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DEFINING POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN THE BALKANS. THE CASE OF SERBIA

ABSTRACT: Political extremism (and particularly right wing political extremism) remains relatively insufficiently explored due to the fact that the phenomenon is controversial and hard to define. Its ambiguity and variability depending on time and spatial point of view further complicates its definition. Its structure is amorphous and eclectic as it often includes elements from different ideologies and connects incompatible ideas. A multidimensional conceptualization and an interdisciplinary approach - sociological, social, psychological and historical, are the Author's tools in explaining the phenomenon of political extremism in Serbia, hopefully contributing to its clarification and laying a foundation for its further explanatory theoretical studies.

KEY WORDS: Balkans, extremism, political extremism, right-wing, Serbia

Introduction

Fifteen years after downfall of the Slobodan Milošević's authoritarian regime in Serbia this country still fails to distance itself from its nationalist past. Although not as destructive as in the 1990s, nationalism in Serbia today is present in many spheres of social life – from foreign policy to education and culture. Such socio-political climate favors the creation and strengthening of the extreme right-wing organizations. This paper deals with the specificities of right-wing extremism in Serbia and begins with defining basic concepts of right-wing extremism as such. Using a multidimensional conceptualization and an interdisciplinary approach – sociological,

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social, psychological and historical, the Author analyzes specificities of the phenomenon in contemporary Serbia through the review and analysis of some major extreme right-wing organizations in this country. It should be noted however that additional problem for a researcher concerning this country is that it is very hard to find and systematize information on members of extremist organizations, their education and social status etc. which further burdens the study of the phenomenon. This is due to the fact that some of them are banned, others function in the underground.

Extremism

In order to define extremism as a phenomenon which sustained many contextual meanings (and as something that is per se understandable for general audience), we need to realize that the history of the terminology of “extremes” and “extremism” proves their variability and dependency on context (Backes 2007). Therefore we must think of the notion in its ‘uniqueness’ aiming to underline its essence. What does that mean? If the meaning of a phenomenon is controversial, it is always useful to begin with a linguistic side of it as its primary determinative merit (remaining often explanatory insufficient though). First thing we notice is its equivocation which retained all of its original meanings, expanding with the entry in the field of policy *ipso facto* obtaining *new* meanings. The word “*extremism*” is of Latin origin meaning ultimate or extreme which is on top of the borders of sustainable, allowed or normal. Hence extremism as a behavior or a tendency toward extremes usually gets designated lexically as excess, top range, something that is hardly bearable – sustainable, but the last in importance and the last thing that can happen (Glare 662). As each extremism is formally defensive, and usually defended are the highest values and well-being of the members of the group which extremists declare to struggle for. Those values range from the spiritual values to saving “endangered” bare lives. Thereby the right for uncompromisingness in the name of the struggle for those values very fast and easily converts into the right for the hostility and intolerance. Intolerance towards “Others” treated as a threat to the established identity of “We” (“our values,” “our well-being”) is closely linked to prejudice against everything that is different. It is characteristic for an “authoritarian personality” (Adorno et al.) that glorifies “Us” and demonizes “Others.” Authoritarianism in this context is

understood as argumentation following an indisputable authority and not accepting truth-searching arguments. For such a “personality,” an opinion does not consist of assumptions and hypothetical judgments necessary for proving and/or reinterpreting facts, but of the ‘taken for granted’ attitudes. Doubt gets a negative connotation because it disturbs the safety of an authority guaranteed beliefs. Such attitudes are based on beliefs rather than on reflections and debates with facts. An ideal type of the “authoritarian personality,” according to Adorno (Adorno et al.) and Reich (Reich), is a person who blindly believes in the authority and is prone to stereotypes and prejudices expressed through conformism and dogmatic acceptance of values and beliefs. Incapable of independent judgment, he relies on the strength of the authority rather than arguments. “The authoritarian personality” sees as a disaster every attempt for change of given structures and contents of adopted opinions and therefore he considers each dialogue as an attack due to his conviction that there is only one, his own, correct opinion.

