



# Overview of research on far right extremism in the Western Balkans

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## Question

“What does academic/analytical literature have to say about Far Right Extremism in the Western Balkans in the present day? Please include where available commentary on the geographic presence, level, gendered elements and the main themes/groups connected to the region”

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## 1. Summary

Far-right extremism is widespread in the Western Balkans and exists in both mainstream political parties and extremist groups and individuals. Most of the literature focuses on Serbian nationalist groups, but far-right groups are also present in Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania and North Macedonia.

While their precise aims differ, far-right groups share many of the following principles:

- Ethnically based politics.
- Reference to the 1990s wars.
- Glorification of war criminals and ethnic cleansing from the 1990s.
- A belief in victimisation.
- A desire to redraw boundaries on ethnic lines.
- Hatred or 'securitisation' of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups.
- The use of violence.
- Anti-Nato and anti-EU politics.
- Pro-Russian attitudes and links.
- Links with organised crime.

The literature focuses on explaining far right extremism in relation to the political cultures of the countries. It notes continuities with the politics of the 1990s in terms of organisations, personnel and nationalist ideas. Many far-right groups centre on continuing disputes over borders and ethnic victimisation in the Balkans, to which the 'ethnic democracy' practised by today's political elites contributes. It also notes the perceived 'Europeaness' of liberal ideas on LGBT and women's rights, against which some groups contrast their traditional, Orthodox, Eurasian or Slavic values. The spread of these discourses are analysed through media and internet sources. Far-right groups are shown to be linked to football supporters' clubs, and to have experience in the Balkan wars or the recent Ukraine conflict in some cases. Sub-regional links within the Balkans are important, as are links with Russia, and there is some evidence of wider international links. Some studies look at relative social deprivation, criminal backgrounds and high levels of unemployment across the region, but most focus on political culture. The perceived threat of Islam is a theme of many groups, as well as migrants entering Europe through the Balkans. Far right groups are shown to be enabled by mainstream politics and institutions which agree with some of their extreme ideas and fail to clamp down on groups.

There is more research on Islamic violent extremism than far-right violent extremism in the region, although the number of publications on the issue has risen since 2017 (Kursani, 2019). The most recent literature comes from think tanks and foreign policy sources. Academic literature, focused on political parties and discourse analysis, covers a slightly earlier period. The area which has generated most writing is Serbian nationalism, including nationalist groups as well as foreign fighters in Ukraine. The literature on the other countries is dominated by discussion of Islamic extremism, often from a security angle. While women are mentioned as participants in Islamic extremism, there is little information on women in right-wing extremism, except for conservative views on gender roles. Although the criminal backgrounds of foreign fighters are noted, as well as some Serbian and Albanian groups' links with organised crime, this theme is not expanded on in the literature.

## 2. Main themes

### Definitions and context

Scholars and observers use a range of different terms to describe the same groups and ideas in the Western Balkans, including radical right, extreme rights, right-wing extremist, neo-fascist, neo-Nazi, neo-populist, anti-immigrant, ultra-right or far right, new right and right populist (Stojarová, 2014, p. 9). Perry notes a similar problem, as these terms can all be used to describe shared views such as nativism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and anti-Islam sentiment (Perry, 2019). Such groups may identify with different historical ideologies, such as the Serbian Chetniks, or for or against Yugoslavian communist policies, making for some terminological confusion. Indeed, right-wing groups in the Balkans are more likely to be left-wing on economic matters than those elsewhere (Bušćiková, 2018). Most right-wing groups advocate some form of border change based on ethnicity and well as animosity to other ethnic groups, sexual minorities and liberalism.

