SRĐAN MLADENOV JOVANOVIĆ

The *Dveri* Movement Through a Discursive Lens. Serbia's Contemporary Right-Wing Nationalism

Abstract. Twenty-first century Serbian nationalism has had little serious analysis. Most works concentrate heavily on the nineties and the wars of Yugoslav secession, which produced a wide variety of rampant forms of nationalism throughout former Yugoslavia. Since 5 October 2000, right-wingers have somewhat softened their line in public discourse and lost some of their popular appeal, but strong nationalist tendencies have remained, taking their place in Serbia's social and political discourses. These tendencies have been concentrated around certain extreme right-wing groups, chief among them *Dveri srpske*, which has been active since the early nineties. After organizing itself politically, this movement has refurbished its image and discourse, and, in the April 2016 elections, has even succeeded in entering parliament. Here, the author analyses *Dveri's* agenda and key convictions: antisemitism, an anti-EU stance, support for Putin's Russia, clericalism, and homophobia. He also reviews *Dveri's* change of image and discourse over time.

Srđan Mladenov Jovanović is an Associate Professor at the Department of History, Nankai University, Tianjin, China.

Nationalism, as Liah Greenfeld explains, 'is determined not by the character of its elements, but by a certain organizing principle which makes these elements into a unity and imparts to them a special significance'.¹ Nationalism—the key feature of any right-wing ideology or movement—is thus no unified entity. It might be better to talk about nationalisms in the plural, as every manifestation of the general ideology of nationalism has its region-specific instances. These are based on the particular social, cultural, historical, and political developments that have taken place in whichever region we look at. These influences determine the exact *type* of nationalism able to develop, and how well it prospers. As Andrew Heywood writes, 'it is perhaps more helpful to study a range of "nationalisms" than it is to pretend that nationalism is a single or coherent political phenomenon'.² The majority of nationalisms place an emphasis on the

¹ Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge/MA, London 1993, 166.

² Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, New York 1992, 168.

ethnic component—be it Serbian nationalism or nationalism on Mauritius.³ Some forms, such as Croatian nationalism,⁴ place more emphasis on language than others; some put their main stress on connecting to religion, as for example in India and Pakistan.⁵ These are broad generalizations, since every nationalism is in a constant flux while retaining its common ethnic core ideology. Although the building blocks of all forms of nationalism remain relatively similar, the exact blocks used and the importance accorded to each is open for debate. This article classifies and analyses how these building blocks appear in the *Dveri* movement in Serbia.

As this article shows, the nationalism of *Dveri* has been shifting its focus. The movement defines itself partly by demonizing a specific 'Other'. This 'Other' has changed from the Jews, at the very beginning, to homosexuals, and in recent years via an alleged campaign for the 'family', anything that seems to threaten traditional norms. Beyond this, it is Serb ethnicity and the Serb nation that the movement claims it is fighting to protect. In some ways, this follows a familiar pattern. Nationalism, in all its manifestations, is based on a collective identity, one that stands in a clear, binary opposition to some 'Other', be it ethnic, national, sexual, or anything that can be effectively served to the public as a foil.

Nationalism in Serbia has had an extensive and bloodstained history. It falls outside the scope of this work to present Serbian nationalism *in toto*. There are numerous works that have tackled the topic. Here, it is necessary to bring out a key feature of how it is represented nowadays. In general, Serbia's nationalism at the beginning of the twenty-first century has been connected to the

'emerging Orthodox Christian Right, which propagates a mixture of political conservatism and clerical nationalism, antisemitism and homophobia, [and] consists of a collection of Christian youth organisations, including the Patriotic Movement Dignity (*Otačastveni Pokret Obraz*); the Association of Students 'St. Justin the Philosopher' (*Udruženje Studenata 'Sveti Justin Filozof'*), the Serbian Assembly 'Doorway' (*Srpski Sabor 'Dveri'*) and the Serbian Orthodox Youth (*Srpska Pravoslavna Omladina*).'⁶

During the last few years, a plethora of other, new nationalist movements and parties have been formed as well. Mostly they have a Russian-based nationalist agenda, and detailed description falls beyond the scope of this standard-length article. While *Obraz* was banned by the courts in 2012 and subsequently renewed under a new designation, *Sveti Justin Filozof* (St. Justin the Philosopher) is no longer active. *Dveri*, however, has remained steady and is the strongest

³ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Anthropological Perspectives*, London, Sterling/VA ²2002.

⁴ Snježana Kordić, *Jezik i nacionalizam*, Zagreb 2010.

⁵ Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism. Hindus and Muslims in India*, Berkeley/CA et al. 1994.

⁶ Jovan Byford, *Antisemitism and the Christian Right in Post-Milošević Serbia. From Conspiracy Theory to Hate Crime*, *Internet Journal of Criminology* 1 (2003), 1-27, 6.

'assembly point' for people of similar orientation, to some extent absorbing the membership of other less successful groups: 'some of the nationalist organizations became participants in local institutional politics, but only *Dveri* proved that they have a relatively stable electorate at the national level'.⁷

Nowadays, therefore the most influential and politically effective of the right-wing groups is the *Dveri* movement. Other relevant political parties include: the Democratic Party of Serbia (*Demokratska Stranka Srbije*), founded by the former president-cum-prime minister of Yugoslavia, Vojislav Koštunica; the previously influential Serb Radical Party (*Srpska Radikalna Stranka*) led by the Hague inductee Vojislav Šešelj; and, last but not least, particularly active local social groups such as *Naši 1389* (Ours 1389). Social groups of the latter kind have not been studied as much as might be deemed necessary, due to the difficulty of assessing their social and political impact, as both Barbara Wiesinger and Roger Eatwell have noted.⁸ In 2008, Wiesinger underlined that

'the Serbian extreme right seems to concentrate on spreading its worldview through publications and events such as public discussions, concerts, demonstrations etc. Its most important platform is the internet, which activists and sympathizers use to communicate with each other, announce events, and circulate propaganda material.'⁹

This article focuses on the developments of the last decade. Since 2008 the *Dveri* movement has taken on all the characteristics of a political party. Among other activities, it takes part in parliamentary and presidential elections and is thus making an increasingly significant impact on social and political life in Serbia. During the 2016 parliamentary elections the movement entered into a coalition with the Democratic Party of Serbia and achieved the required 5% threshold, thus reaching the status of a parliamentary party. All of this cries out for analytical explication. Bearing in mind that political players promote a particular discourse in order to present themselves to their electorate, I shall approach the subject from a discourse analytical viewpoint.

Dveri's rise to popularity and influence is not without precedent amongst other European parties of similar ideologies. For instance, a quick glance towards Hungary reveals how

⁷ Marek Mikuš, 'Faggots Won't Walk Through the City.' Religious Nationalism and LGBT Pride Parades in Serbia, in: Srdjan Sremac / R. Ruud Ganzevoort, eds, *Religious and Sexual Nationalisms in Central and Eastern Europe. Gods, Gays, and Governments*, Leiden 2015, 15-32, 30.

⁸ Barbara N. Wiesinger, *The Continuing Presence of the Extreme Right in Post-Milošević Serbia*, *Balkanologie* 11, no. 1-2 (2008), 1-15; Roger Eatwell, *Ten Theories of the Extreme Right*, in: Peter H. Merkl / Leonard Weinberg, eds, *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-First Century*, London, Portland/OR 2003, 47-73, 68.

⁹ Wiesinger, *The Continuing Presence of the Extreme Right in Post-Milošević Serbia*, 2.

