

**Original scientific article****IMAGINING YUGOSLAVIA  
A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT OR/AND AN IDEA WITH THE PURPOSE**Vesko GARCEVIC<sup>1</sup>

Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies/Boston University

Address: 121 Bay State Rd, Boston, United States

e-mail: veskog@bu.edu

**ABSTRACT**

Given its length and other similar works in this field, this essay has a rather limited ambition. It focuses on a particular argument often used in the nationalistic narrative – the argument that Yugoslavia was an artificial state. The work primarily discusses how the Yugoslav idea was born and argues that the process of “imagining Yugoslavia” captured the zeitgeist of the late 18th and 19th century when modern European nations were born. The Yugoslav idea was a reflection of the epoch of national awakening.

Yugoslavia was the embodiment of south Slavs’ dreams and interests to live in one country. It was a social construct much like every other state, and it constructed its identity, myths and collective memory as every other state had done before.

The paper argues that Yugoslavia had difficulty to maintain “mass support” because it was a civic nation organized as a multinational state. Its major challenge throughout its short existence was to keep “national and political unity” in congruence, which is, according to Ernest Gellner, a precondition for a nation to exist.

**KEY WORDS:**

Yugoslavia; nation-building; civic nation; collective memory.

---

<sup>1</sup> Vesko Garcevic served as the Ambassador of Montenegro in Brussels (NATO) and Vienna (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe – OSCE and other International Organizations). He was a Montenegrin Ambassador to Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Since 2016 he has worked as a professor of the Practice of International Relation in Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston

## **SAŽETAK**

Imajući u vidu njegovu dužinu i brojne radove na sličnu temu, ovaj esej je fokusiran na argument često korišćen u nacionalističkom vokabularu - da je Jugoslavija bila vještačka tvorevina. Rad, prije svega, analizira rađanje ideje jugoslovenstva, tvrdeći da proces „oblikovanja Jugoslavije” odražava duh vremena s kraja 18. i početka 19. vijeka kada su rođene evropske nacije. Jugoslovenska ideja je bila refleksija epohe nacionalnog buđenja.

Jugoslavija je predstavljala otjelotvorenje snova i interesa Južnih Slovena da žive u jednoj državi. Ona je društvena tvorevina isto kao i svaka druga država. Gradeći svoj identitet, mitove i kolektivno sjećanje, ona nije gradila ništa vještačko što ostale države nijesu činile prije nje.

Rad tvrdi da je Jugoslavija imala problem da održi „masovnu podršku” zato što je u osnovi bila organizovana kao građanska, višenacionalna država. Održavanje saglasja između „nacionalnog i političkog”, što je po Ernestu Gelneru preduslov za održanje jedne nacije (države), bio je glavni izazov tokom kratkog života Jugoslavije.

## **KLJUČNE RIJEČI:**

Jugoslavija; stvaranje nacije; građanska država; kolektivno sjećanje.