There is no agreed definition of terrorism beyond the use of violence for an ideological end. Whether a group is labelled terrorist or not is often linked to the legitimacy conferred on its actions. Some scholars instead use the term 'radicalisation'. The term is used to describe pathways for people to 'adopt and perhaps even act on extreme views' which take them away from social norms and towards unlawful acts (Perry, 2019). However, 'Critics of contemporary radicalisation discourse point out that 'radicalisation' has come to be associated almost exclusively with violent jihadi terrorism and is much less prevalent in discussions around other types of violent extremism and terrorism, such as the extreme right' (Balkans, 2018).

Indeed, notions of radicalisation depend on the context in which the radicalised operate. In the Balkans, a number of nationalistic, anti-feminist and anti-LGBT views are mainstream. The line between holding extreme views and acting on them is also problematic. Perry notes that USAID defines violent extremism as 'advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives'. However, the line between holding extreme views and acting on them is hard to discern, while those who incite violent extremism but do not themselves perpetrate it may be just as dangerous (Perry, 2019).

According to Perry (2019), 'there is less a problem of violent extremism in Serbia than there is a prevalent and unresolved culture of extremism, grounded in the reciprocal dynamics of the socio-political ecosystem that has emerged since the wars in the 1990s, and that efforts to transform the country (and the region) through support for open and democratic systems have been woefully inadequate in addressing the drivers of all kinds of extremisms.' Indeed, in all of the literature surveyed, far right parties are either linked to mainstream parties via coalitions, enabled by lax prosecution, or by right-wing discourses.

Many of the parties and groups involved in the wars of the 1990s are still involved in politics. There is a blurring between 'mainstream' and extremist parties, who often share views or work in coalition. This review therefore focuses on right-wing extremism in the form of groups willing to undertake violent action as well as formal political parties. Extremism is taken to include anti-democratic views, anti-LGBT and gender equality views, advocacy of fascism or theocracy, and propagation of ethnic or religious hatred, extreme nationalism and violent action.

## Religion and nationalism

The Western Balkans hosts a number of competing forms of far-right and Islamic extremism. The term 'reciprocal radicalisation' refers to the interplay of extremism, such as Islamic extremism and far-right extremism in Serbia, as opposing groups make their views and actions more radical based on perceived threats from the other, as well as actions (Perry, 2019). A recent literature review of Balkan extremism (far-right and Islamic) 'suggests that areas (Western Balkans states or municipalities) where identity aspects are mixed (ethnic/religious), violent extremism appears to be more prominent', but has not been thoroughly studied, and emphasises the need for surveys of the links between ethnic and religious extremism (Kursani, 2019).

Many far-right groups, particularly in Serbia, use Orthodox imagery or have links with the Serbian Orthodox Church. However, religion is not assigned as central a place in analyses of right-wing extremism as for Islamic extremism. With respect to Balkans fighters going to fight for Russia in Ukraine and Syria, Beslin and Ignjatijevic (2017) state: 'While the question of shared religion stands at the cornerstone of Serbo-Russian relations it did not, unlike with jihadists, represent a determining factor for mobilisation'. However, the Serbian Orthodox supports a number of extreme positions, particularly on social issues such as LGBT rights or Kosovo through public statements or links with far-right groups. Some far-right groups also participate in fundraising events for the church (Mills, 2018).

To understand what motivates individuals to take extremist action, Kursani (2019, p. 24) suggests analysing their 'authority preferences', to understand 'what makes individuals prefer submitting themselves under and between (i) existing state laws (the established order); (ii) religious laws/order; or community authority, which may include individuals' preferences to take community/family authority (be that religious or secular) more seriously than other types of authorities'.

## International connections

Connections between ethnic Serbs in Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo are common, as are those between ethnic Albanians in Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia. Similarly, Russian links to right-wing Serbian groups exist from the government level down, most visibly shown by the several hundred Balkan citizens fighting for Russia in Ukraine and Syria.