'ten years ago, Jobbik was a radical national student movement that gained supporters via a strong anticommunist and conservative-Christian family environment. Today, it is a well-connected political organization, working at all levels, with offices and party sections throughout the country. It has become a political power.'¹⁰

Dveri had a similar beginning. Initially a clique of nationally oriented students of the Serbian language (at least officially), it was founded within the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade on 27 January 1999 as the magazine *Dveri srpske* ('Serbian doors' or 'Serbian doorways').¹¹ It was here too that *Dveri* developed from 'an association of citizens' into a political movement focusing on spreading its message through publications and debates and building close ties to the Serbian Orthodox Church.¹² Since this time, continuing right up to the present, *Dveri* has succeeded in broadening its spectrum of public activities to active propaganda, reaching the point at which it was able to enter the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2013. On that occasion, its support did not cross the 5% threshold needed for entering parliament (it received 4.35% of the vote), but it did get itself into some local governing bodies in Novi Sad, the regional capital of the Vojvodina.¹³

So far, *Dveri* has been designated in scholarship as a 'right wing extremist' faction,¹⁴ based on the fact that its political ideology 'stands against the fundamentals of the democratic system'.¹⁵ In 2010, Rada Drezgić used the euphemistic wording 'conservative youth organization' to describe the movement,¹⁶ while more recently Đorđe Tomić has opted for the designation 'new right-wing'¹⁷ and Bojan Bilić and Irene Dioli have called it a 'far-right clerical political organization'.¹⁸ The liberal wing of Serbian journalism often refers to the

¹⁰ Jan Jirát, Faschismus mit adretter Frisur, *Die Wochenzeitung*, 7 February 2013, <http://www.woz.ch/1306/ungarn/faschismus-mit-adretter-frisur>. All internet sources were accessed on 2 August 2018, unless otherwise stated.

¹¹ It is difficult to translate the word *dveri*, as it is not a part of the contemporary vocabulary of Serbo-Croatian. In other languages (Russian, Czech), the word means 'doors', but in Serbo-Croatian the connotation is ripe with an 'ancient' pathos. I shall use Jovan Byford's translation 'doorway'.

¹² Mikuš, 'Faggots Won't Walk Through the City', 20.

¹³ Uspeh Dveri: 'Fašizam se rađa u kriznim vremenima', *Radio 021*, 7 May 2012.

¹⁴ Wiesinger, *The Continuing Presence of the Extreme Right in Post-Milošević Serbia*, 1.

¹⁵ Piero Ignazi, *The Extreme Right. Defining the Object and Assessing the Causes*, in: Martin Schain / Aristide Zolberg / Patrick Hossay, eds, *Shadows over Europe. The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe*, Basingstoke 2003, 21-37, 25.

¹⁶ Rada Drezgić, *Religion, Politics and Gender in the Context of Nation-State Formation. The Case of Serbia*, *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 6 (2010), 955-970, 955, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2010.502728.

¹⁷ Đorđe Tomić, *On the 'Right' Side? The Radical Right in the Post-Yugoslav Area and the Serbian Case*, *Fascism* 2, no. 1 (2013), 94-114, 100, DOI: 10.1163/22116257-00201012.

¹⁸ Bojan Bilić / Irene Dioli, *Queer Beograd Collective. Beyond Single-Issue Activism in Serbia and the Post-Yugoslav Space*, in: Bojan Bilić / Sanja Kajinić, eds, *Intersectionality and LGBT Activist Politics. Multiple Others in Croatia and Serbia*, Basingstoke 2016, 105-125, 110.

Dveri adherents as 'clerical fascists'.¹⁹ Generally, the basic tenets of *Dveri*, which describes itself as a 'movement' even while trying to enter the state parliament, can be broadly summarized as

- (1) strong opposition towards Serbia's potential EU integration and staunch anti-Westernism;
- (2) 'russophilia'—a strong inclination towards Putin-led Russia, its political system and customs— as the type of role model to be followed;
- (3) clerical nationalism based on the Orthodox Church, especially in line with the cult of St. Sava and Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović;
- (4) homophobia, which seems to have replaced the antisemitism of the movement's beginnings;
- (5) a concentration on so-called 'family values'.

Anticommunism was once part of *Dveri*'s discourse as well, but this aspect was never fully developed.

In the following sections, I outline the antisemitic, clerical background to *Dveri*'s formation. Then, taking content analysis as the methodological basis, I elaborate on the five preoccupations of the movement listed above.

The Beginning of the Movement. Antisemitism

The narrative of the *Dveri* movement's 'success'—for lack of a better word—is a curious one. It has risen from being a minor right-wing organization to becoming a clique within the national parliament. *Dveri* started off as an anti-semitic movement and later on replaced its all-too-visible antisemitism with homophobia.²⁰ Initially, it was the antisemitic priest Nikolaj Velimirović who held centre stage in the movement's discourse. Velimirović, who lived a century ago, was known for his racist proclivities, antisemitic opinions, and statements such as: 'we are of the Arian race by blood, our surname is Slavic, our name Serbian, our heart and soul Christian.'²¹ Even today, Velimirović is 'the most esteemed clerical figure in Serbia, after St. Sava [...]. The *vladika* [church leader] Amfilohije Radović recently described him as a "prophet and missionary who is seldom born".²² During his time as prime minister, Vojislav Koštunica described Velimirović as 'our leader' who 'is and will be always with us'.²³ This demonstrates the ideological connection the *Dveri* movement has with

¹⁹ Cf., for example, Klerofašisti iz Dveri uhvaćeni u obmani, *E-novine*, 1 February 2012, <http://www.e-novine.com/srbija/vesti/58256-Klerofaisti-Dveri-uhvaeni-obmani.html>.

²⁰ Byford, *Antisemitism and the Christian Right in Post-Milošević Serbia*.

²¹ Cf. his writings, for example Nikolaj Velimirović, *San o Slovenskoj Religiji*, Belgrade 2001; and Nikolaj Velimirović, *Reči srpskom narodu kroz tamnički prozor iz logora Dahau*, Belgrade 2003, quoted from Jovan Byford, *Potiskivanje i poricanje antisemitizma*, Belgrade 2005, 28.

²² Byford, *Potiskivanje i poricanje antisemitizma*, 30.

²³ Atanasije Jeftić, *Sveti Vladika Nikolaj Ohridski i Žički*, Kraljevo 2003, 321, 323.

influential political, clerical, and public figures in Serbia, a connection that has been crucial for its development. In May 2003, the Serbian Orthodox Church canonized Velimirović.²⁴

According to a report of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, dating from 2003,

‘the Serbian Orthodox Church has received a prominent role on the Serbian political scene with the full support of the [then] President of the Republic (Vojislav Koštunica). With it, it has secured itself a dominant status within society, which allows it to force a re-traditionalization of the public and spiritual life [...]’.²⁵

As Byford has aptly explained, it has been the rising power of the Church that has allowed such a discourse to be constructed, and with this discourse, groups such as *Dveri* have emerged and become increasingly powerful. It is noteworthy that ‘the surfacing of movements such as *Obraz*, *Sveti Justin Filozof*, and *Dveri* in the societal scene [have] coincided with a noticeable rise of antisemitic vandalism and violence’.²⁶

Opposition to the EU and Anti-Westernism

In Eastern Europe, nationalist opposition to the West is nothing new. Historians such as Holm Sundhaussen and Latinka Perović have written extensively about the antagonistic character of the *patriarchal current* opposing modernization within Serbia. The term ‘patriarchal current’ is Perović’s. As she wrote in 2006:

‘Serbian society in the last two centuries has been characterized as a confrontation of two historical tendencies: *the patriarchal* and *the modern*. The center of this division is the relation towards Western Europe. This division can be compared to the Slavophiles versus Westerners that existed within the Russian elite of the 1830s, but a simple analogy is not possible.’²⁷

The *Dveri* movement takes a position very similar to the patriarchal current found in Serbia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, local perceptions having shifted only slightly to embrace the current geopolitical situation. Whilst in the nineteenth century it was Serbia’s reliance on Austria that was at the centre of patriarchal opposition, today the *Dveri* movement concentrates

²⁴ Note that there is no difference between canonization and beatification within the Orthodox Church, especially when contrasted with the Catholic ecclesiastic tradition. See Slobodan Kostić, *Sporno slovo u crkvenom kalendaru*, *Vreme* 647, 2003, <https://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=341695>.