Political extremism

As Uwe Backes explains, the idea of the political extreme is rooted in the ancient Greek ethics of moderation. In every situation there is a midpoint (*mesotes*) between the too-great (*hyperbole*) and the too-little (*elleipsis*), a distinction between the excessive and the moderate (Backes 2006). Nevertheless, the concept of political extremism is still difficult to determine because it is not a universal category: something extreme for one might seem normal for someone else. In linguistic terms, the extreme is what is “stretched to the limit,” and in the political sense, it concerns values “stretched to the limits” of a society. One of the conditions of occurrence of extremism is a crisis in society (causing the crisis of morality and/or the crisis of values) or feelings of inferiority. This brings the envy and desire to threaten those who have a better position. Actions against them bring a sense of superiority which is a sort of a negative self-affirmation. This straight ahead leads to xenophobia. When discussing the causes of political extremism, apart from a crisis of society, there are worth mentioning structural and objective circumstances existing in society. Political extremism is more prone to authoritarian regimes (or those who had been such), the feelings of revanchism in the society (the case of the post-Yugoslav political space: there still is a smoldering desire for revenge

for war crimes committed during the civil war in Yugoslavia in the nineties), poor economic conditions causing the population at the lower end of the socio-economic hierarchy to create a parallel world where the extreme nationalism and religiosity trigger feelings of superiority. It is interesting that during the self-identification of parties or movements of the “extreme” (this mainly concerns right-wingers) European experience shows that their members rarely approve labeling themselves as “extreme” (Hainsworth 12). This especially applies to the parties that take part in elections where every single vote is important. They never publicly declare themselves as “extremists” due to negative connotations of the term, but willingly admit to be “elitists,” “nationalists,” “defenders of Christianity,” “patriots” etc.

Social and political roots of right-wing extremism

Experience of countries in transition, such as Serbia, shows that causes for the rise of modern right generally represent a combination of circumstances. Among the most important ones are: legacy of communist rule and suppression of nations, the challenges of democratization and the construction of national identity, social and economic problems as reflection of difficulties of transition (Vujačić 351). History largely determines to what extent society is “open” for the development of right-wing extremism. Experiences of German and Italian societies indicate more or less successfully accomplished process of distancing themselves from the past and trying to build a collective identity based on new values. For a society in transition, this process is far more challenging and painful: an attempt to distance itself from communism often ends up in another form of extreme. What continuously keeps being an obstacle for such countries are remains of the authoritarian regimes and their durability. This makes it hard for the countries to get rid of the ideological ballast and long-ago acquired forms of a servile political culture, political intolerance and, last but not least, craving for a leader. Every society, in accordance with its system, forms certain standards of behavior, imposes morality both in its descriptive and normative sense, supports certain values and attitudes that people within the political culture adopted.

The case of Serbia is particularly interesting. In the 1990s in Serbia (although this can be more or less applied equally to other post-Yugoslav societies) prevailed “traditionally-authoritarian type

of personality” (Golubović et al; Lazić). Inherited authoritarian mentality emerged from the compound of the traditionally patriarchal society of the old XIX century Serbia and the authoritarian system of both Yugoslavias¹ had very slowly been changing. In support of this we can note that the majority of the population in Serbia long opted for status quo and social security that the Slobodan Milošević’s regime had provided them, regardless of the negative effects of its politics and policy. Before Milošević’s fall in 2000 the majority of voters voted for party leaders rather than their programs. Today the majority of voters support a strong paternalistic state which is expected to provide all individuals with their needs, at the same time freeing them of responsibility and necessity to solve problems on their own. Most of them find it hard to sacrifice inherited belief that a collective (such as the nation, for example) should be the main focus over which all individual needs and interests will be met. There is still a strong orientation towards traditionalism, and with the awakening of nationalism in the 1990s, towards the historically traditional myths which had been favored over reality and future.

