

# On the ‘right’ side? The Radical Right in the Post-Yugoslav Area and the Serbian Case

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## Abstract

The political transformation in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s was marked by the establishment of a nationalist political mainstream. As a consequence of the Yugoslav wars, nationalism gained broad acceptance in most post-Yugoslav societies. This led to the emergence of many radical right groups, the majority of which support the nationalist policies of the Yugoslav successor states. Since the regime changes in most post-Yugoslav states around the year 2000, the nationalist paradigm has shifted towards a new mainstream, combining the promise of EU accession with neoliberal economic reforms, and slowly abandoning nationalism as a means of political mobilization/demobilization. The radical right groups in the post-Yugoslav area were generally on the right side during the 1990s, but they now face marginalization and even prosecution by state authorities. When pushed to the edge of the political field, however, these groups reorganize themselves. At the same time, several developments are fostering their existence and activities, namely the discursive normalization of nationalism, an unchallenged nationalist revisionism of history, and the reluctance of large parts of society to deal critically with the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Finally, due to the lack of strong left-wing parties and organizations, the radical right groups represent the only political alternative to the new pro-European mainstream. This article looks at the formation and development of radical right groups in the post-Yugoslav area, and situates this in the political context of the last two decades.

## Keywords

radical right; neo-fascism; clerical fascism; Yugoslavia; Serbia; Croatia

## Introduction

The 2010 Gay Pride Parade—a procession of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons—in Belgrade, the capital of the former Yugoslavia and of today’s Serbia, presented quite an ambivalent picture of the political and social

situation in the post-Yugoslav societies.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, a demonstration by gays and lesbians in Serbia was for the first time heavily protected by the police, showing the willingness of the state to take serious responsibility for minority issues. On the other hand, around 6,000 well-organized radical right activists used violence to try to break up the parade. However, due to the presence of over 5,000 police officers, ‘only’ a hundred-plus people were injured. Heavy fighting between the police and the radical right activists, which resulted in the destruction of several buildings in the city center, indicates not only the strength of radical right groups in Serbia, but also a new development in the region’s political situation. The radical right in the post-Yugoslav area was generally on the *right* side during the 1990s, but now faces political marginalization and even prosecution by state authorities. This article outlines some important aspects of this development, focusing on the political context and on the ideology and organizational structure of the various radical right protagonists.

### Post-Yugoslavia: political and economic context

At the beginning of the 1990s, Yugoslavia was marked by a massive political and economic transformation, as were all Eastern European states. The social consequences of these developments—increasing poverty, unemployment, corruption, etc.—were even more dramatic in the former Yugoslavia, since several wars were waged there (Croatia, 1991–95; Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992–95; Kosovo/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1998–99). One of the main outcomes of these wars was the installation of the ‘national question’ as the central political one, and of nationalism as the main interpretation frame of all political issues. In the first half of the 1980s, nationalism in Yugoslavia was the reserve of certain sections of the intellectual elite. It gained its dominant political role and wide acceptance by the Yugoslav population only through the violent ‘creation of facts’—the wars.

The breakup of Yugoslavia started as a conflict between reformist and conservative forces within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The breakup was a result not of some sort of ancient hatred among the Yugoslav peoples (Croats, Serbs, etc.), but of the intentional use of nationalist violence by conservative communists—most importantly Slobodan Milošević in Serbia—who wanted to demobilize their reformist political opponents.<sup>2</sup> Combined

<sup>1</sup> This article speaks of ‘post-Yugoslav’ societies. Instead of looking individually at each of the newly emerged nation-states and societies, the article has a thematic structure, as all of these societies face a range of similar developments.

<sup>2</sup> See Valère P. Gagnon, *The myth of ethnic war: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

with widespread feelings of insecurity among the population, caused by an all-encompassing crisis (economic, political, institutional, etc.), as well as with regime media propaganda, this demobilization strategy was successful. The use of violence eventually partially homogenized the post-Yugoslav societies, the most striking example being the creation of ethnically cleansed territories, like the Republika Sprska in today's Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nationalism has also been discursively normalized in all other post-Yugoslav societies during the last twenty years.

Right-wing extremism or neo-fascism was able to emerge during the 1990s without drawing much public attention, because nationalism was a state-sponsored and state-guided project, fostered through the media, public demonstrations, etc., and accepted and reinforced by clerical circles, which gained strong influence in this period. Even the appearance of some new subcultural groups (e.g. neo-Nazi skinheads) was not really noticed. In the war setting of the early 1990s, few could tell the difference between mercenaries, volunteers, and urban football hooligan-like youngsters,<sup>3</sup> and sometimes the same persons belonged to several of these groups. In the beginning, however, it was the intellectual and political elite who prepared the battleground for solving the national question in Yugoslavia.

### The national question and the radical right

The nationalisms (Serb, Croat, Macedonian, etc.), set by political elites as an official narrative in all post-Yugoslav states during the 1990s, became the ideological ground on which radical right groups could develop their own political ideas and actions. The differences among the various radical right groups in the region concerning their organizational structure, their relationship toward the political elites, and the political system itself, as well as the respective ideology and tradition (clerical/secular; national/ international, etc.) they draw on, depend not only on the self-positioning of these groups on the political field, but also on the interpretation and definition of the notion of 'right wing' used by the intellectual elite in these countries. Especially scholars of social science and humanities have different opinions on which ideas or interpretational frames should be named in a respective manner. Thus, the question of the terminology used to describe contemporary radical right-wing groups or movements remains unsolved also for the post-Yugoslav area.<sup>4</sup> The term

<sup>3</sup> For the relation between football hooligans and war, see for example: Ivan Čolović, 'Football, Hooligans and War,' in *The road to war in Serbia: Trauma and catharsis*, ed. Nebojša Popov (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2000), 373–396.

<sup>4</sup> For the debate on terminology in the region, see: Sead Hadžović, 'Upotreba termina fašizam nacizam,' *Helsinki povelja*, no. 127–128 (2009): 45–47; Todor Kuljić, 'O fašizmu, desnom

‘extremism’—which implies a certain political center that tries to balance as is the case in Germany,<sup>5</sup> left extremism with right-wing extremism—does not really fit the radical right groups in the post-Yugoslav area, especially because there is neither a strong left movement nor a firm political center in any state in this region. At the same time, the fact that many of the groups dealt with in this article draw on a certain fascist tradition from the period of the Second World War, almost invites us to call a spade a spade and speak of neo-fascism. However, even a broadly accepted definition (in Western social science) of fascism as ‘a revolutionary form of nationalism which assumes unique ideological, cultural, political, and organizational expression according to the circumstances and national context where it takes shape’<sup>6</sup> can only partially prove as helpful for the post-Yugoslav context, especially in the light of the post-socialist political and economic transformation *and* the Yugoslav wars.<sup>7</sup> The difficulties in defining the post-Yugoslav far right are caused not only by the political context of the 1990s. Perhaps even more problematic are the various organizational forms, the different forms of political action, and the ideological differences between the protagonists of the post-Yugoslav far right in the last two decades. The far right includes populist radical right parties<sup>8</sup> and various ‘groupuscules’<sup>9</sup> (e.g. neo-Nazis<sup>10</sup>), as well as groups of intellectuals with their ‘metapolitical fascism.’<sup>11</sup> This explains why previous research on some of these groups (especially political parties) in the post-Yugoslav area was unable to provide a single, clear definition.<sup>12</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet’s definition

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ekstremizmu i teorijama o fašizmu krajem 20. Veka,’ *Sociologija* 41, no. 4 (1999): 415–448; Damir Velički, ‘Desni ekstremizam, radikalizam i zapadnoeuropska Nova desnica,’ *Politička misao* 47, no. 2 (2010): 67–84.