²⁵ Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, *Ljudska prava u senci nacionalizma*, Belgrade 2003, 142.

²⁶ Byford, *Potiskivanje i poricanje antisemitizma*, 93.

²⁷ Latinka Perović, *Između anarhije i autokratije*, Belgrade 2006, 18.

its dislike on the European Union and on the United States. It often proclaims that 'the EU is the past',²⁸ or that 'the EU is a common extortionist'.²⁹ In the earlier period, an East-West opposition was voiced by Nikola Pašić, founder of the National Radical Party (*Narodna Radikalna Stranka*) and long-serving politician holding high offices in Serbia and then the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Pašić spoke about 'intelligence' that 'was divided into two camps'.³⁰ Russophilia, one of the main planks of *Dveri* activities and ideology, was formed at the same time. Thus, for a considerable length of time, antagonism towards the 'West' has developed in binary opposition to support of the 'East'.

Fuelled with anti-EU sentiment, *Dveri* often publishes pamphlets with titles like 'Everyone to the Front against the EU!'.³¹ In these, connotations of war and conflict are often suggested, as can be seen in the use of words clearly connected with strife, such as 'front', a word that in Serbo-Croatian has the exclusive denotation of a *military* front. A large number of *Dveri*'s online articles also have an exclamation mark after the title. According to the article just cited, the EU 'persists in pushing Serbia and the Serb people up a lethal road',³² a theme which was reiterated in 2015/16 in the movement's policy programme.³³ In the many articles where this claim appears there is no explanation of why and how the EU is 'pushing' Serbia in such a direction. Such assertions are taken by *Dveri* ideologues as premises that require no particular explanation. Any more detailed rationalization can only be found in longer, essay-like articles, where, by means of muddled writing and misrepresentation of current and historical political situations, the reader is steered towards accepting a pre-arranged vision of reality, as I show in what follows.

Failure to explain or give grounds for this extreme anti-EU sentiment is manifest in several articles and proclamations issued by *Dveri*, in which the title shows a clear anti-EU sentiment—for example, '*Dveri* at Work Confirms Its National Front against the EU!'—whereas the text that follows concentrates on something entirely different. In the case I have taken as an example, the subtitle

²⁸ Boško (Dveri): EU je prošlost, da Srbija pojaća saradnju sa Rusijom, *Srbinfo. Srpske brze internet novine*, 6 February 2017, <http://srbinfo.info/2017/02/06/bosko-dveri-eu-je-proslost-da-srbija-pojaca-saradnju-sa-rusijom/>.

²⁹ Dveri: Gde su sad Vučićevi zapadni prijatelji?, *RTV Radio Televizija Vojvodine*, 9 October 2016, http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/politika/dveri-gde-su-sad-vucicevi-zapadni-prijatelji_763202.html.

³⁰ Latinka Perović / Andrej Šemjakin, eds, Nikola P. Pašić. Pisma, članci i govori (1872-1891), Belgrade 1995, 238.

³¹ Da napravimo front protivnika Evropske unije, *Dveri srpske*, n. d. (but 2012), <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr-CS/dveri-na-delu/2012/novembar/da-napravimo-front-protivnika-evropske-unije.php>, accessed on 20 September 2014.

³² Da napravimo front protivnika Evropske unije.

³³ Srbija van EU i u savezu s Rusijom, *Dveri srpske*, n. d., <https://dveri.rs/van-eu-savez-sa-rusijom>.

claims that 'the *Dveri* movement today has proved that party vanity and narrow interests cannot stand before the interest of the people of Serbia',³⁴ and this is the trope on which most of the text focuses. This leaves readers to make their own connection between how the party's interests might relate to the EU. Inconsistencies in the argument advanced by this article are manifold; for instance, even though the text makes a clear connection with conflict through frequent use of the word 'front', it asserts that *Dveri* 'is not a party army', a statement which negates any connection with war and conflict.

Russophilia

As has already been pointed out, an overt fondness for Russia has a long history within Serbian nationalism. Though Josip Broz Tito's break with the Soviet Union during the epoch of state socialism in the late 1940s weakened the Russian connection, the Serb nationalisms that have developed in the 1990s have, in most instances, taken their inspiration from the previous century. It was then, in the nationalists' vision, that the true Russian-Serbian connection was formed. The *Dveri* movement has thus adopted an entirely uncritical affection and partiality towards present-day Russia. This is true especially for its president, Vladimir Putin; but a strong liking for the Belorussian president Vladimir Lukashenko is also a typical trope. The discourse through which such a position has been established and legitimized is explored in the following paragraphs.

Economically, politically, historically, and culturally, Serbia does not possess as many ties to Russia as is commonly insisted upon in public discourse. Latinka Perović writes about 'Serbia without Russia as a powerful ally'³⁵ even when referring to the 1912-13 period of the Balkan Wars. Additionally, it must be borne in mind that the discursive opposition is both *binary* and *exclusive*: 'pro-Russian' sentiment is fuelled by 'anti-Western' feeling. At present, the latter consists of an 'anti-EU' bias reinforced by anti-Americanism. Economically, however, the EU is Serbia's largest overall economic supporter, while the United States is the largest individual financial donor.³⁶ Contrary to popular opinion, Russia has not helped Serbia economically at all during the last few decades: 'From the year 2000, the EU has donated around 2.5 billion euros to

³⁴ *Dveri* potvrđuju front protiv EU, *Dveri srpske*, n. d. (but 2012), <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr-CS/dveri-na-delu/2012/novembar/dveri-potvrduju-front-protiv-eu.php>, accessed 20 September 2014.

³⁵ Latinka Perović, Serbian-Russian Historical Analogies. The Matrix of Denying Western Europe's Course. Development Barring Liberalism and Capitalism, in: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, ed, *The Warp of the Serbian Identity. Anti-Westernism, Russophilia, Traditionalism ...*, Belgrade 2016, 57-81.

³⁶ Donatori. Od SAD smo dobili 843 miliona dolara!, *Kurir*, 12 January 2013, <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/drustvo/599923/donatori-od-sad-smo-dobili-843-miliona-dolara>.