Although we mention the rise of the right-wing nationalism after the fall of communism, in historical sense, the post-communist nationalism has absorbed ages-old prejudices and hatreds suppressed in the days of Communism (Vujačić 352). This concerns the countries of the Western Balkans and a few other post-communist states that have not only evolved from communism to autocracy and dictatorship due to the ‘appropriate’ structural and contextual timing, but also due to the preconditions rooted in the deep past. The long period of foreign rule and domination, the late formation of the state in its present form and equal treatment of individual freedom and democracy of both communism and nationalism, were the prerequisites for nationalism to inherit communism (Mundjiu-Pipidi). The syntagma ‘foreign rule’ in the context of the region of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe means the three multinational empires – Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian. After their collapse in the First World War new national states with non-democratic arrangements and territorial claims have emerged. Interwar period, during which there were dictatorships in the Balkans and the Soviet Union and the problems that have emerged after the collapse of communism, could be seen as

¹ The first monarchist Yugoslavia 1918-1941, the second socialist Yugoslavia 1943-1991.

renewed problems from the interwar period of non-democracy in South East and Eastern Europe (Vujačić 353).

Communism, with its universalism and the idea of ‘Brotherhood and Unity’², problems that previously existed ‘swept under the carpet’ and have never been addressed. The ethnic violence that took place in the former Yugoslavia was not an entirely new phenomenon. The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the late formation of the nation-states in the post-Yugoslav political space (“the delayed nations”³) have again raised the issue of frontiers or boundaries of the states and nations through the problem of defining national identity. This struggle for national interests and defining the nation was a subject of manipulation by political and intellectual elites in the countries. It determined the difference in the formation of the extreme right between the Balkans and Eastern European countries and Western and Central European countries. The post-Communist conservatism, besides nationalism, emphasized religion and tradition. Being based on myths and romanticized history it revitalized problems that have yet occurred in the interwar period. Although a large part of extremist right programs is based on anti-Communism and posed as its antipode, no doubt that both have a lot in common. It is about the attitude towards democracy and individual freedoms, not in the context of consequences that both regimes leave in the political system, but concerning the impact on individuals and their political culture and consciousness. Both

² Popular slogan of the Yugoslav Communist party during WWII and a guiding principle of the country’s post-war interethnic policy.

³ I use the term “the delayed nation” referring to the works of Helmut Plessner (Plessner, H., 1974, *Die Verspaetete Nation*, (“The Delayed Nation”), Koeln & Mains, Suhrkamp] and Istvan Bibo (Bibo, I. 2010, *Nędza małych państw wschodnioeuropejskich*, Alkano). Due to long time of foreign rule in Serbia, the institution of citizenship was not able to emerge and that resulted in no liberal tradition and lack of modernization processes. Therefore, the Serbia’s political history was rather characterized by the primacy of the national rather than the democratic. For the countries with “delayed nations,” such as Serbia, some reasonable questions could be asked: are there possible the “civil state” and the “civic nation” based on freedom and democracy political concepts? Could there be a realistic expectations in today’s post-socialist circumstances of a shift from the current dominance of ethnic nationalism to a purely civic principle? There have been debates in scientific community over the still unresolved question – what is the unifying factor of the modern state: citizenship or nationality, or both principles? I think that much overemphasized differences between ethnicity and nation, ethno-cultural and political concept of nation, national and nationalistic led to a dichotomy dilemma of potential answers: either national or civic state, either civic or national identity. As a matter of fact, nation and democracy are compatible, nationalism and democracy are not.

Communism and nationalism are hostile towards democracy as they imply autocratic rule (either by a leader or a party, often being equivalent) and sanctioning of diversity in every aspect of political and social life. In the countries where nationalism inherited Communism, multiparty system was introduced as a step towards the democratization of the system and one of the fundamental differences in relation to Communism. In reality this was not the case. The freedom of the individual in both regimes was also compromised. Diversity of opinions and attitudes in Communist regimes was not possible. Nationalist regimes *pro forma* allow such attitudes but an individual who dares to think differently than majority is being labeled a traitor of the “national interest” and banned.⁴ Termination of the right to freedom of thought and highlighting examples of those who have in this context challenged the regime and failed, has supported the rise of a *vassal* political culture preventing any politically active stand of the population. Such a pattern of behavior is being revitalized by the extreme right. The collective identity over individualism remains superior whether it is about collectivism embodied in “Brotherhood and Unity” or collective identity embodied in ethno-nationalism. Individuality is undesirable and suppressed.