Some of the links cross ethnic groups, or regions. In 2017, a man wearing a Croatian Defence Council shirt, was also involved in storming the parliament in protest at the election of an ethnic Albanian speaker, and advocating a Croatian-Macedonian far-right alliance (Ristic, Milekic, Zivanovic, & Dzidic, 2017). The British far-right activist Jim Dowson has been active providing 'media training' for far-right groups in Serbia, including filming videos, helping the far-right group Order of the Dragon make a website, advising the anti-immigration group Generation Identity on social media use, and attending rallies. He has also taken bullet-proof vests to northern Kosovo. His international activities have been facilitated by the Knights Templar International (KTI), a widely used web portal (Cosic, Marzouk, & Angelovski, 2018).

A number of authors point to the role of the Balkans in right-wing discourse and networks more generally. An article notes that 'the resurgence of right-wing nationalism in Europe has turned Bosnia's war into an object of lurid nostalgia' as they look to the Serbian cause in the war as a model of a 'race war'. Aside from those who fought in the Balkans wars, younger figures such as Anders Breivik have expressed admiration for convicted war criminals, while the American 'alt

right' figure Steve Bannon and Russian president Vladimir Putin have met far-right politicians from Republika Srpska (Hussain, 2018).

The internet is an important link in these far-right connections. A survey of far right-internet sites in 2017 showed links between groups all over Europe (Balkans, 2018). A recent study found more than 60 websites in the Balkans promoting 'ethnically pure nation states, neo-Nazism, violent homophobia and other radical right-wing policies' (Ristic et al., 2017). Far-right organisations cultivate links abroad. For instance, the website of Serbian National Movement 1389 links to organisations including Poles for Serbian Kosovo, Slovenské Hnutie Obrody, and Oboz Wielkiej Polski (Ristic et al., 2017).

Other studies focus on far-right groups or individuals. A recent study shows how Goran Davidovic has used Twitter and other social media to propagate his views. Formerly the leader of the banned National Guard, he was sentenced to one year in prison after attacking anti-fascist rallies, but fled to Trieste. Using social network analysis and content analysis, Marko (2019) shows the main narratives and buzzwords are focused on self-protection and xenophobia, and that Davidovic creates relatively 'horizontal' relationships with followers. He finds that 'Instead of suggesting specific actions that might be considered to be a targeted call for mobilization, Davidović uses provocative and suggestive messages. "Tell them what you think..."; "Remember this..." or more explicitly, "Spread your anger..."—' (Marko, 2019).

However, the role of internet platforms in mobilising individuals and groups needs to be better understood. An Atlantic Initiative study finds 'no evidence that ... frequency of Internet use [is] associated with violent extremism (VE) sympathy' (Atlantic Initiative, 2018). Similarly, Ivanovic's study of internet use among Serbian youth shows that the internet has not been a main driver of the recruitment of individuals to extremist groups, which still happens face-to-face (Ivanovic, 2019).

### 3. Serbia

#### Prominent parties

**Far right ideas, individuals and parties have remained in prominent positions in Serbian politics and society since the fall of the Milosevic government** (Dzombic, 2014). This includes political parties experiencing success at the ballot box, more extreme fringe groups, football hooligans, mercenary fighters and figures in the Orthodox Church, as well as widespread public attitudes which may be characterised as far right (particularly relating to certain ethnic groups, gender roles and LGBT people).

The **Serbian Radical Party** is a conservative, nationalist party which practises xenophobia and advocates the unification of territories containing ethnic Serbs in Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia. It looks to the history of the Serbian Chetniks, a monarchist resistance group in the Second World War, as well as Serbian Orthodoxy (Stojarová, 2014, p. 48). In 2008-12, it was the second largest party in the National Assembly with 78 out of 250 seats; in 2012 and 2014 it failed to win any seats; and in 2016, it was the third largest party with 22 seats.

Outside of the larger parties, data on far-right extremist groups is poor. Using police data from 2011, Dzombic (2014) says there are about 30 active groups with about 5,000 members in total, spanning nationalist, Nazi, cleric-fascist ideologies as well as football fans. Three of the largest of

these groups are **Obraz**, the **Serbian National Movement (SNP or Naši)** and **Dveri**. Other groups include Blood and Honour, National Alignment (officially banned), Stormfront Serbia, Serbian Nationalists, Serbian National movement 1389, Nomokanon and the Serbian National movement 'Svetozar miletic' (Dzombic, 2014).