Serbia [...] not a single rouble has come from Russia'.³⁷ Geographically, Serbia is surrounded by EU member states, while Russia is far away to the northeast. This geopolitical positioning has influenced the current economic and political ties Serbia has with the EU in trade, investment, and political dialogue. Even the political dialogue with Russia is tenuous, surfacing at occasional events at which the Russian ambassador is present. Overall, the connections between Serbia and Russia are much poorer than generally presented in Serbia's public discourse. It is a commonplace argument in this discourse that the country is 'torn' between the 'East' and the 'West', between Europe and Russia; yet the worldview upheld by *Dveri* tends to stress Russian influence much more strongly than is done in mainstream dialogue. For this reason, the *Dveri* movement has had to construct a discourse through which ties to Russia can be overemphasized, or, where necessary, invented. As I show below, this discourse is faulty and misleading, relying, as it does, on a series of sophisms and intentional misrepresentations of history.

Most of these are blunt, uncorroborated, and direct. Vladimir Dimitrijević of the *Dveri* political council has pronounced that 'states like Russia [...] want a multipolar world in which everybody has a right to existence', unlike the 'USA and their EU satellites'. The West is presented as pure evil, and Russia fights against this evil: 'If the West should win, small nations will not be able to avoid death; should Russia win, the world will start rebuilding itself.'³⁸

Vladan Glišić, former presidential candidate of the *Dveri* movement, has set out the movement's views in an article of high importance for the understanding of contemporary Serbian nationalist discourse. Here he expounds on the 'myths of antifascism',³⁹ and, to do so, delves into European history, a field on which the general population in Serbia is very poorly informed.⁴⁰ This overall lack of knowledge amongst readers offers a *tabula rasa* on which an ideologue can inscribe their own view and encourage them to adopt a 'persuasive vision of reality' (to use Annette Hastings' words).⁴¹ Glišić's goal is to persuade his readers that the *Dveri* movement is actually *antifascist* by invoking a distorted

³⁷ LSV: Ruski ambasador ponižava Srbiju, *Novi Magazin*, 1 April 2013, <http://www.novi-magazin.rs/vesti/lsv-ruski-ambasador-ponizava-srbiju>.

³⁸ Vladimir Dimitrijević: Podržavam Dveri u borbi za porodične vrednosti, *naslovi.net*, 3 January 2016, <https://naslovi.net/2016-01-03/glas-zapadne-srbije/vladimir-dimitrijevic-podrzavam-dveri-u-borbi-za-porodicne-vrednosti/17813614>.

³⁹ Vladan Glišić, Mitovi antifašizma, *Dveri srpske*, <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr-CS/dverjani/vladan-glasic/tekstovi/mitovi-antifasizma.php>, accessed on 20 September 2014.

⁴⁰ Cf. Srđan M. Jovanović, Historical Consciousness in Serbia's Lay Population, in: Srđan M. Jovanović / Veran Stančetić, eds, *History and Politics in the Western Balkans. Changes at the Turn of the Millennium*, Belgrade 2013, 52-63.

⁴¹ Annette Hastings, Connecting Linguistic Structures and Social Practices. A Discursive Approach to Social Policy Analysis, *Journal of Social Policy* 27, no. 2 (1998), 191-211.

vision of European history, in which Western antifascism is 'false', while Russian antifascism is 'true':

'It turns out that the European Union has a terrifying need to glorify its antifascist tradition because its purpose is a confrontation with all the layers of xenophobia, racial and national exclusions, which have deep roots within the societies of Western Europe.'⁴²

Glišić essentially accuses Western Europe (and by proxy, today's EU) of fascism and bigotry, as a comment in the newspaper *Kurir* explicates:

'[Glišić] argues that the historical forgery of the antifascist tradition of the newly-accepted members of the European Union is not useless and that the part concerning the "great antifascist tradition" of these people was made up by the Soviets and their communist puppets, and that it (the historical forgery) can now be refreshed and very appropriately be used to make up the history of all of these people in order to satisfy the needs of political correctness demanded from Brussels.'⁴³

This argument exemplifies what David Cooper calls 'the deferral of reference [...]; the strategy whereby an author's or speaker's reference to the real world is indirect, because refracted through an imaginary, or an imaginatively presented one, which he sets up'.⁴⁴ The indirect references, in this case, point towards an alleged lack of antifascist orientation within Europe in order to present Russia in a more positive frame. The passage is a misrepresentation of the discourses that exist on European antifascism. Antifascist European historiography shows a keen awareness of the strong proclivities to authoritarianism in the 1930s.⁴⁵ Already in 1958 Hannah Arendt was pointing out how 'we can no longer allow ourselves to take what was good in the past and simply proclaim it to be our legacy, to discard what was bad and simply think of it as dead weight which will be buried by oblivion in the course of time'.⁴⁶ Glišić, however, tries to represent the West as almost entirely fascist, simply ignoring the other side of the spectrum, in an artificial creation of bipolarity:

'The only thing they could not accept—which was not demanded from them by Washington and Brussels—is the renewal of the historical memory of the true and decisive contribution of the Russian people and the Red Army in the breaking

⁴² Glišić, Mitovi antifašizma.

⁴³ Falsifikovanje: Zapad izmislio svoju antifašističku tradiciju, *Kurir*, 10 May 2013, <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/drustvo/782463/falsifikovanje-zapad-izmislio-svoju-antifasisticku-tradiciju>.

⁴⁴ David Cooper, Rhetoric, Literature and Philosophy, in: Richard H. Roberts / James M. M. Good, eds, *The Recovery of Rhetoric. Persuasive Discourse and Disciplinarity in the Human Sciences*, Charlottesville/VA, London 1993, 193-202, 198.

⁴⁵ Cf. Mark Mazower, *The Dark Continent. Europe's Twentieth Century*, London 1998; the reference here is to the Serbian translation of Mark Mazower, *Mračni kontinent. Evropa u XX veku*, Belgrade 2010, 18.

⁴⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York 1958, ix.

of fascism in Europe. That is the way in which these people, recently taken into the arms of the European Union and other Euroatlantic structures, could stay in a fierce anti-Russian and anticommunist position, even though they continued to preserve the communist forgery about some alleged role in their antifascist struggle [...]; so a new, Putin's, Russia decided to announce its comeback to the throne of a superpower of special importance through the renewal of the research about the historical truth about what really happened in World War II and who sided with whom [...].⁴⁷

It seems that 'Europe'—a designation for the West, or simply the European Union, as something that is seen to stand in complete diametrical opposition to Russia—is 'positioned' in an anti-Russian manner just because of an alleged lack of opposition to fascism. According to Michael Billig, 'memory contains that which some discourse psychologists call "the rhetorical stake"', whereby when talking about the past, one is 'conducting business in the present'.⁴⁸

Iwona Irwin-Zarecka supports this view. When we talk about forgetting, she writes, we talk about the ejection or substitution of one version of the past by another.⁴⁹ It is precisely such 'substitutions of the past' that underpin the discursive moments within many of the discourses presented publicly by the *Dveri* movement. Other key players from *Dveri*, including those who have issued official statements, have continuously been pushing a pro-Russian agenda. In this vein, Serbia should 'put a stop to its dependence on the EU and broker a strategic partnership with Russia'.⁵⁰ Once more Russia is positioned as the polar opposite of the EU. In a similar manner, the official site of the *Dveri* movement in the Raška region (in southern Serbia near the border with Kosovo) claims that Russians are 'our brothers', with whom 'we share common ancestors and the same faith'.⁵¹

Clerical Nationalism

The *Dveri* movement is known for its close ties to the Serbian Orthodox Church, which proclaims a deep religious authority and insistence on a 'Serbian spiritual identity'. For a long time, 'until late 2010 or early 2011, prominent *Dveri* members worked in the editorial team of *Pravoslavlje* (Orthodoxy), the official

⁴⁷ Glišić, Mitovi antifašizma.