Another important feature of the right wing extremism is a process of *ethnification* of politics and politics as an introduction to ethnic nationalism. Clauss Offe explains that embedded in a cognitive and evaluated frame, strategies of social and political bodies in a post-Communist society are based on the “ethnic identity as a primordial and trans-individual set of highly valued qualities that have been formed in a long collective history and are acquired through birth and primary socialization, and are inaccessible, even incomprehensible, to others not born with these qualities” (Offe 51). Offe thesis on ethnification policy derives from the fact that every political life is an operating political system and the cumulative outcome of decision making in hierarchical three different levels: the first level decides on the identity, and it is most often associated with passion, patriotism and courage. The second level concerns the key constitutional decisions – rights, procedures, rules and institutions of political life. The third level involves regular political decision-making which is regarded as the implementation of certain interests into political decisions. In the Balkans, the first level of decision-making was overstated in relation to the other

⁴ “Diversity is evil” – type of mentality has been inherited by the previous repressive regime.

two so politics and, indirectly, public opinion was diverted at this level of decision-making.

As equal as other features for understanding ethnic nationalism is human behaviour. Potocky-Tripodi underlines four components of human behavior that are evident in ethnic nationalism: ethnocentrism, prejudice, stereotyping (that creates caricatures of individuals) and scapegoating. Prejudice is having an adverse opinion or judgment before examining or without examining the facts. Stereotyping involves making generalizations about other groups as well as ascribing superficial characteristics to all members of that ethnic group (Potocky-Tripodi). Scapegoating refers to making a person or a group to bear the blame that another or others should take. The last three components fit very well within the phenomenon of antisemitism and antiromanyism (antiziganism/antigypsyism) as integral parts of ethnic nationalism. It is not easy to establish a clear structural cut between the traditional religiously motivated anti-Semitism and modern political anti-Semitism. Both are characterized by fear of the "Other" and the negative collective identity formation. Like any antagonism towards a racial, ethnic, religious or cultural group, anti-Semitism is characterized (at the level of individual and collective consciousness) through these three categories:

1. Conviction: latent hatred of the Jews that are not manifested openly.

2. Feeling: open hostile feelings expressed towards Jews forming strong ethnic and religious distance, discrimination and finally, open public propaganda.

3. Action: means social operationalization of the "feeling" through an ideology, politics and all constitutional norms, ultimately leading into physical violence (Radenović 17).

Thus, all the manifestations of anti-Semitism can be subsumed under the above categories of structural schemes dynamics of anti-Semitism: conviction - feeling - action. At the level of "feelings" an individual may act alone, but the level of "action" always requires a group, functioning through dichotomy "we" and "they" (which is Jews) (Sekelj 59-60). When it comes to the presence of anti-Semitism in the former Yugoslavia (also in Serbia) it should be noted that anti-Semitism was an integral part of anti-Yugoslav ethnic nationalisms, but did not have (and still does not have) such a significance as inter-national antagonisms. It remains peripheral or marginal political phenomenon (Sekelj 84-85).

If we assume that anti-Roma bias presents a specific form of prejudice against the Roma by the majority of non-Roma population

then we can distinguish several types of manifestations of antiromanyism:

1. Gossiping and stereotyped evaluation of Roma minority – typical stereotypes that reflect the ambivalent attitude of the majority towards Roma. Roma are often described as lazy, dirty, noisy, prone to theft etc.;

2. Avoiding contact or expressing social distance;

3. Discrimination, discriminatory behavior (factual limitation of rights);

4. Physical attacks (transition from verbal to physical aggression);

5. Extermination (genocide) (Radenović 20).

Nevertheless, both anti-Semitism and anti-Romanyism are never objective nor authentic, but always exist within various anti-democratic ideologies. While anti-Semitism is characterized by a continuous playback “knowledge” about the alleged guilt and responsibility of the “World’s Jewish notables – the enemy| for conspiracy, mischief, robbery, for all global and local wars of revolutions, anti-Romanyism is characterized by an understanding that “eternally different Gypsy” that lives at the margins of European and World’s societies remains a personification of clutter, dirt and idleness (Radenović 21).