**Obraz** (meaning honour) is a Serbian clerical-fascist organisation. It advocates for theocracy using programmes from the 1930s and 1940s programmes. It is against the emancipation of women or LGBT people, integration with the EU or NATO, and calls for a Greater Serbia. It was banned in 2012, but a successor organisation called 'Serbian Obraz' was soon formed (Ivanovic, 2019; Stakic, 2019).

**The Serbian National Movement (Naši)** similarly advocates against Western institutions, LGBT rights, equal gender roles, and for the Orthodox faith and a greater Serbia. Naši 'published a list of 'anti-Serbian' national traitors. This included media outlets, NGOs and various individuals, all of which had allegedly breached the Constitution by supporting the independent Republic of Kosovo, and were financed by foreign foundations and embassies' (Dzombic, 2014).

**Dveri** started as a Christian student organisation and advocates conservative Orthodox positions on social issues as well as nationalism and fascism. It sees homosexuality as a foreign imposition and in 2009 organised a 'Family Walk' to promote 'traditional' social views (Stakic, 2019).

While these groups have not gained significant vote shares nationally, members of Naši are in local government and national coalitions with the New Serbia Party and Serbian Progressive Party. Members of Dveri are on the council in Novi Sad and sit in the National Assembly in coalition with the Democratic Party of Serbia.

Other extremist groups include **NS—Nova Srbija [New Serbia]** and **SPO—Srpski Pokret Obnove [Serbian Renewal Movement]** (Bušćiková, 2018). The **National Serbian Front/ Nacionalni Srpski Front (NSF)** advocates national freedom, a greater Serbia, a left-wing economic programme, is 'against Euro-Atlantic integration in favour of a "Europe of Nations"', is against neoliberal capitalism, argues for both men and women to fight in the army, and is against LGBT rights. **Serbian action/Srbska akcija (SA)** 'relies on tradition, social welfare and spiritual (Orthodox) discipline'. It is anti-capitalist and in favour of monarchical rule and 'traditional gender roles', as well as a greater Serbia. **The Serbian National Movement 1389/ SNP 1389** also advocates for a greater Serbia, Orthodox Christianity, Eurasianism, traditional family roles, as well as against LGBT rights and drugs. **Movement Blood and Honour Serbia/ Pokret krv i čast** argues for white supremacy and National Socialism. It is against abortion. It advocates paganism and rejects (non-pagan) religion, capitalism, communism and human rights (Ivanovic, 2019).

## Football supporters

**Football supporters groups have taken violent nationalist and anti-LGBT actions, as well as non-violent charity and Christian works.** Two of the largest are Crvena Zvezda [Red Star Belgrade]'s **Delije** (Valiants) and Partizan Belgrade's **Grobari** (Gravediggers).

The LGBT Pride marches in Belgrade have 'provided an opportunity for [far-right] supporters' groups to express their collective identities before the gaze of Serbian society and the wider world' (Mills, 2018). Supporters groups also stormed the American embassy after the partial

independence of Kosovo in 2008 and usually take nationalist positions on Balkan and global politics. They use imagery from the history of Serbian nationalism and Orthodox Christianity.

