the project to include a focus on ethnic minority parties, and both editors provided substantive feedback to the contributors. Valenta raised funds to hire a professional copyeditor to undertake preliminary copyediting on five of the chapters; Ramet completed the copyediting of these chapters and the remainder of the book. Ramet also assembled the “further reading” section and took responsibility for coordinating with the contributors, copyeditor, Press, and indexer once the book was accepted for publication.

The editors
Trondheim, Norway