Nationalism can manifest itself through the territorial and cultural concepts. The concept of territorial nationalism implies the idea that the territorial boundaries of one state should coincide with cultural boundaries of the people, while cultural nationalism focuses on a national identity shaped by cultural traditions and by language. Language in this case is crucial as political rights are given only to those who speak the dominant language. In Serbia and other Western Balkan countries due to the specific socio-political context, nationalism manifestsequally through its territorial and cultural dimensions (the latter with a negative attitude towards minorities) followed by chauvinism and xenophobia.

Discrimination of other groups, hatred or intolerance appear and rise throughout a process and a context and therefore there is an unquestionable role of political elites in boosting inter-ethnic hatred, chauvinism under the pretext of settling the national question and the construction of ethnic identity. What is characteristic for the Balkans was expressed in the formulation of István Bibó about the misery of the small Eastern European nations: they experienced internal homogenization by an external threat or internal dangers but all orchestrated by political elites. In moments of

danger, the elites have served to the masses the romanticized history often with altered facts, glorifying the role of their own nation in history, propagating the ideology of “Blood and Soil,” an organic understanding of the State, applauding a great comeback of religion and using the political myths and manipulating the symbols.

Selected Extreme Right-wing Organizations in Serbia

Unfortunately, the scope of the paper does not allow an insight analysis of every and each right-wing organization in Serbia. Therefore, only some of them are briefly analyzed. Interestingly no serious research on motives to join extreme right-wing organizations has been done so far in Serbia. What can be noticed however, is that their members are mostly younger people between 18 and 30 who grew up and were politically socialized during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and sanctions.⁵ The primary political socialization in this case played a very important role, because then the children, and today members of these organizations formed their opinions based on the attitudes of parents, teachers at school or their peers. Political views at that time in general were very conservative, authoritarian and illiberal. Therefore, the political context of the 1990s has created conditions under which authoritarian personalities of the present members of these organizations were formed.

Национални stroj (Nacionalni stroj – NS)

NS is a neo-Nazi organization formed in 2004 but for inciting racial and national hatred, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia banned this organization on June 2, 2011. After the ban, the website of this organization was deleted but continued promotional activities via the website of Stromfront (Stormfront Srbija), a worldwide extremist right-wing organization. In any case, the organization is built on the foundation of the German neo-Nazism and racism somewhat customized to the Serbian cultural environment. It is

⁵ The United Nations Security Council imposed broad trade, financial and political sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro (then constituting one state – Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) which lasted, with different intensity, from May 1992 all throughout the 1990s. The sanctions were one of the reasons of the Serbia’s economic collapse during this period.

a paradox that such a neo-Nazi organization emerged and has followers in the country with a history of a very strong antifascist resistance movement during WWII that resulted in a huge number of victims. So, this conglomerate of disparate irrational ideas should be treated as an insult to all victims of the World War II in Serbia. Its emergence can be explained by extreme nationalism, a phenomenon of the 1990s that occurred parallel to the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, but also with the fact that after the end of the Cold War, in general, the extreme right has increased its influence throughout the world.

The new extreme right obviously represents amorphous heterogeneous phenomenon in which it combines contradictory elements. The organization is an interesting combination of typical left-wing ideas of social justice with the idea of racial identity: “*Национални строј* is a political organization of propaganda-educational character based on the idea of national freedom, social justice and racial identity” (Stormfront Srbija). Interestingly it favors the Serbian nation, which remains incompatible with “classical” Nazism as it is well known that Adolf Hitler had contempt not only the Serbs but also to all Slavs considering them an inferior race.

Next contradiction is related to the article 3 of the statute explicitly stating that: “To achieve its objectives, *Национални строј* uses only means of political action and does not call for any form of incitement to violence, racial, religious and national hatred, but calls for the truth and the right to freedom of speech and thought of all Serbs in Serbia” (Stormfront Srbija). However, members of the organization have repeatedly been involved in political riots and unrest in Serbia using violence as the main method of operations. The statute therefore does not correspond with their activities. Obviously we deal with a demagogic political and inconsistent organization without a clearly defined goal. For example, it is committed to creating a purely national state of Aryan Slavic populace of «predominantly Dinaric⁶sub-race type.” Ethno-psychological research conducted by a famous Serbian ethnographer Jovan Cvijić in the early XX century proves that “the Dinaric type” makes 2/3 of the Serbian population (Cvijić 377) and the question is how to treat the other “non-Dinaric populace”? Cvijić argued that the Dinaric man belonged to a ‘patriarchal stage of culture’ and was ‘original and exceeding patriotic and is untouched by contact with foreign peoples or civilizations’ (Cvijić 377). The main psychological characteristics of the Dinaric