**Members of Red Star Belgrade's *Delije* have been increasingly interested in Orthodox Christianity since the 1990s.** According to Mills (2018) 'Before long, *Delije* members were praying collectively at Belgrade's imposing Church of St. Mark and boycotting matches scheduled for the Easter weekend'. They agree with the Church in opposing gay rights and the independence of Kosovo. They also undertake a range of charitable as part of their Orthodox worldview. For instance 7,000 spectators attended their annual fund-raising concert featuring Serbian pop stars: 'Their rendition of the national anthem, *Bože pravde* (God of Justice), provoked "a storm of emotion" among a crowd who heightened the atmosphere with fares and chants drawn from their own repertoire. The whole affair was blessed by the Bishop of the Ras and Prizren Eparchy (which encompasses Kosovo), while a hundred children from the Serbian enclaves of Kosovo and Metohija were welcomed as special guests. *Delije* subsequently sought the advice of church leaders in determining how best to direct the substantial takings. Monasteries, soup kitchens and vulnerable individuals were among the beneficiaries.'

Other groups, such as FK Vojvodina's *Firma*, have also raised money for ethnic Serbian villages in Kosovo. In 2009 Serbian supporters' groups went with groups from Russia, Poland, Greece and other countries for a football tournament in the Kosovan town of Gračanica, home of an Orthodox monastery, to commemorate the murder of an ethnic Serb by an Albanian in 2004. The visit put a lot of emphasis on prayer and piety instead of more outwardly aggressive forms of nationalism. The Serbian football association also hosts disadvantaged ethnic Serb children from Kosovo. According to Mills (2018), this charity and religious work has a 'reaffirming effect' on the supporters' groups.

Other football hooligan groups include

- Ultra Boys
- Belgrade Boys
- Ultras
- Brigade
- Alkatraz
- Ludaci – Padinska Skela
- Anti – Romi
- South Family
- Head Hunters
- Irriducibili – Nbg
- Shadows
- Extreme Boys
- Čuvari Časti
- Brain Damage i United Force 1987

(Petrović & Stakić, 2018).

Although the state prosecutor asked for leading groups to be banned because of their links with drug crime, the state has been lax, largely because prominent politicians sit on the boards of the clubs (Mills, 2018).

## Returning fighters

**Many extremists are veterans of the 1990s Balkans wars.** It is argued that such fighters 'found themselves relegated to the status of underdogs after serving either in paramilitary groups, police or special forces during the 1990s wars' and so rejected the new liberal institutions. Fighters also forged links with Russian units in the Yugoslav wars which later helped encourage participation in the Russian war in Ukraine (Beslin & Ignjatijevic, 2017).

**Several hundred Serbs have gone to fight in the war in Ukraine as part of the Serbian Chetnik movement** (Petrović & Stakić, 2018). Estimates vary – a recent publication notes a range of 70-300 between authors' figures (Perry, 2019). Most fight for the Russian side, although some may have joined the Ukrainian volunteer battalions. A number of these fighters left Serbia to flee criminal records (Beslin & Ignjatijevic, 2017). Some Serb fighters have also joined pro-Russian parliamentary groups in Syria, fighting as the Serbian Hussar Regiment (Kursani, 2019).

These fighters are not usually prosecuted, or are treated leniently in comparison to Muslims returning from Syria and Iraq. The government encouraged these fighters to return early to avoid prosecution under new legislation put in place in 2014 after pressure from the international community to deal with Islamist fighters in Iraq and Syria (Beslin & Ignjatijevic, 2017). Despite some officials saying that 'some Serbian Orthodox priests are known to promote a brand of extremism that may make them a radicalizing force on par with Salafi ideologues' and the stated ideological motives of the fighters in Ukraine, they are seen as 'mercenaries' and so less dangerous than Islamic fighters (Azinovic & Becirevic, 2017; Kelmendi & Balaj, 2017). If they are charged, it is for 'participation in a foreign conflict' rather than the terrorism charges levelled against Islamist fighters. Most go to Ukraine or Syria legally, as humanitarian workers or mercenaries for the Russian company Wagner (Petrović & Stakić, 2018).