⁴⁸ Michael Billig, *Freudian Repression. Conversation Creating the Unconscious*, New York/NY 1999, 159.

⁴⁹ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance. The Dynamics of Collective Memory*, New Brunswick, London 1994, 120.

⁵⁰ Dveri: Srbija da krene ka Rusiji, 9 April 2017, http://www.rtv.rs/sk/politika/dveri-srbija-da-krene-ka-rusiji_384104.html.

⁵¹ Šta su Rusi Srbima?, 20 October 2013, <http://www.dveriraskaoblast.com/dverjani-raske-oblasti/sta-su-rusi-srbima/>.

magazine of the Patriarchate. They also worked with church-affiliated youth organizations to prepare several “assemblies of Orthodox youth”.⁵² In essence, a

‘conviction that there is a special bond between God and the Serbian nation lies at the centre of *Dveri*’s worldview. Supposedly, Saint Sava forged a covenant (*zavet*) with God, which was later confirmed by Car Lazar when he opted for a “heavenly kingdom” (*carstvo nebesko*) on the eve of the Battle of Kosovo Polje (1389). By organizing the 1804 Serbian uprising against the Ottomans, Karađorđe renewed this covenant. The Serbian nation is obliged to eternally bear witness to the covenant by respecting the nation’s spiritual and moral values and by defending its ethnic territory.’⁵³

Wiesinger highlights the habitual combination of history and religion, in such passages, imbued as they are with a strong ethnic component. And, in fact, in an article on ‘The Kosovo Covenant. Its Foundations and Forms in the 21st Century’, Branimir Nešić, another active member of *Dveri*, emphasizes how

‘the main element of life of a society is dialogue: the dialogue of the faithful during the Holy Communion; the dialogue of the faithful on conventions on the relation between the Church and the people [...]; the dialogue of the faithful within clerical communities; the dialogue of the spouses within the Holy Sacrament of Marriage. And at the end of the Orthodox road of dialogue, the God-man Jesus Christ himself stands.’⁵⁴

Any religion other than Orthodoxy is absent, as is the possibility of atheism, while the clerical discourse is omnipresent: ‘God gives to those who strive: we have succeeded within nine years of existence to become one of the most active, most populous and best organized national organizations of free people, from a small student organization.’⁵⁵ The leaders of *Dveri* describe the movement as ‘we who educate ourselves based on the St. Sava philosophy of life’,⁵⁶ with St. Sava being ‘the protector not only of *Dveri*, but also of the whole of humanity—the Holy Godmother and the God-man Christ’.⁵⁷ Potent clericalism and references to religion (Orthodox Christianity, or, to be more precise, the Serbian Orthodox Church) are pervasive and ubiquitous in the *Dveri* discourse. In 2013 it became publicly known that the *Dveri* movement was even being financed by the Serbian Orthodox Church—to be more precise, by *vladika* Filaret, who

⁵² Mikuš, ‘Faggots Won’t Walk Through the City’, 20.

⁵³ Wiesinger, The Continuing Presence of the Extreme Right in Post-Milošević Serbia, 9.

⁵⁴ Branimir Nešić, *Kosovski zavet, Dveri srpske*, n. d., <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr-CS/dverjani/branimir-nesic/tekstovi/kosovski-zavet.php>, accessed on 20 September 2014.

⁵⁵ Branimir Nešić, *Jedinstvo, Dveri srpske*, n. d., <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr-CS/dverjani/branimir-nesic/tekstovi/jedinstvo.php>, accessed on 20 September 2014.

⁵⁶ Ko je pokrovitelj i zaštitnik Dveri, *Dveri srpske*, n. d., <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr-CS/nasa-politika/temelji-nase-politike/ko-je-pokrovitelj-i-zastitnik-dveri.php>, accessed on 20 September 2014.

⁵⁷ Ko je pokrovitelj i zaštitnik Dveri.

'thanks to his contacts [...] connected this movement with the Serbian bank in order to enable finances for the May 2012 elections'.⁵⁸ In addition, the Centre for Development of the Non-Profit Sector has made it publicly known that even the Ministry of the Diaspora has made financial contributions to *Dveri*.⁵⁹ According to Lucian Leustean, 'Eastern Orthodox Christianity has developed an intrinsic relationship with political myths',⁶⁰ not only in Serbia, but on a broader level as well, thereby developing a stronger bond between Church and state: 'The relationship between church and state in Orthodoxy is characterised by the concept of "symphonia" or the "system of co-reciprocity" (Latin *consonantia*), a doctrine that developed in Byzantium.'⁶¹ Much of this *symphonia* has been echoed by the leaders of *Dveri*, who have often 'stressed the central role of Orthodox Christianity and the Serbian Orthodox Church in the governance of society'.⁶²

Homophobia

Western scholars have treated the *Dveri* movement mostly as the workings of an antisemitic group, which it indeed initially was.⁶³ Byford and Wiesinger wrote their studies before *Dveri* expanded its actions towards the overtly political and openly entered the public space and public discourse, finally getting seats and influence in the Serbian parliament. In fact, in its beginnings, *Dveri* used to be 'widely recognized as the principal exponents of anti-Jewish prejudice in post-Milošević Serbia'.⁶⁴ It was a discourse that concentrated on the 'enemy within the nation':

'A development of the subversive tone in Serbian antisemitic rhetoric accompanied the shift in focus from "Judaists" abroad to their exponents within Serbia. In defining the enemy—i.e. the "Judeo-Serbs"—antisemitic writers continued to show reluctance to use overtly ethnic or religious criteria.'⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Filaret finansirao Dveri, vladika Irinej ga brani, *Novi magazin*, 8 May 2013, <http://www.novimagazin.rs/vesti/filaret-glavni-finansijer-pokreta-dveri>.

⁵⁹ Ivana Stevanović (Center for the Development of the Non-Profit Sector), Najviše iz budžeta dobija srpska pravoslavna crkva, website of the *Organizacija Društvenog Aktivizma*, n. d. (but 2010), <http://www.oda.rs/2010/najvise-iz-budzeta-dobija-srpska-pravoslavna-crkva>.

⁶⁰ Lucian N. Leustean, Orthodoxy and Political Myths in Balkan National Identities, *National Identities* 10, no. 4 (2008), 421-432, 421.

⁶¹ Leustean, Orthodoxy and Political Myths, 422.

⁶² Mikuš, 'Faggots Won't Walk Through the City', 23.

⁶³ Byford, Antisemitism and the Christian Right in Post-Milošević Serbia; Wiesinger, The Continuing Presence of the Extreme Right in Post-Milošević Serbia; also Dragana Kovačević, Antisemitism in Serbia and Its (Re-)Invention After 1999, PhD thesis, Central European University, Budapest 2008.

⁶⁴ Byford, Antisemitism and the Christian Right in Post-Milošević Serbia, 6.

⁶⁵ Byford, Antisemitism and the Christian Right in Post-Milošević Serbia, 14.

Essentially, the discourse concentrated at first on all those 'who put the European, Judeo-Masonic culture before traditional Serbian values, reflected in the worldview of Saint Sava'.⁶⁶ Relevant here is the fact that *Dveri's* references to Judaism were 'used as a symbolic allusion to the liberal and prowestern political orientation of the new Serbian leadership'.⁶⁷ That the Jews in Serbia—who were almost entirely exterminated during the German occupation in the Second World War—were never a real 'enemy' has become obvious, not least through *Dveri's* more recent construction of a new enemy—homosexuals. It can be presumed (though it is impossible to prove entirely) that this new enemy promised to have a larger impact on voters, that homosexuals could be 'sold' as the enemy with greater ease. This shows that the anti-Jewish discourse was simply recast into a homophobic one, and is an illustration of how having an internal enemy, a potential traitor, is of the utmost importance for nationalism.