⁶ Dinaric (derived from Dinara), a large mountain chain in the Balkans also called Dinaric Alps or Dinarides.

Serbs were sensitivity, lively temperament, idealism, honour, heroism, a strong link to nature and one's ancestors and the desire to fight for justice and freedom (Cvijić 378-383).

Nevertheless, today such research conducted a century ago is considered archaic as modern societies undergo intense migration processes which impose significant influence on the validity of the above research. Serbian neo-Nazis therefore misuse science for ideological purposes, for example in the case of racial identity and racial types "measurement." Ignorance regarding basic historical and ethnological facts and bias remains the basic problem of many ideologically similar groups which makes uncontrolled irrational operations with predominantly aggressive feelings against anyone designated as "enemy" possible.

As for the state organization their goal is a unitary state based on "national freedom, social justice and racial biological protection of the People" (Stormfront Srbija). The racial selection in the form of eugenics is one of the main objectives of the organization. This is the reason why this organization is against any form of racial mixing and advocates the so-called "geographical segregation": each indigenous nation must remain within its territory and protect itself from potential invaders. They are opponents of the "human depravity" which includes homosexuality, pornography, pedophilia, etc. They stand for the abolition of some basic human rights such as freedom of speech and freedom of the press suggesting that all media should be state-controlled. Taking the law into their own hands according to their understanding of the law stems from the fear that potential "enemy" may harm Serbian nation. Their fear of globalization processes, strengthening of neo-liberalism and multiculturalism are just some of the factors that influence the intensification of the aggressive vigilantism.⁷ The idea of National Socialism, which traditionally is distant to the Serbian people today, exist only on the margins of the society among the few but aggressive groups.

Србска Акција (Srbska Akcija – SA)

After the ban of the NS, the right-wing extreme in Serbia did not limit their activities. Some new right-wing organizations such as SA appeared having similar but not identical ideology as NS. SA

⁷ Majority of the followers of the organization are young and uneducated people easily manipulated.

is an anti-globalist type of organization using clerical and nationalist symbols. Their respect for tradition and ancient ancestors can be seen through glorification of a classical right-wing triad: God-King-Homekeeper. Their views are highly euroskeptical, opposed to the Euro-Atlantic integration of Serbia and advocating for Christian Orthodox integration by merging all Christian Orthodox nations. This would include the political, economic, security and spiritual dimensions: "We want Orthodox integration instead of the so-called Euro-Atlantic integrations. Similar to local Orthodox Churches which are the branches of a single tree of the Universal Church, the states of these nations should be parts of a single, strong international organism. In this way, the Orthodox nations will increase the possibility of their own spiritual and physical protection, as well as economic and cultural advancement" (Srbska Akcija). Ideologically, SA considers itself an organization of the, so-called, "third way," thereby denying affiliation to any leftist and right-wing ideology. However, this standpoint seems to be far from reality as, by all indications, SA in ideological terms belongs to the right-wing. The SA sponsored magazine *Bojčka Смене* [The Army of Changes] claims that the organization belongs to the "metaphysical right-wing which combines national revival with social justice and differs very much from the so-called right-wing politics because it is not controlled by anyone" (Srbska Akcija). According to the «Political and economic program," their fundamental principles and ideas are based on the following: without the spiritual revival of the people there can be no political or economic development; they criticize neoliberal order that favors the concept of individualism; as an alternative they propose nature-based organicist concept of society (Srbska Akcija).

