

Dr Ina Merdjanova

Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism

Coventry University London Campus: G03 & G04

Thursday 7th March 2019

6pm- 6.30pm: Refreshments

6.30pm-8pm: Lecture/Q&A

After 1989, Islam reappeared as an important social and political factor in the Balkans. With the newly-emerged religious freedom, and in the context of multiple structural and cultural post-communist transitions, Muslim communities underwent remarkable transformations. They sought to renegotiate their place in formally secular legal and normative environments, mostly as minorities in majority-Christian societies. They reclaimed their Islamic faith, practices and identities in a complex geopolitical situation dominated by anti-Muslim sentiments, particularly after 9/11, which mapped upon already existing national and regional apprehension of Islam related to the legacies of the five centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. Post-communism created conditions for a rising political and cultural awareness of Muslims, which was frequently expressed by recourse to two frames of reference: the national and the transnational. Despite a certain level of tension between those two perspectives, they were closely intertwined. Generally, it can be argued that transnational Islamic influences in the region often reinforced Muslim ethno-national identities rather than prompting a radical redefinition of religious allegiances in the key of a “universalist” Islam.

Bio: Ina Merdjanova is a senior researcher and adjunct assistant professor in religious studies at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin, & Leverhulme visiting professor at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University. She had held visiting fellowships at Oxford University, Birmingham University, Edinburgh University, New York University, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington DC, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, the Central European University in Budapest, Radboud University in Nijmegen and Aleksanteri Institute at Helsinki University. Dr. Merdjanova has also won research grants from the British Academy, DAAD, Volkswagen Foundation, the United States Institute of Peace, and the European Commission. She is the author of four monographs and numerous articles on religion and politics in post-communist society. Her recent publications include *Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans* (with Patrice Brodeur; Continuum, 2009, paperback 2011), and *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2013, paperback 2016).