The switch from projecting an internal Jewish enemy to projecting an internal homosexual enemy was probably successful for several reasons. There are far more homosexuals than Jews in Serbia. Homosexuals, especially those perceived as effeminate, are more easily identifiable and thus make the 'threat' seem real, especially since an LGBT movement is active within the country and makes annual attempts to organize a Gay Pride parade. The fact that there are several known homosexual night-clubs in Serbia also helps identify the 'threat'. A recent rise in homophobia in Russia has also helped foster similar attitudes in Serbia, especially given the ideological impact Russia has had on Serbian nationalism. Last but not least, homophobia serves as an easy discursive means of creating an enemy against which political players can claim they need to 'defend' their electorate.

Homophobia has been defined as 'the fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals. It is the hatred, hostility, or disapproval of homosexual people'.⁶⁸ In order to gauge the homophobia within the discourse that *Dveri* represents, it will be useful to take a look at the texts the ideologues have put out and examine their contextualization in the Serbian public sphere.

Scholars have analysed the role of homophobia in Serbian society in detail.⁶⁹ While Serbian society has been characterized as assuredly homophobic, it proves

⁶⁶ Ratibor Đurđević, *Svetosavski nacionalizam u judeomasonskom okruženju*, Belgrade 2002, 196.

⁶⁷ Byford, *Antisemitism and the Christian Right in Post-Milošević Serbia*, 14.

⁶⁸ Daniel Ottoson, *State-Sponsored Homophobia. A World Survey of Laws Prohibiting Same-Sex Activity between Consenting Adults*, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) Report, Geneva 2009.

⁶⁹ Cf. for instance Jessica Greenberg, *Nationalism, Masculinity and Multicultural Citizenship in Serbia*, *Nationalities Papers* 34, no. 3 (2006), 321–341, DOI: 10.1080/00905990600766628; Isidora Stakić, *Homophobia and Hate Speech in Serbian Public Discourse. How Nationalist Myths and Stereotypes Influence Prejudices Against the LGBT Minority*, M.A. thesis, Universities of

to be almost impossible to quantify homophobia. It can safely be assumed that homophobia in Serbia is not comparable to homophobia in Uganda, which has been classified as one of the most dangerous places in the world for homosexuals.⁷⁰ Rather, a closer connection can be made with the Russian model, which includes the repression of everything deemed 'abnormal'. The *Dveri* website describes homosexuality as 'deviant behavior'.⁷¹ Wiesinger, in 2008, had already noticed fledgling homophobia within the movement, but at the time did not expand on it;⁷² the *Dveri* movement strengthened its rhetoric against homosexuality only after she published her article. The latest surveys show a worrying picture. According to the European branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe), an opinion poll in 2015

'showed that 23% of the LGBTI people surveyed in Serbia had suffered physical violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The same opinion poll revealed that 72% of the LGBTI people surveyed in Serbia had been verbally harassed or abused because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.'⁷³

Bilić and Dioli have stressed how 'the first attempt to stage a pride march started the pairing of LGBT oriented street protests with overtly homophobic aggression and inaugurated a chain of activist actions and immediate nationalist reactions sustained by the Serbian Orthodox Church,'⁷⁴ indicating a strong presence of homophobia among the population.

In the nationalist *Weltanschauung*, an intrinsic distinction is made between 'normality' and 'abnormality'. As Mosse has pointed out, 'nationalism and respectability assigned everyone his place in life, man and woman, normal and abnormal, native and foreigner; any confusion between these categories threat-

Gothenburg, Roehampton, and Trømsø 2011; Robert Rhodes-Kubiak, *Activist Citizenship and the LGBT Movement in Serbia. Belonging, Critical Engagement, and Transformation*, New York, 2015; Marek Mikuš, 'State Pride'. *Politics of LGBT Rights and Democratisation in European Serbia*, *East European Politics & Societies* 25, no. 4 (2011), 834-851, DOI: 10.1177/0888325411426886.

⁷⁰ Cf. Sylvia Tamale, *Out of the Closet. Unveiling Sexuality Discourses in Uganda*, *Feminist Africa* 2 (2003), 17-30, http://www.agi.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/429/feminist_africa_journals/archive/02/fa_2_standpoint_3.pdf; Patrick Ireland, A Macro-Level Analysis of the Scope, Causes, and Consequences of Homophobia in Africa, *African Studies Review* 56, no. 2 (2013), 47-66, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2013.41>.

⁷¹ Aktivisti Dveri u verbalnom napadu na mirovni marš, *Jugpress*, 25 May 2016, <https://jugpress.com/aktivisti-dveri-u-verbalnom-napadu-na-mirovni-mars/>.

⁷² Wiesinger, *The Continuing Presence of the Extreme Right in Post-Milošević Serbia*, 10.

⁷³ International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association Europe (ILGA-Europe), Contribution from Labris, Gayten-LGBT and *Da Se Zna* to Serbia's Country Progress Report 2016, 9 May 2016, http://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/enlargement_review_serbia_2016.pdf.

⁷⁴ Bojan Bilić / Irene Dioli, *Queer Beograd Collective. Beyond Single-Issue Activism in Serbia and the Post-Yugoslav Space*, Basingstoke 2016, 105-125.

ened chaos and loss of control'.⁷⁵ In such a worldview, notions of manliness, often seen in reference to heterosexuality, preserve a sharp distinction between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal'. Once these distinctions are made, 'enemies of society' are created, and the 'enemies' are viewed as subhuman:

'The difference could not be absolute. The "subhuman" had to be concretized, to be made familiar if it was to pose believable threat. Jews and the other outsiders were stereotyped as evil kinds of men but nevertheless still recognizable as men even if they reversed traditional values.'⁷⁶

The connection between the older, antisemitic discourse of the *Dveri* movement and their contemporary homophobic discourse becomes quite clear. The topic of homophobia in Serbia deserves a more detailed analysis, given how LGBT organizations and support groups have succeeded in attaining higher public visibility over recent years. However, the full issue falls outside the scope of this article.

The discourse that *Dveri* propagates fits easily into Mosse's categorization. In an article entitled 'The Social Aspects of Homosexuality', Branimir Nešić, one of the founders of the *Dveri* journal that stood at the beginning of the movement, writes how the gay lobby strives to 'expand the corpus of human rights [...] to LGBT people' (my emphasis).⁷⁷ The implication here is that homosexuals are not people, but subhuman, since, of course, the corpus of human rights applies to all humanity. As Stefan Micheler has pointed out in his study on conditions under national socialism, homosexuals, as seen by the extreme right, are morally and physically degenerate, and as such cannot be 'assimilated' into society.⁷⁸ During the period of national socialism (but not only then) they were portrayed as being socially and politically subversive and were associated with conspiracies. The *Dveri* discourse functions in an analogous manner. Nešić writes about the existence of a 'totalitarian ideology of homosexuality', prior to the rise of the 'postmodern left', which 'wishes to impose the attitude to the whole of society that homosexual "proclivity" is natural, and that it is a "variety", and that everybody who does not agree should be lynched by the media'.⁷⁹ The rhetorical creation of this (subhuman) 'enemy of society' reaches its final stage when Nešić

⁷⁵ George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality. Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*, Madison/WI 1985, 16.