One of the main points in this program is patrimonial-type political power which corresponds with the idea of a monarchical system of the country can be accepted. The idea of the Greater Serbia was incorporated into the political and economic program of SA. Unsatisfied with modern economic processes this organization criticizes capitalism as much as communism and finds some mutual points of the two:

1. Man becomes a measure of all things and focuses on 'earthly' life;
2. The work becomes a necessary evil and leads only to achieving certain goods;
3. The fact that is hidden is that the production of the Nation is the fundament of life;
4. Both favor only one dimension of property relations (either state or private property) (Srbska Akcija).

In ideological terms, SA is a typical ultra-right-wing organization with overwhelming influence of clerical nationalism. Their self-identification is linked to Orthodox Christianity. Elements of possible violence justified by the Christian religion can be found already in the paradigm of “the combat Serbian Orthodoxy” (борбено србско православље) which allows struggle of the sword against evil. Members of SA are opponents of democracy which they call “demonocracy.” Democracy, according to them, originated in the Western civilization is full of egoism and materialism and therefore cannot be imminent to the contemporary Christian world. In sum, SA remains right-wing extremist organizations of a clerical-nationalist type. Unlike the NS which is a typical neo-Nazi organization, elements of extreme nationalism can be noticeable in SA with a potential to turn into chauvinism. This particularly reflects in the quasi-racial theories of the Aryan nation and genetic subtypes that are based on eugenics.

Отачаствени покрет Образ (Fatherland Movement Obraz)

Obraz, as a movement, had been very active on the Serbian right-wing political scene until June 12, 2012 when by the decision of the Constitutional Court of Serbia was banned. The role of the *Obraz* can be described as very essential due to the fact that it represents a bastion of ultra-nationalist ideas. Although not registered as a political party, its influence is significant in the social and political developments in Serbia. For example, they were very active in organizing protests against the illegal secession of Kosovo and Metohija, against gay-parades in Belgrade and numerous campaigns against cooperation of Serbia’s officials with the ICTY.

The program of the movement clearly indicates that the “*Svetosavlje*”⁸ is its basic ideological matrix from which all other ideas and axiological system of *Obraz* develops. As its official program on the website reads: “*Obraz* advocates for schools with faith (religion), politics with honesty, the Army with patriotism, the State with the blessing of God. *Obraz* is fighting for spiritual renewal and

⁸ The Saint Sava Cult expressed in national mythology as *Svetosavlje* refers to the particular worldview, ethics and morality inspired by the life of medieval Serbian Duke Rastko Nemanjić (1175-1235) who was later acknowledged as a saint by the Orthodox Church [Halpern, Kideckel 2000, p. 174].

Nation-Building on the foundations of the St. Sava heritage.”⁹ The basic elements of their ideology are as follows:

1. Devotion and patriotism is the first and foremost principle. Devotion is understood as religiosity of the Christian-Orthodox character while the ideal period of spiritual elevation of the Serbian people took place during the rule of the Nemanjić dynasty¹⁰ when all the Serbs were Orthodox pious. Patriotism understood as appreciation and love for the homeland is a part of piety and these two ideas go side by side.

2. ‘Serbian Serbia’ (Српска Србија) is the second principle of the program and has the intention to unite and preserve the Serbian nation due to a fear that the Serbian living space is constantly being reduced which causes serious existential and security problems for the nation. This principle is in line with the so-called “territorial pessimism” that Serbs share with the Croats related to the conviction that Serbia (or Croatia) through the history of permanent territorial reduce.

3. ‘Homekeeping’ principle (Домаћински поредак) is present in almost all Serbian right-wing clerical-nationalist type of organizations. It is related to the already mentioned triad of God-King-Homekeeper by which God is the host of the world, king is the host of the country and the devout Serb is the host of the family.

4. This principle implies the existence of the Serbian army, which must constantly be on alert due to an adverse geopolitical position of the Serbian state (they pay much respect for the police as well). Therefore the most developed Serbian state industry must be production of weapons and military equipment.