<sup>5</sup> For the German debate, see for example: Wolfgang Wippermann, ‘Politologentrug: Ideologiekritik der Extremismus-Legende,’ *Standpunkte*, no. 10 (2010): 1–7.

<sup>6</sup> Roger Griffin, ‘Studying Fascism in a Postfascist Age: From New Consensus to New Wave?’ *Fascism* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–17, 14, accessed January 25, 2013, doi:10.1163/221162512X623601.

<sup>7</sup> The post-Yugoslav developments showed that despite violent (revolutionary?) nationalism during the 1990s, the process of transition eventually led to some form of more or less consolidated liberal democracy in most parts of the former Yugoslavia.

<sup>8</sup> See: Cas Mudde, *Populist radical right parties in Europe* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Roger Griffin and Matthew Feldman, *A fascist century: Essays by Roger Griffin* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 195.

<sup>10</sup> As part of what Griffin suggested, it could be called ‘Universal Nazism.’ See: *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>12</sup> Some of the authors even renounced specific exact definitions. In the introduction of their edition, Angelica Fenner and Eric D. Weitz wrote: ‘Yet we retain in our title and usage the term “neofascism” .... We offer here no exacting definition of neofascism, nor, for that matter, of fascism. We are content to let our various contributors work with their individual understandings.’ In: Angelica Fenner and Eric D. Weitz, eds., *Fascism and Neofascism: Critical Writings on the Radical Right in Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 9.

of the radical right in Central and Eastern Europe as ‘organized intolerance’<sup>13</sup> is one of only a few convincing attempts in this respect. However, this concept was hardly accepted even by the other authors in the same volume. Most contributions spoke of the ‘radical right,’ sometimes using the term interchangeably with ‘fascism,’ while also trying to include ‘nationalists, anti-Semites, racist, xenophobic populists, and authoritarians of all types.’<sup>14</sup> Although the term ‘radical right’ is far from the ‘perfect solution,’<sup>15</sup> and a theoretical reflection on and further analysis of all the various concepts in the post-Yugoslav context is still needed, the ‘radical right’ is used here as a common term for the various groups mentioned.

However, it was not only Western social scientists who faced difficulties in their search for definitions of the post-socialist radical right. Post-Yugoslav social scientists were concerned with similar questions, even though they hardly took part in the discussions in the West, and social science there underwent a specific transformation. Because in the 1990s the institutional landscape in this field of research was dominated by rather national-conservative scholars, their views on what should be ‘right’ or ‘left,’ despite all the contradictions, are not really surprising. For Miša Đurković, a Belgrade social scientist, radical right groups encompass mostly ‘non-party groups,’ while he regards most of the radical right-wing parties, some of which are openly fascist in their programs and activities, as belonging to a ‘moderate right.’ Moreover, Đurković explains the growing presence of neo-fascist groups in Serbia since 2000 by completely inverting the cause and the consequence, and blaming the ‘leftist’ policies of the new post-Milošević regime:

The reasons for their growing and stronger presence in the media after 2000 are multiple. They are to be found in the first place within the nature of the [post-Milošević] administration and the huge variety of problems, which the Serbian society faces. In the first

<sup>13</sup> See: Sabrina P. Ramet, ‘Defining the Radical Right: The Values and Behaviors of Organized Intolerance,’ in *The Radical right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 3–27.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Williams, ‘Problems of Transition and the Rise of the Radical Right,’ in *The Radical right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 45.

<sup>15</sup> Besides the term ‘extreme right,’ the term ‘radical right’ as used by Michael Minkenberg, seems to be widely accepted within the respective research on Eastern Europe. See for example: Michael Minkenberg, ‘The Radical Right in Postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe: Comparative Observations and Interpretations,’ *East European Politics & Societies* 16, no. 2 (2002): 335–362, accessed January 28, 2013, doi:10.1177/088832540201600201; Michael Minkenberg, Dagmar Sucker, and Angnieszka Wenninger, ed., *Radikale Rechte und Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Deutschland und Polen: Nationale und europäische Perspektiven* (Bonn: Informationszentrum Sozialwissenschaften, 2005); Michael Minkenberg, *Historical legacies and the radical right in post-Cold War Central and Eastern Europe* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2010).

place, after October 5th, as official ideology, the ideology of denazification, of facing the past, and of giving up everything that has to do with the Serbian nation, tradition ... was imposed in culture, education and the media. Such radical leftist options provoked the usually radical rightist answers; hence, the huge majority of the newly established organizations were formed on such a basis.<sup>16</sup>

Although, somewhat needless to say, the coalition of numerous parties that came to power in Serbia after the end of Slobodan Milošević's regime in 2000 could hardly be interpreted as 'leftist,' the view of Đurković and other like-thinking social scientists illustrates very well in which direction the political coordinative system moved in the course of only a decade. The process of historical revisionism<sup>17</sup> in most post-Yugoslav states in this period left behind 'an intellectual and cultural wasteland,'<sup>18</sup> in which various neo-fascist groups continued to grow. One of the reasons for this was that the reinterpreting of the past in the former Yugoslavia took place in the form of inverting history: Former (socialist Yugoslav) heroes became traitors, while former traitors became heroes. The new cycle of an alternating history of the told and history of the concealed again omitted to deal critically with the past, and had many political and legal consequences. In Serbia, for example, parts of the intellectual and political elite succeeded in equating the Yugoslav partisans with the Četnik movement, underlining that both these groups fought against the Nazi occupation during the Second World War, thus suggesting the anti-fascist character of the Četniks and nationalizing the resistance movement. In fact, during most of the Second World War, these two groups were fighting on opposite sides. Still, this equation was adopted as law by the Serbian parliament in 2004. Similar attempts to reach a sort of social reconciliation also took place in Croatia, under the regime of Franjo Tuđman. Hoping to create an ethnically and politically homogenized Croatia (and electoral body), he tried to overcome potential political conflicts, bringing together two traditions: that of the *Ustaša*—Croatian fascists who led the Hitler-allied Independent State of Croatia and were responsible for the murder of the majority of Croatia's Jews, and the murder of Serbs, Roma, communists, etc.—and that of the Croat partisan resistance.<sup>19</sup> The most recent development in reshaping the past and its

<sup>16</sup> Miša Đurković, 'Traganje, paradoksi, mogućnosti: desnica u Srbiji 1990–2003,' *Nova srpska politička misao* 11, no. 1-4 (2004): 138–139.