⁷⁶ George Mosse, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, New York/NY et al. 1996, 63.

⁷⁷ Cf. the section 'Društveni aspekt homoseksualizma' on the website presenting the book Branimir Nešić, ed, *Globalno zaGEJvanje. Totalitarna ideologija homoseksualizma*, Belgrade 2012, <http://www.mikroknjiga.rs/store/prikaz.php?ref=978-86-7964-028-4>.

⁷⁸ Stefan Micheler, *Homophobic Propaganda and the Denunciation of Same-Sex-Desiring Men Under National Socialism*, in: Dagmar Herzog, ed, *Sexuality and German Fascism*, Oxford 2005, 95-130.

⁷⁹ Nešić, *Društveni aspekt homoseksualizma*.

writes about 'aggressive homosexuals, who are the carriers of the LGBT movement and the totalitarian ideology of homosexuality'.⁸⁰ In another article, the same author claims that the 'Gay Pride parade is the continuation of the violence of the regime against the citizens of Serbia'.⁸¹ Hovering dangerously close to contemporary Russian homophobic discourse, he has also insisted that 'the promotion of homosexuality to minors should be forbidden'.⁸² As Mikuš writes, 'what Dveri (and other nationalists) supposedly opposed was "homosexuality", their own idea of what Pride was about—public shows of homosexuality and a conspiracy to destroy the traditional family by imposing a gay "ideology"'.⁸³

The question that naturally follows centres around the state. How does the state respond to contemporary homophobia? As Michael O'Flaherty and John Fisher have noted, there are states that do not consider matters of sexual orientation to lie within the area of human rights at all, or even be general issues of concern.⁸⁴ Officially and formally, Serbia is among those states. This opens a huge area of discourse and policy through which homophobic groups or parties can act. When it comes to the state proper, its most prominent contact with the issue of the rights of homosexuals versus homophobia has arisen in the cases of the banned Gay Pride parades: 'In June 2001, the first Pride Parade (*Parada ponosa*) in Belgrade ended being attacked by a thousand-strong crowd. Tapes of the incident show the vastly outnumbered police intervening, but the football hooligans and rightists clearly dominate the scene.'⁸⁵ The first Pride parade was characterized by what seemed to be either the inability of the state to protect its citizens against homophobic violence, or a simple lack of interest. Two later Pride attempts, in 2011 and 2012, however, have succumbed to a different fate. In both instances the state denied the organizers the right of assembly claiming, in a teleological somersault, that, since the Pride parade would probably be attacked by right-wing extremists, violence could ensue. In this way, the ban on the parade was introduced for 'safety reasons'.⁸⁶ As an interviewee said to Marek Mikuš:

⁸⁰ Nešić, Društveni aspekt homoseksualizma.

⁸¹ Branimir Nešić, Gej parada je nasilje nad našim vrednostima, *Dveri srpske*, 28 August 2011, <https://facebookreporter.org/2011/08/28/бранимир-нешић-парада-хомосексуалац/>.

⁸² Branimir Nešić, Zabraniti promociju homoseksualizma maloletnim licima, *Dveri srpske*, n. d., <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr-CS/dverjani/branimir-nesic/tekstovi/zabraniti-promociju-homoseksualizma-maloletnim-licima.php>, accessed 20 September 2014.

⁸³ Mikuš, 'Faggots Won't Walk Through the City', 23.

⁸⁴ Michael O'Flaherty / John Fisher, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and International Human Rights Law. Contextualizing the Yogyakarta Principles, *Human Rights Law Review* 8, no. 2 (2008), DOI: 10.1093/hrlr/ngn009, 207-248.

⁸⁵ Mikuš, 'State Pride', 834.

⁸⁶ Parada ponosa u Srbiji bit će (opet) zabranjena?, *Novi list*, 2 October 2012, <http://novolist.hr/Vijesti/Svijet/Parada-ponosa-u-Srbiji-bit-ce-opet-zabranjena>.

'Many, including some of the interviewed LGBT activists, believed that the state did not do enough to prevent the violence although it surely could. [...] Everything that happened leaves many questions. How did they organise? How come nobody knew about it? Where did the containers with stones or concrete come from? Why did they gather by the church? Why weren't they dispersed in the morning as they were gathering? ... And so on. It's that principle, like—the Pride's fine, but you're fine too. And then we're all just OK. And that happens all the time.'⁸⁷

Family Values

Since 2010, *Dveri* members have been organizing so-called 'family walks' (*porodične šetnje*). This has been a significant development: 'in hindsight, it marked the beginning of their expansion from an association of citizens to a fledgling party'.⁸⁸ This innocuous designation, however, serves to hide the ulterior intention, which, in essence, has been to promote a public march against homosexuality, since these 'family walks' have commonly been organized on the same day and at the same hour as the Gay Pride parades.

Seizing an opportunity, *Dveri* has expanded its 'family walks' into a semi-developed political agenda called 'family values', an agenda common to sundry right-wing political groups worldwide. The *Dveri* approach to the 'family values' issue takes its incentive from a self-proclaimed fight against the 'ideology of homosexuality'. However, 'family values' remain poorly defined. In September 2016, prior to that year's Gay Pride parade, *Dveri* wrote that their 'answer to the promotion of the ideology of homosexuality within all state institutions is the Regional Conference of the World Congress of Families'. Discursively promoting homosexuality via an imagined ideology of 'homosexuality', which they claim aims to 'destroy the family', *Dveri* tries to present promotion of 'family values' as a strategy of defence: '[Boško] Obradović,' the newspaper *Danas* reported, 'stated that the government of Serbia is gay-friendly, instead of being pro-family.'⁸⁹ *Dveri*'s co-founder Boško Obradović continues to deny that free choice of sexual orientation is a human right, claiming instead that 'the promoters of the ideology of homosexuality want to make sexual orientation a human right, which it is not'.⁹⁰

Occasionally, when the discourse about 'family values' is not purely a front for the promotion of homophobia, *Dveri* members produce a semblance of some social policy, such as that presented by Vladimir Dimitrijević, a member

⁸⁷ Mikuš, 'State Pride', 843.

⁸⁸ Mikuš, 'Faggots Won't Walk Through the City', 20.

⁸⁹ *Dveri*: Šetnja za porodicu, *Danas*, 14 September 2016, <https://www.danas.rs/drustvo/dveri-setnja-za-porodicu/>.

⁹⁰ *Dveri*: Šetnja za porodicu.

of the *Dveri* political council.⁹¹ Encouraging growth in the birth rate is one of the key instances of such policy recommendations, as well as financial support for families with a large number of children, both schemes somewhat reminiscent of Ceaușescu's natalist policies in communist Romania.⁹² However, such promotions of 'family values' are, more often than not, merely catch phrases for positive political messaging rather than being real policies. Boško Obradović often speaks about 'protecting family values, protecting family morality, putting a stop to the demographic disaster, confronting anti-family ideologies', yet he has never elucidated what exactly these ideas might entail.⁹³ An entry on *Dveri's* website, called 'Family First', includes some proposals for policy: national pensions to be offered to mothers with more than three children; a general increase of state subsidies to mothers; and 10,000 euros to be presented to families who 'return to the rural areas'. Among the ideas put forward, there is a proposal to form a 'Ministry for the Care of the Family' and a suggestion for a 'national strategy of population development' can also be found. But these ideas have no further explanations.⁹⁴

A comparison of how *Dveri's* 'care for the family' scheme is presented on the movement's website with discourse on the same subject in the media (including the public campaigning there) shows that, even though there are elements of social policy in the programme, these policies are seldom communicated to the electorate in public promotion. Instead, 'family values' tend to be crafted to serve as a socially more acceptable channel for homophobia.