In line with its ideology *Obraz* made the list of political “friends” and “enemies.” The group of “friends” include members of the Serbian nation, clergy, military, police, workers and peasants. They should be the driving force behind the development of the Serbian state. Among the “enemies” of the organization we can find Zionists (which points to their anti-Semitism), Croatian Fascists-Ustasha, Muslim extremists, Albanian terrorists, members of political parties, drug addicts and criminals. *Obraz* cooperates with other European national movements such as the *Noua Dreapta* (Romania), *Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski* (Poland), *Forza Nuova* (Italy), *La Falanga* (Spain), *Slovenska Pospolitost* (Slovakia) and *Renouveau Francais* (France). It

⁹ http://www.obraz.rs/?page_id=398 (accessed: February 2, 2015)

¹⁰ The Nemanjić dynasty was the most important Serbian dynasty in the Middle Ages. It produced eleven Serbian monarchs between 1166 and 1371.

is important to point out program and ideology similarities between *Obraz* and the Serbian Action, so it is not unusual that many members of the former are also members of the latter.

Српски Народни Покрет 1389 (SNP 1389)¹¹ (Serbian People's Movement 1389) was formed in 2004 and it is an official and registered association with its seal, principles and statute which sets it apart from previously analyzed Serbian right-wing organizations. While working closely with right-wing type organizations, the SNP 1389 has committed itself not to endanger human or minority rights nor spread racial, national or religious hatred. Founders claim that the reasons SNP 1389 was established can be found in great moral, economic and political crisis of the Serbian nation. Assessing the fundamental objectives and goals included in the SNP1389 statute, it is not extremist organizations:

1. Fulfilling Serbian national interests;
2. Protection of territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia;
3. Struggle against global trends in politics, culture and economy;
4. Affirmation of Serbian culture;
5. Human rights and equality.

Ideology derives from the Christian Orthodoxy and tradition that aims to preserve family values, Cyrillic script and moral purity. The word "*Sabornost*" is common not only for this organization but to all right-wing more or less extremist organizations in Serbia. It is a multifaceted philosophical, theological and political term. In theological terms it is often translated as 'catholicity' (from Greek: Καθολικη – universality, generality) as one of the four marks/attributes of the Christian Church: One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic. In political discourse, the idea of catholicity comes down to idealization of patriarchal and feudal cooperative organization of society. It seems that such a concept is a cover for political mindedness [Djordjević]. According to the Serbian right-wing understanding of catholicity, all Serbs are either Christian Orthodox or they are not Serbs, and for them there can be no other religion except the Serbian Orthodox Church. That way a theological concept of catholicity involved into organicist thought, turns into an ideological cover for collectivism and authoritarianism.

¹¹ 1389 in the name states for the year of the famous Battle for Kosovo between the army led by the Serbian Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović and the invading army of the Ottoman Empire. Although in its consequences the battle was a defeat for the Serbian State and Serbian nation, it remains particularly important to history, tradition and national identity of the Serbs until today.

In sum, SNP 1389 is a clerical nationalist organization but its goals defined in the statute cannot be classified as extremist. However activity of its members may qualify as violent and sometimes extremist. They participate in many right-wing and extreme right-wing marches organized across Europe.¹²

Conclusions

Contemporary right extremism in Serbia shares basic characteristics with the European extreme right, but also has its own specifics which are primarily the result of socio-political circumstances of the 1990s in former Yugoslavia: 'normalization' of nationalism, the rise of anti-anti-fascism, questioning secularity of the state, rule of law deficit, ethnic homogenization, the pursuit of merging national and ethnic borders, anti-communism, strengthening of traditionalism and authoritarianism, fundamentalist interpretation of Christian Orthodoxy regarded as a superior religion in relation to other ethnic and religious groups (especially Croats, Muslims and Albanians), opposition towards the ideas of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism and hostility towards the "new" minorities (LGBT population) and traditional minorities (Roma). However, right-wing extremism in Serbia is not so radical in terms of consequences. There are, of course, cases of violence, but nothing similar to very aggressive right-wing groupings in the Western Europe whose actions often end in murder. But, contrary to the latter which are pushed to the margins of society, Serbian extreme right flirts with political elite precisely because they are not as prone to violence. "The reason for this is that they believe that can in the future even become a part of the mainstream, and that will be able to 'smuggle' some of its ideas into official political discourse" (Deutsche Welle).

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¹² For example, in Warsaw on November 11, 2011 protesting against the controversial Kosovo's independence.

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