BOOK REVIEWS

Valery Perry, ed, *Extremism and Violent Extremism in Serbia. 21st Century Manifestations of a Historical Challenge*, Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2018. 314 pp., ISBN 978-3-8382-1260-9, \$ 40.00

Bearing in mind that the countries that had formerly belonged to Yugoslavia saw a significant decline in academic interest in the political violence that occurred over the decades after the bloodshed of the 1990s had ceased, Valery Perry's edited volume on violence and extreme ideologies in Serbia comes as a breath of much-needed fresh air. Such research has become increasingly rare, not only when it comes to Serbia, but in regard to the successor states of Yugoslavia in general; thus I was eager to read this publication.

Perry identifies the main themes of the volume as 'Islamic extremism' and 'local nationalism', and goes to great lengths to emphasize the importance of properly defining the key terms she uses. This is laudable, especially today when any term associated with right-wing politics is more and more often used simply to voice disagreement with a collocutor. She thus presents a wide array of terminology, among which I would stress the concept of 'reciprocal radicalization' that is perhaps not applied as often as it should be. This concept describes a 'tit for tat', i. e. cumulative radicalization enacted by various groups, which by supporting each other drift further and further into extremism. Moreover, Perry emphasizes the importance of knowing one's terminology in relation to concepts such as 'terrorism', 'radicaliza-

tion', and 'violent extremism' by taking into account whether subjectivity plays a role in defining such terms, and in which manner.

These concepts, in the context of contemporary Serbia, are tackled in a number of chapters, mostly via qualitative methods. Media articles, tweets, message boards, and various visual images are analysed throughout the volume. Interviews provide discourse analytical perspectives. Some chapters deserve special praise, such as *Ana Dević's* chapter on Serbian affinities with the Russian right. While *Russian* affinities with the Serbian right are rather common in scholarly research, *Dević's* vice versa approach is quite rare. In other words, this chapter is rather informative for those who wish to know how Russian political analyst Aleksandr Dugin, known for his radical, fundamentalist views and sometimes seen as Putin's 'grey eminence', writes about Serbia, going beyond the observation that Serbian extremists have a fondness for Russia. Dugin's propagation of 'Eurasian geopolitics' has figured in Russian right-wing thought for some time and now has reached Serbia, too. What is interesting is that Dugin himself, as *Dević* elaborates, has an interest in Serbia concentrating on recent events in Kosovo as the 'major turning point in Serbian politics' (119). She indicates that Kosovo is seen by the Russian right as an instance of arguably the same relevance as for Serbia's far right. Additionally, *Dević* stresses the connections of the Serbian and the Russian far right with their respective official states as an issue in need of tack-

ling on both local and international policy levels.

Another promising chapter is *Davor Marko's* analysis on online extremism. He mostly confronts tweets by known fundamentalists, such as Goran Davidović—labelled the 'Führer' by mainstream media—or Miša Vacić, leader of a recently formed political party, the 'Serbian Right'. Bearing in mind the recent increase in media presence of these figures and their activist engagement, these analyses are rather timely, concluding that extremism nowadays spreads with ease through the channels of the World Wide Web, making people who would otherwise be fairly unknown the centre of attention.

Likewise, *Boris Milanović's* discourse analysis of the forum 'Serbian 4Chan/pol/' is a case in point. He draws on Andrea Nagle's work on the 'culture wars' in the United States, which has been praised for its in-depth analyses. Milanović refers to an impressive number of online primary sources, mostly taken from Twitter and 4Chan, and comes to the conclusion that Serbian 4Chan users generally reserve their animosity for a wide set of 'other' groups. Offering a rather relevant piece of advice, the author concludes that policy-makers had better *not* curb the freedom of expression of 4Chan users, as this might backfire. After all, free speech is a value that has gone substantially missing in Serbia since the early twenty-first century.

Commendably, the authors of this volume do not shy away from addressing religious extremism in the context of any denomination, Islam included, as *Nike Wentholt's* chapter proves. Over the last twenty-some years, criticism of Islam has been a sensitive issue. Anybody engaging in analysing Muslim extremism has risked almost reflexive accusations of Islamophobia. This is noticeable in an increasing

number of scholarly monographs and articles, and this chapter breaks the chain of silence on the issue. The Balkans, or more precisely, Serbia, have experienced the violent manifestation of Islamophobia. It fuelled violence and atrocities in the 1990s, and has existed ever since in a distinct form, as Wentholt shows. She elaborates on the striking similarities between Christian extremism and Islamism by investigating the workings of groups such as the Christian *Zavetnici* and the Muslim group *Put Vjernika*.

All the contributors to this volume substantially rely on primary sources such as online forums, message boards, Twitter, 4Chan, and others, which is a real asset. However, given Serbia's recent history and the proclivity to violence and extremism in Serbian society, the editor could have invited contributions by several more authors beyond the six, plus provided her own commentary. Issues such as the political organization of newly formed groups and their extensively documented connections to the government, as in the case of Miša Vacić's 'Serbian Right' party, represent an urgent research desideratum, to name but one example. In addition, I look forward to seeing other scholars dealing with the Balkans produce a similar volume focusing on neighbouring states; the volume under review could be used as a building block. I fully recommend Perry's edited volume to readers interested in how violence and extremism have remained a part of Serbian society since the bloody (post-)Yugoslav conflicts of the 1990s.

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