Editorial

It is my pleasure to welcome to this special issue of *SPSR*, which is guest edited by Emily B. Baran of Middle Tennessee State University and Zoe Knox of the University of Leicester. Entitled “Understanding Russia’s Anti-Extremism Law: Historical Contexts and Contemporary Consequences,” this special issue includes contributions from Baran and Knox as well as from Maria Kravchenko of the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Ellie R. Schainker of Emory University, Marat Shterin of King’s College, and Dmitry Dubrovsky of the Higher School of Economics and the Center for Independent Social Research.

Baran examines the history of marginalizing rhetoric in Russia as applied to evangelizing faiths, particularly the Jehovah’s Witnesses, from the postwar period to the present day. Baran argues that Russian media has not fully embraced the rhetoric of “extremism” as applied to evangelizing communities, but has also done little to challenge the underlying state policy it represents. Knox looks the Russian Supreme Court’s 2017 decision to ban Jehovah’s Witnesses as “extremists.” Knox argues that the 2017 ban signals the rejection of European human rights norms by Russian governmental authorities, lawmakers, and religious elites.

Kravchenko’s focus is on the enforcement of Russian anti-extremist legislation through web regulation. Her article analyzes the legal norms pertaining to web content control, and details law enforcement practice and major trends. It also identifies the most common publications, people, and organizations targeted by Russian law enforcement for sanctions based on online statements. Schainker’s contribution places current Russian efforts to stamp out religious extremism in a broad historical context of imperial productions of tolerance and intolerance and the impact on religious minorities. It examines the case of Jews in the Russian Empire and post-Soviet Russia through the lens of religious conversion, forced baptisms, and freedom of conscience in the realm of apostasy.

Finally, Shterin and Dubrovsky’s article investigates how academic expertise is deployed in anti-extremist litigation involving Russia’s minority religions. They reveal important processes involved in this judicial regulation and focus on the selection of experts and the validation of their opinion within Russia’s academia and the judiciary while also identifying patterns in the experts’ approach to evidence and how they validate their conclusions in the eyes of the

judiciary. Shterin and Dubrovsky reveal important processes that produce religious discrimination and the role that anti-extremist legislation plays in these processes.

It is my hope that you will enjoy this special issue of *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*.

Christopher J. Ward
Editor-in-Chief