<sup>17</sup> See for example: Todor Kuljić, 'O fašizmu, desnom'; Olivera Milosavljević, 'Stare vrednosti za novo vreme: Svetislav Stefanović, nekad i sad,' *Sociologija* 52, no. 4 (2010): 399–420.

<sup>18</sup> Holm Sundhaussen, 'Serbiens extremes Zeitalter,' in *Serbien nach den Kriegen*, ed. Jens Becker and Achim Engelberg (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 45.

<sup>19</sup> See: Ljiljana Radonic, *Krieg um die Erinnerung: Kroatische Vergangenheitspolitik zwischen Revisionismus und europäischen Standards* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010); Ljiljana Radonic, 'Europäisierung der Erinnerung an das kroatische KZ Jasenovac: Wie europäisch sind post-sozialistische Gedenkmuseen?' *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* 2012, accessed May 10, 2012. <http://www.europa.clio-online.de/2012/Article/?=?538>.

remembrance<sup>20</sup> is the ongoing process of the rehabilitation of Draža Mihailović, the leader of the Četniks, which is being disputed before the High Tribunal in Belgrade.<sup>21</sup> A sentence, expected on May 11, 2012, was postponed. Now that Mihailović has been officially declared deceased, the rehabilitation trial is expected to go on.

This ‘wasteland,’ as Holm Sundhaussen calls the political context since 2000, provided a very fertile ground for the growth of radical right groups. This process started with a rather small group of intellectuals in Serbia, who first re-launched the national question in Yugoslavia in the mid-1980s. During the 1980s and especially the 1990s, they constantly tried to develop a notion—a very diffuse and often contradictory one—of Yugoslavia’s economic and political order. The source of inspiration for these circles was provided by the publications and activities of various protagonists of the historical fascism in Serbia: Priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church, who are famous for their strong anti-Semitic views (e.g. Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, Atanasije Jevtić, and Justin Popović), and nationalist heroes from the Second World War, for example the fascists Dimitrije Ljotić and Milan Nedić, and the Četnik leader Draža Mihailović. In the course of the 1990s, a whole range of magazines emerged, featuring the new right-wing intellectual elite: *Obraz* [Honor], *Dveri srpske* [Serbian Heavenly Gates], *Srpske organske studije* [Serbian Organic Studies], *Geopolitika* [Geopolitics], *Pogledi* [Perspectives], *Nova iskra* [New Spark],<sup>22</sup> *Zbilja* [Reality], *Srpska slobodarska misao* [Serbian Liberal Thought], and *Ogledalo* [Mirror].<sup>23</sup> At the same time, books reproducing the same discourse were published by several publishing companies, for example, *Slobodna knjiga* [Free Book] and *Ihtus* [Fish (Christian symbol)] in Belgrade.<sup>24</sup> The normalization of nationalism was slowly accomplished, and in 2004 a new journal was established: *Nova srpska politička misao* [New Serbian Political Thought]. This political science journal best illustrates the process of embedding radical right

<sup>20</sup> See for example: Todor Kuljić, *Umkämpfte Vergangenheiten: Die Kultur der Erinnerung im postjugoslawischen Raum* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> ‘Nastavljen postupak za rehabilitaciju Mihailovica,’ *Tanjug*, March 23, 2012, accessed May 7, 2012, <http://www.tanjug.rs/novosti/36549/sud-ceka-dokaz-da-je-draza-mihailovic-mrtav.htm>; ‘Nastavljen postupak za rehabilitaciju Mihailovica,’ *Politika*, March 23, 2012, accessed May 7, 2012, <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Drustvo/Nastavljen-postupak-za-rehabilitaciju-Draze-Mihailovica.lt.html>; Ljudmila Cvetković, ‘Rehabilitacije kvislinga: Odriče li se Srbija antifašizmu,’ *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, March 23, 2012, accessed May 7, 2012, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/articleprintview/24525465.html>. For a good analysis of the rehabilitation process, see also: Milan Radanović, ‘Zakonodavna politika Vlade Republike Srbije (2004–2011) u službi revizije prošlosti: Zakon o rehabilitaciji i njegova primena kao paradigma istorijskog revizionizma u Srbiji,’ in *Antifašizam pred izazovima savremenosti*, ed. Milivoj Bešlin and Petar Atanacković (Novi Sad: Alternativna kulturna organizacija, 2012), 81–110.

<sup>22</sup> Sundhaussen, ‘Serbiens extremes Zeitalter,’ 47.

<sup>23</sup> Đurković, ‘Traganje,’ 142–143.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

ideas into the scientific mainstream. On the one hand, it tries to be an open journal for social science and invites contributors who do not present right-wing opinions, while on the other hand it advocates strong nationalist policies. Whether—and if so, in which way—this and other publications will eventually change, remains an open question. However, the influence of radical right intellectuals should not be underestimated.

Before looking more closely at the protagonists, it is useful to outline the main common features of the post-Yugoslav radical right ideologies. All radical right groups in the region articulate a strong anti-Yugoslavism in their political views. They all consider Yugoslavia an ‘historical mistake,’ arguing—similar to some Western scholars during the 1990s, by the way—that the common state of the Southern Slavs hindered the development of the respective nations (the Croats, Serbs, etc.), and represented some kind of unnatural, prison-like political construction. Mostly, however, the anti-Yugoslavism is connected to the strong anti-communist attitude, thus focusing on the second (i.e., socialist) Yugoslavia.

Like other European nationalisms, the post-Yugoslav new right<sup>25</sup> also constructs ‘its’ respective nation as an ethnically pure community. This purity should be achieved by excluding the ‘other’ from society. The ‘other’ can, depending on the specific profile of each right-wing group, encompass the ‘bastards’ from mixed marriages, as well as other groups like gay and lesbian persons, Roma, and anybody with contrary political opinions. The nation is regarded as the highest political and individual priority. Seeing the nation as a natural or organic community, the common feeling of ethno-national belonging is, in the view of the new right, the only correct, or at least the most important, form of collective identification.<sup>26</sup> Above all, the nation is seen as an unquestionable fact.

In terms of ‘othering’ within the process of defining the own nation, radical right groups in the region stay within the framework of the former Yugoslav ethnic groups, rejecting any cultural, historical, or political relationship between them, or, in the best case, claiming that all ‘others’ actually derive from ‘us,’ arguing for the alleged autochthonous character of the own nation. At the same time, the ‘others’ are depicted as negative, often in the form of the binary figure Good vs. Evil, by using historical arguments, that is, different strategies of delegitimizing the ‘other’ (at the same time, legitimizing the

<sup>25</sup> The term ‘new right’ is used by many post-Yugoslav right-wing intellectuals and is to be understood in relation to the respective context rather than to the older Western (i.e., U.S. or British) ‘New Right.’ On difficulties with the term ‘new right’ used in Eastern Europe after 1989, see for example: Seán Hanley, *The New Right in the New Europe: Czech Transformation and Right-Wing Politics, 1989-2006* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> For a good analysis of the ideology of the Serbian new right, see: Sundhaussen, ‘Serbiens extremes Zeitalter,’ 45–51.

opposite ‘us’). One of the strategic figures used is the eternal threat: All post-Yugoslav right-wing groups preach a constant threat from the neighboring nations. This concerns not only the question of territoriality in the nationalist construction, but also the threat to ‘our national values.’ Another figure is the alternately, and sometimes even simultaneously, used interpretation of ‘our nation’ as a victim and/or a hero. The self-victimization and the heroic self-representation were both used as a legitimizing discursive strategy for mobilization in all post-Yugoslav nationalisms during the 1990s, and are still present in the radical right argumentation.

