

At the Department of International Studies meeting, held in 2025, the Master Thesis Defense Commission (hereby the Commission) for the candidate Nikolina Klajić was formed including the following members: prof. dr. Alexandra Perišić (mentor), prof. dr. Goran Tepšić and prof. dr. Nemanja Džuverović. The Commission, consisting of members approved by the Council for the Second and Third Cycle of Studies, is responsible for overseeing the defense of the master thesis.

After a review of Nikolina Klajić's master thesis, the Commission is submitting the following comprehensive report.

Report

Nikolina Klajić's master thesis, titled "Balkanism in Action: Self-perception(s) and Political Culture among Youth in Serbia," examines the relationship between Balkanist discourse, self-perceptions, and political culture in contemporary Serbia. By drawing on Constructivism, Postcolonial theory, and the theory of Political Culture, the thesis situates Serbia within a broader framework of Balkan studies while narrowing its empirical focus to youth perceptions.

The thesis is structured into five main chapters: Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, Methodology, Empirical Analysis, and Conclusion. The literature review offers a comprehensive overview of Balkanism, its intersections with Orientalism, and Serbia's position within this framework. It identifies a research gap in the study of how Balkanist discourse influences political culture, particularly among younger generations.

The theoretical framework integrates Constructivist concepts of socially constructed identities, Postcolonial perspectives on Balkanism as a discourse of domination and self-definition, and Political Culture theory as a means to examine how shared beliefs, norms, and values influence political behavior. This combination provides a nuanced analytical lens for the study.

Methodologically, the thesis adopts a mixed-method approach, combining survey research with focus group discussions and narrative analysis. This dual strategy allows the author to capture

both quantitative trends in perceptions and the deeper qualitative narratives that shape political behavior.

The empirical analysis demonstrates that Serbian students are strongly aware of the duality of national self-perceptions, oscillating between notions of Serbs as a 'Heavenly people' and as 'the worst ones.' The research shows that these contradictory perceptions are internalized and politically relevant, shaping attitudes toward governance, protest, and collective action. Importantly, the thesis highlights how these perceptions are not only inherited from historical legacies but also continually reproduced through discourse, particularly under the influence of Balkanist narratives.

The conclusion emphasizes that Balkanism is not only an external categorization but also an internalized discourse that directly affects political culture in Serbia. By focusing on students, the thesis underscores the importance of youth as agents of political change and as a key group for understanding how identity and discourse shape future political behavior. The study contributes to Balkan studies, Constructivist and Postcolonial scholarship, and research on political culture by bridging theoretical insights with empirical findings.

Following a thorough review, the Commission concludes that Nikolina Klajić's master thesis successfully fulfills all the necessary formal requirements for public defense. The thesis demonstrates originality, methodological rigor, and academic relevance, and is prepared for presentation to a broader audience.

The Commission:

prof. dr. Goran Tepšić
University of Belgrade
Faculty of Political science

prof. dr. Nemanja Džuverović
University of Belgrade
Faculty of Political science

prof.dr. Alexandra Perišić
Singidinum University
Faculty of Media and Communication

Belgrade,
September 2025