International Academic Conference

DIPLOMATIC NETWORKS AND STATE-BUILDING

in Southeast Europe 18th – 20th Century



27 - 28 November 2026
Sofia, Bulgaria

9:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Sofia University,
New Conference Hall
15 Tsar Osvoboditel
Blvd., 1504 Sofia

Conference Overview

The phenomenon of state building has profoundly shaped the modern Balkans, but its diplomatic and international dimensions remain relatively understudied in the field of the humanities.

What were the Medieval and Early Modern origins of diplomatic state-building in Southeast Europe?

What role did the Ottoman Empire and other regional, continental and global factors play in the diplomatic modernization of the region?

Who were the agents of modernization, and how were they integrated (or not) in wider networks of trade, diplomacy, and statecraft?

The current conference seeks to explore these questions through novel historical, interdisciplinary, and digital-humanities perspectives, reappraising the place of Southeast Europe in the global trajectory of statebuilding and situating the region within broader conversations about modernity and modernization.

The conference provides a platform to approach these questions in local, national, regional, continental, and global settings, enabling and encouraging scholars to adopt micro- and macro-perspectives on the diplomatic aspects of state-building processes in Southeast Europe.

Organizing Committee:

Simeon Simeonov
Radoslav Spassov
Aneta Mihaylova
Stamatia Fotiadou
Angel Zlatkov

Origins, Imperial Frameworks, and Consular State-Building

09:00 - 09:30 – Registration and Welcome Coffee
09:30 - 10:00 – Opening Session, Welcome and introductory

10:00 - 10:45 – Keynote Lecture

– Daniel Cain, The Consular Networks of the Balkan State at the Beginning of the 20th Century: An Overview

10:00 - 10:45 – Coffee Break

11:00 - 12:30 PANEL I – Toward Modern Consulship: Consuls and the Foundations of State-Building

Chair: **Ivan Roussev**

– Simeon Hinkovski, *The Consular Institution in the Medieval Balkans: Examples from the Black Sea*
– Mathieu Grenet, *Building the state-building: consulates as houses, arenas, and symbols, 16th–19th century*
– Vinicije Lupis, *Dubrovnik diplomat Miho Damjan Bračevic in the twilight of freedom*
– Simeon Simeonov, *The Balkans Ancient and Modern: The Institutional Past in Balkan Consular Modernity*

Discussion: 12:10 - 12:30

12:30 - 14:00 – Lunch

14:00 - 15:30 PANEL II
Consulates, Extraterritoriality, and the Practice of Sovereignty

Chair: **Simeon Simeonov**

– Ivan Roussev, *The Difficult Beginnings of the French Consular Network in the Eastern Balkans and the Black Sea Region. The Varna Consulate (1800s–1870s)*

– **Constantin Ardeleanu**, *Denouncing abuse, enabling patronage: British consular practices in the Danubian principalities,* (1830s–1860s)
– **Georgios Giannakopoulos**, *Consuls and the Making of the Modern State in Nineteenth-Century. Greece: Extraterritoriality, Local Knowledge, and Diplomatic State-Building*
– **Vladislav Lilić**, *Outward State Transborder Nation Building and Serb Consuls in Ottoman Macedonia (1887–1912)*

Discussion: 15:10 - 15:30

15:30 - 15:45 – Coffee Break

15:45–17:15 PANEL III
Greek Diplomatic and Consular Networks in the Balkans

Chair: **Radoslav Spassov**

– **Iakovos Michailidis**, *The Greek Diplomatic and Consular Network in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire during the Nineteenth Century: Influences, Geopolitical Contexts, and Their Implications*
– **Stamatia Fotiadou**, *State-Building through Consular Networks: Greek Diplomacy and the Transformation of the Ottoman Balkans* –
– **Yura Konstantinova**, *The Creation and Development of the Greek Consular Network in the Bulgarian Lands*
– **Eleonora Naxidou**, *Ideology and Statecraft in the Post-1878 Balkans: Anastasios Vyzantios and the Greek Diplomatic Mission in Sofia*

Discussion: 16:55 - 17:15

17:15–18:45 PANEL IV
Consuls, Ottoman Diplomacy, and Informal Empire

Chair: **Aneta Mihaylova**

– **Silvana Rachieru**, *Ottoman Diplomats in Modern Romania* – *Integration Strategies and Cultural Challenges*
– **Houssine Alloul**, *"Let Us Work for the Turks": Textiles, Interlopers, and Private Diplomacy between Verviers and Istanbul, 1780s-1840s*