The Refurbished Doorways

Since 2010, the 'Serbian Doorways' movement has been remodelling its image and its discourse. It came to realize that 'old school nationalism', with its strong imagery and venomous nationalist and clericalist discourse, was not gaining popular or electoral support. So, moving on from barging into NGO meetings and propagating a chaotic, simplistic discourse against homosexuals, the European Union, and the values of liberal democracy, it has been working on refurbishing its image. It has been doing so very carefully for several years. Nowadays, the movement's members sport suits and ties to upgrade their visual image, and they have developed an actual political programme which

⁹¹ Vladimir Dimitrijević: Podržavam Dveri.

⁹² Thomas J. Keil / Viviana Andreescu, Fertility Policy in Ceausescu's Romania, *Journal of Family History*, 24, no. 4 (1999), 478-492.

⁹³ Protiv 'Gej frendli' programa. Dveri promovišu porodične vrednosti, *Alo!*, 17 September 2016, <http://www.alo.rs/dveri-promovisu-porodicne-vrednosti/71517>.

⁹⁴ Briga o porodici, *Dveri srpske*, n. d., <https://dveri.rs/briga-o-porodici>.

even includes proposed social measures. The internet has become more and more important as the place where they promote their ideas.

Support for strong homophobic sentiments has thus been turned into the discursively 'weaker' wording of 'support for Serbian families'. That this is only a superficial change is clearly indicated by Boško Obradović's recent statement (already cited) that 'sexual orientation is not a human right',⁹⁵ as well as by articulating the wish to introduce a law, similar to the Russian one, prohibiting the 'promotion of homosexuality' to those who are underage.

Paradoxically, the same programme that, discursively, acts as if it supports women is strongly misogynist, as it promotes the idea that 'motherhood should be regarded as employment'.⁹⁶ In the same vein, the programme claims that 'women will save Serbia' through 'motherhood becoming an occupation'.⁹⁷ *Dveri* has increasingly been stressing its 'support for women' in this way. In reality, such 'support' is an example of what Susanne Rippl and Christian Seipel identify: 'Organized or semi-organized right-wing extremism is dominated by men', which is the grounds on which 'women's true potential (in both attitudes and behavior) is underestimated'.⁹⁸

Other features of *Dveri*'s current programme include a desire to strengthen ties with Russia. This is a part of its programme the movement has never abandoned. The argument begins with a highly negative representation of the EU, so that Russia can be offered as an alternative. Serbia is said to be on the wrong course: the country is duped by 'the lethal policy that the EU has no alternatives'. It condemns the EU's exhortation to recognize Kosovo, which entails the 'breaking up of families'.⁹⁹ None of these instances have been elaborated on, or given for a full explanation.

Remnants of 'old school nationalism' can still be seen in *Dveri*'s new programme. For instance, its 'cultural policy' is described as the policy of the 'Serbian viewpoint'. Once again, this 'viewpoint' is offered without any explanation or elaboration. It is declared to be the 'basis of every cultural activity', and is held important since the 'current cultural policies in Serbia dismantle Serbian

⁹⁵ Jovana Štetin, Obradović: Seksulana orijentacija nije ljudsko pravo, *N1*, 17 May 2016, <http://rs.n1info.com/a160964/Vesti/Bosko-Obradovic-o-gej-paradi.html>.

⁹⁶ Briga o porodici.

⁹⁷ Briga o porodici.

⁹⁸ Susanne Rippl / Christian Seipel, Gender Differences in Right Wing Extremism. Intergroup Validity of a Second-Order Construct, *Social Psychology Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (1999), 381-393, DOI: 10.2307/2695835.

⁹⁹ Srbija van EU i u savezu sa Rusijom, *Dveri srpske*, n. d., <https://dveri.rs/van-eu-savez-sa-rusijom>.

national identity'.¹⁰⁰ The word 'Serbian' occurs twenty-two times in the short two-paragraph section of the programme that deals with culture.

And, last but not least, *Dveri*'s policies regarding science and education are filled with buzzwords, offered in an enumerating fashion, from promises to 'improve the material and social position of professors, teachers and educational institutes' to 'improving the quality of education'. Nowhere is it explained *how* these improvements are to be achieved. In a somewhat authoritarian fashion, *Dveri* insists on 'student discipline, work habits, moral and ethical responsibilities'.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

The *Dveri* movement is a good example of how 'radical right wing populist parties have been rather skilful in adopting a rhetoric that appeals to a combination of resentment and real grievances and direct[ing] them against one specific group in society'.¹⁰² From the point of view of basic semantics, it seems relatively unimportant if the movement is designated as 'clerical', 'nationalist', 'antisemitic', 'clerofascist', or even 'new right wing'. Since 'in *Dveri*'s utopia religious, political and personal freedom would be restricted in case of its incompatibility with the "spiritual and moral values" of the Serbian nation [...] *Dveri* could therefore be classified as belonging to the extreme right'.¹⁰³ This assessment made by Barbara Wiesinger ten years ago remains valid, even though *Dveri*'s new, refurbished image has successfully gained it some political legitimacy within the public sphere. The movement's attempt to position itself not as an extreme-right group but rather as a moderate centre-right one scarcely conceals the fact that the *core* of its programme has remained substantially unchanged: it is authoritarian and nationalist.

As mentioned, *Dveri* has received financial support from one of the state ministries as well as from the Church. The latter is exempt from paying taxes and maintains close connections with key political players, especially Tomislav Nikolić, the former president. The question that remains is whether *Dveri* is, in essence, a false alternative to the government; one should keep in mind that the government has on numerous occasions been accused of stifling the freedom of the press, in addition to being at the heart of numerous scandals, ranging from plagiarized doctorates to accusations of physically threatening political

¹⁰⁰ Kulturna politika srpskog stanovništva, *Dveri srpske*, n. d., <https://dveri.rs/wp-content/themes/capital/pdf/Novi%20program%20-%20Dveri.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ Obrazovanje i nauka za 21. vek, *Dveri srpske*, n. d., <https://dveri.rs/obrazovanje-i-nauka>.

¹⁰² Hans-Georg Betz, Against the System. Radical Right-Wing Populism's Challenge to Liberal Democracy, in: Jens Rydgren, ed, *Movements Of Exclusion. Radical Right-Wing Populism in The Western World*, New York 2005, 25-40, 37.

¹⁰³ Wiesinger, *The Continuing Presence of the Extreme Right in Post-Milošević Serbia*, 10.

opponents. Will the movement-turned-party now be able to boast even more support from EU officials by pretending to serve as the boundary political force to an ever more extreme type of nationalism? An analogous instance is already apparent in Viktor Orbán's Hungary, where political choices have been effectively reduced to Orbán's party and the even stronger nationalists within *Jobbik*. The steady rise of populist political players of the right in the whole of Europe, from Hungary's Orbán to Turkey's Erdoğan, including the less successful, but still growing extreme right, such as *Jobbik* in Hungary, or the *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany, AfD) in Germany, and their impact on politics and policies calls for further in-depth analytical attention.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Srđan Mladenov Jovanović Nankai University, Department of History, 94 Weijin Rd, Nankai Qu, China, 300071. E-mail: srdjan.jovanovic@piast.pan.pl