One key element of many radical right groups is some kind of religious narrative. The respective religion is not merely framed as some national historical heritage that has to be protected: A whole value system, derived from some religious views, is adopted and proposed in terms of a political program, based on religious morals and ethics. One prominent example of such use of religion is the installation or reinstallation of patriarchal structures of society throughout the post-Yugoslav area. As the nation is seen as a living organism, gender roles change completely: Women are regarded only in their reproductive function—they should give birth to new Serbs/Croats/Macedonians/etc.<sup>27</sup> In view of the new right, the structure of power in society should follow the divine triad of God–king–*pater familias*.<sup>28</sup> Thus, as good wives, women should obey their husbands. Homosexuality, for example, is seen as unnatural, or in clerical terms, as a sin. The homophobic message, which often comes directly from clerical elites, further legitimizes the verbal violence, and even the physical violence, committed against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.<sup>29</sup>

Drawing on pseudo-religious arguments, the overall worldview of most groups of the radical right includes the rejection of the Enlightenment, secularization, democracy, and free market economy—the major characteristics of the decadent ‘rotten West’—and a strong anti-Semitism.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, all of these groups advocate some sort of traditional and/or religious value. The new right in Serbia, for example, sees itself as the defender of Christian Orthodoxy, the harmony between church and the state, the nation, portrayed as a servant of God, patriarchalism, corporativism, etc.<sup>31</sup> In most cases, these

<sup>27</sup> See: Nada Ler Sofronić, ‘Fašizam danas: žene između vjerskog i tržišnog fundamentalizma,’ *Zeničke sveske*, no. 7 (2008): 135–150.

<sup>28</sup> Sundhaussen, ‘Serbiens extremes Zeitalter,’ 48; Kuljić, ‘O fašizmu,’ 430.

<sup>29</sup> For a short overview of the actual homophobia in the post-Yugoslav area, see: Đorđe Tomić, ‘Aber bitte in den eigenen vier Wänden: Homophobie im postjugoslawischen Raum,’ *Prager Frühling*, no. 12 (2012): 46–47.

<sup>30</sup> For a good overview of recent anti-Semitism in Serbia, see: Jovan Byford, ‘Distinguishing “anti-Judaism” from “anti-Semitism”’: Recent championing of Serbian Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović,’ *Sociologija* 48, no. 2 (2006): 163–192.

<sup>31</sup> Sundhaussen, ‘Serbiens extremes Zeitalter,’ 49.

ideals are combined with an anti-capitalist, anti-globalization, or anti-liberal criticism.

### Organizational structures of the post-Yugoslav radical right

In the post-Yugoslav area, many (very different) parties programmatically and practically used nationalism as their main interpretational frame, which makes it quite hard to say which parties belong to extreme right-wing organizations, and which to moderate ones. In addition to the question of different criteria of definition, another important issue makes it hard to refer to certain parties as belonging to the ‘right.’ As Michael Ehrke stresses, all parties in Southeastern Europe show a high grade of ‘flexibility,’ becoming some sort of ‘modern hybrid’ organization that can be described only in terms of its ruling ambitions.<sup>32</sup> When socialist/social democratic parties implement neoliberal economic reforms, the liberals advocate social justice, and the nationalist parties plead for a pro-European policy, an analysis of the programmatic documents of these parties or the respective ideology does not prove to be really helpful. Therefore, the definition of ‘radical right’ parties has to take into account their entire development since the beginning of the 1990s, including both their programmatic views and their political actions.

One of the radical right parties in the region is the *Srpska radikalna stranka* [SRS; Serbian Radical Party].<sup>33</sup> Its leader, Vojislav Šešelj, is currently on trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, for several crimes committed by his personal militia in the 1990s.<sup>34</sup> The SRS was founded in 1991 and advocates the creation of Greater Serbia. During the post-Yugoslav wars, its members formed paramilitary units and recruited volunteers to carry out military actions in Croatia.<sup>35</sup> In 1991 and 1992, members of the party also supported the ethnic cleansing of several villages with predominantly Croatian populations in Serbia’s northern province of Vojvodina.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Michael Ehrke, *Sozialdemokratische Parteien in Zentral- und Südosteuropa: Politische Gesinnungsvereinigungen oder Managementagenturen für die Regierung* (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> Together with the SRS, Cas Mudde also mentioned the Serbian Renewal Movement party as one of the main representatives of populist radical right parties in Serbia. See: Mudde, ‘Populist radical right parties,’ 55–57.

<sup>34</sup> See: Sonja Biserko, ed., *Proces Vojislavu Šešelju: Raskrinkavanje projekta Velika Srbija*, Biblioteka Svedočanstva 34 (Beograd: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Sonja Biserko, ed., *Vukovarska tragedija 1991: U mreži propagandnih laži i oružane moći JNA* (Beograd: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2007), 821.

<sup>36</sup> Gordana Jovanović, ‘Mutan Dunav, krvav Srem: Reporter “Nezavisnog Indexa” u poseti Srbislavcima (nekadašnjim Hrtkovicima),’ *Nezavisni Index*, July 18, 1992, 334.

Although during the last twenty years the party has changed its ultra-nationalist program several times, it has maintained its aim of creating Greater Serbia as an ethnically pure state of the Serbian nation.<sup>37</sup> In their public appearances, party members continue to threaten especially ethnic minorities. The main features of the party are a 'strongly expressed authoritarian character, a general rejection of changes, an affirmative position towards centralization and mistrust towards other nationalities.'<sup>38</sup> With regard to foreign policy, the party advocates closer cooperation with Russia and rejects the pro-EU political course of all post-Milošević governments. One of the major topics on its agenda is the return of Serbia's southern province, Kosovo, to Serbia's authority. The party has undergone various developments during the last twenty years and its political influence has fluctuated. During the 1990s, what had once been a small opposition party became Milošević's coalition partner.<sup>39</sup> After the collapse of the regime in 2000, it slowly regained popularity and became the strongest opposition party, and almost won several national elections. In 2008, the party fell apart, due to the decision by one part of its leaders to support the government's EU accession policy. This group formed the *Srpska napredna stranka* [SNS, Serbian Progressive Party], whose leader (Tomislav Nikolić) is the president of Serbia. It remains to be seen whether the party will be able to recover from this split.