– **Fabrice Jesné**, *The Italian Consular Service and the Emergence of the Balkan Nation-States*
– **Viorel Panaite**, *Status and Functions of the Western Consulates in the Ottoman Empire (16th–18th c.) The Evidence of a Turkish Manuscript from BnF (Paris)*

Discussion: 18:25 - 18:45

National State-Building, Frontier Diplomacy, and Global Networks

09:00 - 09:15 – Morning Coffee

09:15–10:45 PANEL V
Romanian and Bulgarian State-Building through Diplomatic Institutions

Chair: **Gábor Demeter**

– **Aneta Mihaylova**, *Frontier Diplomacy on the Lower Danube: The Romanian Consulate in Rusciuk (1878–1914)*
– **Aleka Strezova**, *First Steps Toward Establishing a Bulgarian Commercial Agency/Consulate in Alexandria (1906–1915)*
– **Roumiana Il. Preshlenova**, *A Consulate in Need is a Consulate Indeed. Two Bulgarian Cases in Vienna and Paris*

Discussion: 10:25 - 10:45

10:45 - 11:00 – Coffee Break

11:00–12:30 PANEL VI
Between the Great Game and the Eastern Question. The British Foreign Office and Balkan Consulship

Chair: **Angel Zlatkov**

– **Igor Lyman**, *Henry Alfred Cumberbatch – British Acting Consul General in Philippopolis (Plovdiv, Bulgaria)*
– **Victoria Konstantinova**, *Combining the Experience of Three Empires: British Consuls Who Served in the Balkans and Berdyansk*
– **Radoslav Spassov**, *The Role of Great Britain in the Construction of the Projects for the Future Bulgarian State from the Crimean War (1853–1856) to the Berlin Congress of 1878*

Discussion: 12:00–12:30

12:30 - 14:00 Lunch

14:00 - 15:30 PANEL VII
Diplomacy, Identity, and Alternative Forms of State Representation

Chair: **Silvana Rachieru**

– **Cristiana Murariu**, *Romanians and Greeks: Identity and Alterity in Early Eighteenth-Century Vernacular Chronicles*
– **Dobrinka Parusheva**, *Making It Stronger: Membership in Social and Cultural Associations and Clubs and Elite's Networks (Sofia and Bucharest, End of the 19th and Early 20th Century)*
– **Cengiz Yolcu**, *From Marshalcy to the Diplomacy: Mehmed Ali Pasha: His Life, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, and His Activities at the Berlin Congress*
– **Gábor Demeter**, *Forgotten Kingmakers: Fülöp Waldapfel the Grain Merchant Agent, Count Jenő Zichy and the Hungarian's Role in Coburg Ferdinand Candidature*

Discussion: 15:10 - 15:30

15:30 - 15:45 – Coffee Break

14:00 - 15:30 PANEL VIII
Diplomacy Beyond the Nation-State: Crisis, Exile, and Contested Modernities

Chair: **Stamatia Fotiadou**

– **Angel Zlatkov**, *In the Whirlwind of National Passions: Serbian Consuls and Bulgarian Trade Agents in Ottoman Macedonia*
– **Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu**, *The Profile of the Romanian Consul in the Balkans at the End of the 19th Century*
– **Sinan Kuneralp**, *Between Empire and Nation-State: The Making of Ottoman-Bulgarian Consular Relations, 1908 - 1912*

Discussion: 16:45–17:15

17:15–18:00 CONCLUDING ROUND TABLE

Diplomatic Networks and State-Building in Southeast Europe: New Directions

Participants: Conference chairs, project team, panel chairs, and interested speakers

Suggested discussion themes:

– Are consulates best understood as state institutions, transnational intermediaries, or autonomous sites of political action?

– How did overlapping jurisdictions shape modern state formation?

– How did Ottoman institutions and imperial transformations condition diplomatic modernization?

– How can micro-histories of individual consuls and institutions be connected to broader histories of modernization?

18:00 CLOSING OF THE CONFERENCE

ORGANIZED BY

Institute of Balkan Studies
with Center of Thracology
at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

History Department
Sofia University "Saint Kliment Ohridski"

Department of History and Civilizations
American University in Bulgaria

LOCATION

Sofia University, New Conference Hall

SUPPORTED BY

Bulgarian Science Fund VIHREN – 2024 Program

PROJECT

Balkan Consuls: Extraterritorial Agents and the Making
of the Modern State in Southeast Europe

Contract: КП-06-ДВ-16.12.2024/3

Thank you to all the participants and supporters!

ФОНД НАУЧНИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ
МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕТО И НАУКАТА

BALKAN CONSULS

СОФИЙСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ

ИФ