In Croatia in the 1990s, the *Hrvatska stranka prava* [HSP; Croatian Party of Rights] was probably the most visible radical right party.<sup>40</sup> In the course of the 1990s and 2000s, a whole range of similar parties emerged, for example, the *Hrvatska čista stranka prava* [HČSP; Croatia Pure Party of Rights] and the *Hrvatska stranka prava dr. Ante Starčević* [Croatian Party of Rights dr. Ante Starčević], and the less influential *Autohtona hrvatska stranka prava* [A-HSP; Autochthonous Croatian Party of Rights] and the *Hrvatski oslobodilački pokret* [HOP; Croatian Liberation Party].<sup>41</sup>

A sort of general right-wing ideology, as described above, is also shared by some of the membership of other right-wing parties like the *Demokratska stranka Srbije* [DSS; Democratic Party of Serbia], whose leader Vojislav Koštunica was prime minister of Serbia until 2008; the *Savez nezavisnih*

<sup>37</sup> For the development of the party during the 1990s, see: Ognjen Pribičević, 'Changing Fortunes of the Serbian Radical Right,' in *The Radical right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 193–211.

<sup>38</sup> Vladimir Goati, *Partijske borbe u Srbiji u postoktobarskom razdoblju* (Beograd: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung; Institut društvenih nauka, 2006), 40–41.

<sup>39</sup> Milan Milošević, *Die Parteienlandschaft Serbiens* (Berlin: Spitz, 2000), 52.

<sup>40</sup> See: Mudde, 'Populist radical right parties,' 43–44; Ivan Grdešić, 'The Radical Right in Croatia and its Constituency,' in *The Radical right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 171–189.

<sup>41</sup> See also the report on the latest developments in Croatia: Vedran Obućina, *Right-Wing Extremism in Croatia* (Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012).

*socijaldemokrata* [SNSD; Party of Independent Social Democrats] in the Republika Srpska, the part of Bosnia-Herzegovina with a Serb majority; the *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* [HDZ; Croatian Democratic Community HDZ] in Croatia, which for a decade was the ruling party of the former president of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman; and the *Vnatrešna makedonska revolucionarna organizacija – Demokratska partija za makedonsko nacionalno edinstvo* [VMRO DPMNE; Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity] in Macedonia. In general, however, these parties are considered moderate conservatives by their counterparts in Western Europe,<sup>42</sup> even though some of the most prominent activists of radical right groups are members of these parties.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, the constant transformation and adaptation of most political parties in the post-Yugoslav region stand in sharp contrast to radical right non-party organizations. While political parties try to adapt to the changing political context, and to transform themselves into moderate political organizations in order to escape political marginalization, radical right non-party groups usually do not think of such compromises. They openly express their fascism, racism, anti-Semitism, etc. while acting outside state institutions, and often use violence as their main method of political action. With the retreat of formerly strong radical ultra-nationalist parties, these groups have become increasingly visible and deserve a closer look.

### *Non-party neo-fascist and neo-Nazi organizations*

The beginnings of non-party neo-fascist organizations in the former Yugoslavia are usually traced back to the early skinhead groups in the second half of the 1980s. Neo-Nazi skinheads emerged in larger Yugoslav cities in various ways. In some cities, the right-wing skinheads were only a small fraction, left over after the political break-up within the scene, the majority of whom formed SHARP groups.<sup>44</sup> <sup>45</sup> In other parts of Yugoslavia, the formation of the first neo-Nazi skinhead groups did not follow a long-lasting internal political struggle among

<sup>42</sup> Cas Mudde properly noted: 'While many authors have described Eastern Europe as a hotbed of nationalism in the early postcommunist years (e.g. Bogdanor 1995; Fischer-Galati 1993), very few have linked it explicitly to the radical right. ... [I]t does not seem far-fetched to argue that at least some Eastern European parties that are now nonradical, started out as populist radical right.' In: Mudde, 'Populist radical right parties,' 53.

<sup>43</sup> Zoran Petakov, 'Neonacističke, fašističke i ekstremno desničarske organizacije u Srbiji,' in *Mapiranje desnog ekstremizma*, ed. Željko Klarić and Petar Atanacković (Novi Sad: Cenzura, 2009), 48; Antifa BGD, 'Desni Beograd: 20 godina mraka,' in *Desni ekstremizam: Ultradetničarske i neonacističke grupacije na prostoru bivše SFRJ*, ed. Daško Milinović and Miloš Perović (Novi Sad: Alternativna kulturna organizacija, 2012), 11.

<sup>44</sup> Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice.

<sup>45</sup> Petakov, 'Neonacističke, fašističke i ekstremno,' 42.

the skinheads. Here, all skinheads were soon identified with neo-Nazis, although the majority of young men identifying themselves with the skinhead culture could be described as politically undifferentiated. In these cities, it was only in the course of the 1990s that smaller SHARP groups were formed, distancing themselves from the right-wing skinheads. Large parts of a sizeable underground scene centered on various musical genres and bands, adopted radical right ideas.<sup>46</sup> The first contacts between the Yugoslav skinheads and the transnational networks of neo-Nazis go back to the first half of the 1990s. However, these were exceptions, and mostly at an individual level.

The first Yugoslav neo-fascists or neo-Nazis were recruited among football fans, perhaps even more than among the fans of underground music. Fans of the Belgrade club Rad, who call themselves the 'United Force,' were one of the early right-wing politicized fan groups.<sup>47</sup> The potential for recruitment of neo-fascist activists among football hooligans in most post-Yugoslav states remains strong. During the last twenty years, the scene changed in such a way that all major football clubs now have neo-fascist fan groups in their stadiums. These groups openly use racist, anti-Semitic, or just old-school Nazi slogans and symbols (Celtic crosses and swastikas, and combinations of numerical symbols, like 18<sup>48</sup>). Most often, however, the slogans draw on a local nationalist context. Today, fascist hooligans can be found among the fans of the Belgrade-based clubs *Crvena zvezda* [Red Star], *Partizan*, *OFK Beograd* (especially the firm-like group called the Blue Union Belgrade), *FK Voždovac* (with the radical right group *Invalidi* [The Handicapped]), as well as among the fans of smaller clubs in Serbia like *FK Zemun*, *FK Sloboda* (Užice), and *FK Borac* (Čacak). In Croatia, the situation is quite similar: Here, too, fascism has penetrated the fan groups of all the major clubs, like *Dinamo* (Zagreb), *Hajduk* (Split), *Rijeka*, etc. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the clubs, which are notorious for their Neo-Nazi fans, are *FK Borac* (Banja Luka) and *Zrinjski* (Mostar), as well as the smaller club *NK Široki Brijeg*, whose fan group *Škripari* has a bad reputation that extends far beyond the reputation of the football club itself.<sup>49</sup> The widespread use of physical violence before, during, and after football matches—as also occurs in other countries, perpetrated by groups ranging from the English 'firms' to the Italian Ultras—in combination with the fascist ideology, is a common phenomenon in the post-Yugoslav area. It was only in the last couple of years that

<sup>46</sup> This was apparently the case in Belgrade. See: Antifa BGD, 'Desni Beograd,' 9.

<sup>47</sup> Petakov, 'Neonacističke, fašističke i ekstremno,' 42.

<sup>48</sup> The number 18 represents the first and the eighth letter of the Latin alphabet, and stands for the initials of Adolf Hitler.

<sup>49</sup> Holger Raschke, 'Generator desnice: Stadioni kao poligoni za uvežbavanje militantnih ultradesničara,' in *Desni ekstremizam: Ultradesničarske i neonacističke grupacije na prostoru bivše SFRJ*, ed. Daško Milinović and Miloš Perović (Novi Sad: Alternativna kulturna organizacija, 2012), 43–52.

special laws prohibiting and sanctioning this kind of violence were adopted in several countries in the region. However, these laws usually underestimate the political dimension of it and turn against a very abstract ‘hooliganism,’ reducing fascism in the fan scene to a simple ‘cult of violence.’<sup>50</sup>

Among the first neo-Nazi organizations formed in the former Yugoslavia were divisions of the international militant network Blood & Honour. The Serbian Division was founded in Serbia during the first half of the 1990s, although the group itself celebrates June 25, 1995, as the organization’s official ‘birthday.’ Later, other divisions were initiated in the two biggest cities in Slovenia, Ljubljana and Maribor. In Croatia, Blood & Honour was established in 2004, including divisions in Pula, Rijeka, and Zagreb,<sup>51</sup> and a mysterious group called Crusader division, each counting around a dozen members. Today, in Serbia there are members of Blood & Honour in Belgrade, Šabac, Novi Sad, Niš,<sup>52</sup> Smederevo, Jagodina, Kikinda, Sombor, and Zrenjanin.<sup>53</sup>

The early actions of Blood & Honour in this area mostly comprised the organization of concerts for a variety of both local and international bands. The groups are still publishing various books and fanzines, and the magazine *Krv i čast* [Blood & Honour]. Apart from attempts to organize and perform several protest marches, the public presence of these groups is usually restricted to brutal attacks on anti-fascist activists, Roma, and other minorities. Together with other right-wing groups, they have participated in some larger demonstrations in Belgrade, as well as in Novi Sad and Niš. Their ideology—which is shared by the post-Yugoslav activists—is based on white supremacy as it is known throughout Europe. While basically secular, in Serbia the local Blood & Honour groups showed some indications that it is getting ideologically closer to the Serbian Christian Orthodoxy.<sup>54</sup> How this alliance could look like remains to be seen. At the moment, Blood & Honour groups are concentrating on maintaining good relations with neo-Nazi groups in England, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, etc.<sup>55</sup> While the Blood & Honour network is more or less present in all parts of the former Yugoslavia, in Serbia

<sup>50</sup> Marija Đorić, ‘Politizacija huliganizma,’ *Politička revija* 9, no. 3 (2010): 379–400.

<sup>51</sup> For the most recent situation in Zagreb, see: Antifa Zagreb, ‘Nepokoreni grad: Protiv ustaša i ostalih fašista,’ in *Desni ekstremizam: Ultrad desnicaške i neonacističke grupacije na prostoru bivše SFRJ*, ed. Daško Milinović and Miloš Perović (Novi Sad: Alternativna kulturna organizacija, 2012), 15–19.

<sup>52</sup> For the situation in Niš, where Blood & Honour has a strong group, see: AFA Niš, ‘Svetlo na kraju tunela? Radanje niške antifašističke organizacije,’ in *Desni ekstremizam: Ultrad desnicaške i neonacističke grupacije na prostoru bivše SFRJ*, ed. Daško Milinović and Miloš Perović (Novi Sad: Alternativna kulturna organizacija, 2012), 29–33.

<sup>53</sup> Petakov, ‘Neonacističke, fašističke i ekstremno,’ 43.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

there is a much larger variety of neo-fascist groups. An interesting feature of these groups is that they include both transnational organized radical right networks and autochthonous groups.

A small group called *Rasni nacionalisti - Rasonalisti* [racial nationalists] which has similar views as Blood & Honour, emerged in Belgrade, Serbia, between 2000 and 2005. It has only a few members and basically propagates racism, embedding it in an obscure quasi-medieval iconography, while remaining strictly pagan. Its political influence even within the right-wing circles is rather marginal.<sup>56</sup>

Of much stronger influence was the forming of *Nacionalni stroj* [National Order]<sup>57</sup> in Serbia. This militant neo-Nazi group was established in February 2005 as a result of a conflict within the neo-Nazi community in Serbia. The group that was to become *Nacionalni stroj* accused the rest of being too soft, and started to spray anti-Semitic and racist graffiti in Belgrade. On November 9, 2005, members of *Nacionalni stroj* attacked a public debate on 'Today's neo-fascist threat' at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. The police intervention and the official statements issued by the organizers eventually led to more public attention being paid to this group, as well as to the prosecution of its members. Following his conviction, the leader of the group, Goran Davidović (who calls himself 'Führer'), fled to Italy in September 2008. In June 2009, he moved to Germany. He was finally arrested in February 2010 in the Bavarian city of Traunstein.<sup>58</sup> This episode illustrates the obviously good connections between Serbian neo-Nazis and their friends in Western Europe, especially considering the visa regulations that were in force in this period, as they made it rather hard for Serbian citizens to travel, even as tourists, to Western European states.

The planned 'March for the unity of Serbia,' which was organized at the end of 2007 by *Nacionalni stroj* together with Blood & Honour, was a failure, as a result of the strong resistance mounted by citizens, who had been mobilized by anti-fascist activists and various political parties.<sup>59</sup> However, the group managed to register a formal party called the *Novi srpski program* [NSP; New Serbian Program], although it never gained any notable political influence. Since *Nacionalni stroj* had recently been prohibited, its members started using Republika Srpska in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a new area for their actions, as did

<sup>56</sup> Petakov, 'Neonacističke, fašističke i ekstremno,' 46.

<sup>57</sup> Primarily used because the initials 'NS' also symbolize German 'Nationalsozialismus.'

<sup>58</sup> AFP, 'Serbischer Neonazi in Traunstein verhaftet,' February 3, 2010, accessed May 11, 2012, [http://www.123recht.net/Serbischer-Neonazi-in-Traunstein-verhaftet-\\_a58724.html](http://www.123recht.net/Serbischer-Neonazi-in-Traunstein-verhaftet-_a58724.html).

<sup>59</sup> AFA Novi Sad, 'Bastion antifašizma: 12 godina Antifašističke Akcije Novog Sada,' in *Desni ekstremizam: Ultradessičarske i neonacističke grupacije na prostoru bivše SFRJ*, ed. Daško Milinović and Miloš Perović (Novi Sad: Alternativna kulturna organizacija, 2012), 41.

other clerical fascist organizations from Serbia.<sup>60</sup> Whether—and if so, how—they will manage to organize themselves there remains to be seen. Following the developments and strategies of their German colleagues, the neo-Nazis gathered around this group. They also changed their forms of action and their appearance, using a more discrete symbol, with the aim of remaining unnoticed as fascists and of normalizing their own ‘patriotism.’<sup>61</sup>

### *The Serbian patriotic movements*

Although in all parts of the post-Yugoslav area, neo-fascist groups associate themselves with fascist groups and symbols from the Second World War period (like the *Ustaša* in Croatia), a new type of autochthonous radical right group appeared in Serbia in the 1990s: the clerical fascist group. Despite common actions and mutual sympathy between the transnationally organized neo-Nazi groups and clerical fascists, the latter should be mentioned separately. They emerged from the aforementioned local radical right intellectual circles in Serbia, who have propagated nationalism since the mid-1980s and advocate a specific form of aggressive clerical nationalism.

The group with the largest and most active membership is the *Srpski otačastveni pokret Obraz* [Serbian Patriotic Movement *Obraz*<sup>62</sup>]. On 12 June 2012 *Obraz* was officially banned by the Constitutional Court of Serbia. *Obraz* was founded in 2001 by radical right intellectuals and students at Belgrade University. In this period, another organization that was close to *Obraz*, *Sv. Justin filozof* [Saint Justin the Philosopher], was founded at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. This group was intended to be the student sub-organization of *Obraz*, but this idea was dropped, and the organization did not really gain any serious political influence, except among some of the students of the Faculty of Philosophy.<sup>63</sup> The intellectuals who founded *Obraz* had been collaborating with the magazine of the same name since the mid-1990s. One of the prominent contributors was Vojislav Koštunica,<sup>64</sup> who in 2000 became president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and later prime minister of Serbia.

<sup>60</sup> See: Antifa BiH, ‘Svega zlog i naopakog: Svaki mogući fašizam pomnožen sa najmanje tri,’ in *Desni ekstremizam: Ultradeshničarske i neonacističke grupacije na prostoru bivše SFRJ*, ed. Daško Milinović and Miloš Perović (Novi Sad: Alternativna kulturna organizacija, 2012), 22.

<sup>61</sup> Antifašistička Akcija Novog Sada, ed., *Fašizam oko nas: Životni stilovi, simboli i šifre neonacističkih i ekstremno desničarskih grupa* (Novi Sad: Alternativna kulturna organizacija; Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung; Antifašistička Akcija Novog Sada, 2010).

<sup>62</sup> Serbo-Croatian for ‘cheek,’ but actually meaning ‘honor.’

<sup>63</sup> Petakov, ‘Neonacističke, fašističke i ekstremno,’ 51.

<sup>64</sup> Vladimir Gligorov, ‘Vanredno stanje,’ in *Godišnji almanah: Izbor tekstova sa sajta Pescanik.net*, ed. Svetlana Lukić and Svetlana Vuković (Beograd: Peščanik, 2009), 40–42.

The first public appearance of *Obraz* in March 2001 was the publication of a declaration against the ‘enemies of Serbs.’ The declaration openly attacked Jews, Ustasha Turks, *Shiptars* [Albanians], democrats, ‘false peace-makers’ (i.e., NGOs), sects, narcotics addicts, and homosexuals. The later actions of *Obraz* mostly comprised public discussions that were held all over Serbia on various ‘historical’ topics. The basic idea was to rehabilitate recent war criminals or to propagate the views of right-wing protagonists from Serbia’s past, ranging from politicians of Serbia’s fascist government during the Second World War, to the openly anti-Semitic Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, who was canonized a saint by the Serbian Orthodox Church. In the course of the Serbian government’s educational reform policies, *Obraz* also undertook actions propagating ultra-nationalist contents. The group mobilized for the Cyrillic alphabet, stating that it is crucial for the Serbs to maintain their own alphabet. They also mobilized on the topic of Kosovo, urging the stronger involvement of the army in this issue. Last but not least, they organized actions in favor of Bosnian Serb wartime president, Radovan Karadžić, who was indicted for genocide during the Bosnia war and arrested in 2008.<sup>65</sup>

Due to the emergence of another clerical fascist group (*1389*), in 2006 and 2007 *Obraz* was forced to change its strategy. It radicalized, participating with Blood & Honour in violent marches, like the mentioned one in 2007 in Novi Sad. It also joined in the demonstrations against Kosovo’s declaration of independence and against the arrest of Radovan Karadžić in 2008. In terms of international allies, *Obraz* has close contact with the *Russkii Obraz* organization in Russia, and is well connected to various organizations of the new right in Romania, Slovakia, Poland, France, and Italy.<sup>66</sup>

Like *Obraz*, the group *Dveri srpske: Srpski sabor Dveri. Nacionalna organizacija slobodnih ljudi* [Serbian Gates: Serbian Union Dveri. National organization of free people] underwent a similar development. The organization emerged around the *Dveri srpske* magazine and was founded in January 1999. Besides publishing the magazine and books with clerical and nationalist content, the organization organized several public debates in various parts of Serbia. Recent actions include a sort of pro-life campaign, arguing that the Serbian people are dying out. The organization also tries to mobilize nationalist Serbs abroad. It is close to the Serbian Orthodox Church and serves as a forum for nationalist intellectuals. *Dveri* recently succeeded in registering itself as a political party. It won over 4 percent of the votes in the last parliamentary elections in Serbia,<sup>67</sup> and although it did not gain any seats, it

<sup>65</sup> Petakov, ‘Neonacističke, fašističke i ekstremno,’ 49.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Republička izborna komisija, ‘Rezultati parlamentarnih izbora na osnovu 97,51 odsto biračkih mesta,’ accessed May 7, 2012, <http://eizbori.com/rik-rezultati-parlamentarnih>

exhibited quite a strong mobilizing potential, bearing in mind the short life of the party.

Two newcomers on the clerical fascist scene in Serbia are the groups *Srpski Narodni Pokret 1389* [Serbian National Movement 1389] and *Srpski narodni pokret Naši* [Serbian National Movement *Naši*]. Both groups were founded and registered as NGOs in Belgrade in 2006 and 2007, but they became more visible to the broader public only after uniting in 2010 and acting under the name *SNP 1389 Naši*. Internal conflicts apparently split the alliance,<sup>68</sup> although there are no details about it to be found on their homepages.<sup>69</sup> Still, both organizations have developed a network of activists in several cities in Serbia, and both mainly try to mobilize young people. Both groups are based on the idea of clericalism and ultra-nationalism. While *SNP 1389* (whose name alludes to Serbia's past and the Kosovo myth<sup>70</sup>) focuses on Serbia's internal politics, *SNP Naši* promotes an international 'Euro-Asian perspective' of Serbia. Both organizations are well connected to various radical right organizations abroad, especially in Russia.

The breakup of *SNP 1389 Naši* seems to have led to different forms of action. The early activities of both groups were restricted to propagandistic actions like distributing posters, flyers, etc. It was only after Radovan Karadžić was arrested that they started violent demonstrations, which they organized together with *Obraz* and other neo-fascist organizations. While *SNP Naši* continues its violent actions,<sup>71</sup> *SNP 1389* is trying to become a political party. Whether this attempt will be successful, has to be seen. However, the rather self-confident presentation on the group's homepage points to the perhaps central problem of politics in Serbia, namely the lack of a political alternative. Therefore, *SNP 1389* claims that it 'is the only real alternative to the actual regime, but also to the opposition parties.'<sup>72</sup> Unfortunately, there are not many arguments to refute this statement. In terms of political influence, this organization remains marginal. How strong it may grow remains to be seen, but its

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-izbora-na-osnovu-9751-odsto-birackih-mesta/; CeSID, 'Preliminarni rezultati parlamentarnih izbora 2012,' accessed May 7, 2012, <http://www.cesid.org/>.

<sup>68</sup> AFA Novi Sad, 'Bastion antifašizma,' 37.

<sup>69</sup> SNP Naši provides some information about the split, but does not explain the causes; SNP 1389 does not even mention it. See: SNP Naši, 'O nama,' accessed May 13, 2012, <http://nasirbija.org/index.php/o-nama/>; SNP 1389, 'O SNP 1389,' accessed May 13, 2012, [http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=?com\\_content&view=?article&id=?=57&Itemid=?=269](http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=?com_content&view=?article&id=?=57&Itemid=?=269).

<sup>70</sup> Therefore the group uses the number '1389,' alluding to the year of the 'Kosovo battle' between the 'Serbs' and the 'Turks.'

<sup>71</sup> One of them is the burning of the flag of the autonomous province of Vojvodina in the city of Zrenjanin in March 2012, in protest against the 'secession' of Vojvodina, the northern province of Serbia. Information about this action has been posted on the homepage of SNP Naši, obviously without fear of state/police intervention of any kind.

<sup>72</sup> SNP 1389, 'O nama.'

ability to cooperate with other political organizations, as well as its growing infrastructure, could make it a serious new protagonist on the Serbian neo-fascist scene. For the time being, *Dveri* seems to be filling the gap left by the absence of a strong clerical fascist party in Serbia.

### *Cross-border activism*

Despite the political focus of the autochthonous clerical fascist groups on Serbia and its internal politics, these groups also try to act transnationally. Like most other neo-fascist groups, all clerical fascist groups have attractive websites, even though this combination of tradition and modern means of communication may seem paradoxical. All these groups also use various online forums and, recently, also Facebook groups for communication, also in order to attract new sympathizers. Moreover, some of these groups actively participate in actions and campaigns in neighboring countries (mostly in the Republika Srpska in Bosnia-Herzegovina) that are organized by the local neo-fascist groups, like the neo-Četnik organization *Srpski ravnogorski pokret* [Serbian Ravnogora Movement], and supported by the government and the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>73</sup>

This form of cross-border activism is far from unusual in this region. Ever since it emerged in 2001, the Hungarian neo-fascist organization *Hatvannégy Vármegyé Ifjúsági Mozgalom* [Sixty-four Counties Youth Movement] has had supporters among the Hungarian population of Vojvodina, especially the younger ones. The group is fighting for the restoration both of Hungary's pre-First World War borders and of 'Greater Hungary,' to which also Vojvodina should belong. Although the group has been banned in Hungary (fortunately, this happened before the Orbán government came into power in Hungary), it is still trying to be active in Serbia, as well as in Slovakia and Romania. Facing a relatively low level of acceptance by the Hungarians in Serbia, the group tries to mobilize young people by organizing cultural events in villages and smaller cities that have a Hungarian majority population. Several concert performances by openly neo-fascist bands from Hungary have already been organized, some of them with public funds provided by the autonomous province of Vojvodina. By supporting cultural events of ethnic minorities, the provincial government at least once (in 2010) approved an application for financial support, submitted by a cultural organization of Hungarian youth, to organize 'workshops of traditional handcraft.' Instead, the event turned out to be a gathering of Hungarian fascist punk and heavy metal bands.<sup>74</sup> It was only after a

<sup>73</sup>) Antifa BiH, 'Svega zlog i naopakog,' 21.

<sup>74</sup>) See: Antifaschistische Linke Berlin, 'Serbien: Staat finanziert Nazikonzert,' accessed May 7, 2012, <http://www.antifa.de/cms/content/view/1480/69/>.

local anti-fascist group discovered the deception that the police reacted and prevented at least some of the bands from performing, by stopping them at the state border. Since then, the activities of 64 Counties and its allies have been reduced to a minimum, but it can be expected that new Hungarian fascist initiatives will emerge. A first reorganization of 64 Counties is in sight: A new organization called *Magyar remény mozgalom* [Hungarian Hope Movement] seems to be slowly replacing the old organization.<sup>75</sup>

## Prospects

Since the political changes in 2000, which are regarded as an important break in the most recent history of the post-Yugoslav area, there have been further transformations of the political context. The pro-European course of most governments in the region was accompanied by a series of economic reforms, for example the rapid privatization of state-owned companies, which led to serious social consequences, including a growing unemployment rate (over 30 percent in Macedonia, almost 30 percent in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and over 20 percent in Serbia) and even extreme poverty in some of the post-Yugoslav states. Nationalism as a means of legitimizing the state, and of demobilizing political opponents, is slowly losing its strength. In some states, like Croatia and Serbia (but not yet in Bosnia-Herzegovina or Macedonia), the state-sponsored nationalism was replaced by a new legitimizing interpretational frame: a 'European' future, based upon rules of capitalist market economy. Competition, profit, personal success measured in financial terms, etc. became new values, proposed by the political elite. At the same time, the majority of the post-Yugoslav population is not able to identify itself with these prospects. For many people in this region, the promised 'better future'—or even just 'normal life'—now perhaps seems even further away than ever.<sup>76</sup> Because of this shift within the political and socio-economic context, which is characterized by the new neoliberal mainstream, as well as the process of the normalization of nationalism, neo-fascist groups in the post-Yugoslav area face a new situation.

During the 1990s, radical right groups were ideologically and literally on the right side. Due to the mentioned political changes, radical right groups are left on their own; they are still controlled by state authorities, but they are

<sup>75</sup> AFA Novi Sad, 'Bastion antifašizma,' 39.

<sup>76</sup> For the crisis of the political system in the post-Yugoslav region, see for example: Vedran Džihčić, Dieter Segert, and Angela Wieser, 'The Crisis of Representative Democracy in the Post-Yugoslav Region: Discrepancies of Elite Policies and Citizens' Expectations,' *Southeastern Europe* 36, no. 1 (2012): 87–110, accessed January 28, 2013, doi:10.1163/187633312X616995.

politically marginalized. At the same time, however, these groups are able to reorganize themselves and further radicalize.

Although various smaller anti-fascist, leftist, or other groups engage in political action, there is no real operative and visible political alternative in the former Yugoslavia,<sup>77</sup> and therefore radical right and especially neo-fascist actions and ideology might even become *the* alternative.

Of course, as long as these groups are under some form of state control, no major challenges to the political system should arise. For various minorities in society, however, the strengthening of radical right groups represents a real and very serious threat. The fact that the state provided protection for the Gay Pride Parade in Belgrade in 2010, for example, does not make lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons feel safe from attacks by the radical right. Hence, the only chance for these societies is the establishment of a real political alternative that is based on a strong civil society.

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<sup>77</sup> For an overview of the post-Yugoslav left, see: Boris Kanzleiter and Đorđe Tomić, 'The Left in the Post-Yugoslav Area,' in *From Revolution to Coalition: Radical Left Parties in Europe*, ed. Birgit Daiber, Cornelia Hildebrandt, and Anna Striethorst (Berlin: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2012), 309–325.