A 2018 report gives a list of fighters in Ukraine mentioned in media reports:

- Bratislav Živković – Commander of the Chetnik Movement. Živković said that his unit numbered 15 volunteers from Serbia who arrived in Lugansk in Ukraine via Russia by having only tourist visas in their passports.
- Aleksanar Sindelić – wanted by Ukrainian authorities. Arrested in Montenegro for taking part in an attempted coup d'état. He is now a protected witness
- Zoran Andrejić – Deputy Commander of the Chetnik movement. There is no information about his whereabouts.
- Radomir Počuča – He got a year and a half suspended sentence
- Dejan Berić – He is still in Ukraine. Very active in (social) media.
- Zdravko Pešić – There is not much information about him
- Milutin Mališić - Commander of Chetnik guard unit "Wolf".
- Vladimir Stanimirović – Died on the battlefield
- Sasa Karan – After the end of hostilities in Ukraine, he left for Syria where he died fighting within Russian units.

It also lists several Serbs who fought in Syria, although most of these are Islamists. The list is not exhaustive (Petrović & Stakić, 2018).

## State support

**Right wing extremists are supported by the Serbian state.** Dzombic argues that ‘ideological support for extremists from the Serbian orthodox Church, from many Serbian political parties and the majority of media outlets is beyond doubt’ (Dzombic, 2014). Devic argues that extremists’ ‘liberty and ability to engage in racist, nationalist, and homophobic violence, which spans a wide range of activities, from interrupting film screenings to beating or launching racist slurs at Roma and African American football players, to volunteering in the Donbass separatist war, stems from the fact that they are fully aware of the protracted proceedings in Serbian courts that often end in acquittals or lenient rulings for the perpetrators’ (Devic, 2019).

The state banned *Obraz* in 2009 and *National Alignment* in 2011 on the recommendation of the prosecutor, but did not ban another two other extremist parties recommended. It has not made any efforts to ban offshoots or splinter groups (Dzombic, 2014; Petrović & Stakić, 2018). Moreover, some extremist parties hold government positions, or sit in governing coalitions. *Dveri* entered parliament in 2016 in coalition with the Democratic Party of Serbia.

## Main beliefs

While their programmes differ, most extreme groups defend or deny Serbian war crimes, glorify war criminals, complain of the country’s ‘victim status’ at the hands of the West, and oppose anti-fascism (Dzombic, 2014). They tend to have more left-wing economic policies than far-right groups in Western Europe (Bušćiková, 2018). Following the Yugoslav wars, while not neglecting international politics, extreme groups focused on the ‘internal enemy’: LGBT+, Roma and migrants. Some recent attacks led by extreme groups are (Petrović & Stakić, 2018):

- the anti-Albanian riots in 2004 (incited by the violence against Serbs in Kosovo) in which two mosques were set on fire;
- clashes between neo-Nazis and ANTIFA activists in Novi Sad in 2007;
- the riots after the declaration of Kosovo independence in 2008 in which a number of foreign diplomatic missions and businesses were attacked by the Serbian protesters;
- riots during the Pride Parade in 2010;
- attacks on Roma settlements in village Jabuka in 2010, Resnik in 2012, and anti-Roma riots in Zemun Polje in 2013;
- attacks on shops and bakeries owned by ethnic Albanians in Vojvodina, after the incident with the flag of the ‘Greater Albania’ at the football match between Serbia and Albania in 2014

LGBT rights have become a prominent issue, partly because of the perceived link with Western European values. Far right groups have sought to prevent Pride parades in Belgrade through denunciation and violence. Even if they do not attack LGBT people, they seek to ‘securitise’ the issue by making LGBT rights seem like a threat to the nation, and therefore legitimate targets of violence or discriminatory legislation. *Dveri*, which started as a Christian student organisation, organised a family walk in 2009 which talked about homosexuality as a threat to the family and a foreign imposition. *Obraz*, which advocates for theocracy, sees homosexuality as a threat to the

Serbian nation. SNP Naši also sees Pride as satanic and a threat to the Serbian family. It has drafted a law against 'gay pride propaganda' (Stakic, 2019).

This is facilitated by national leaders and widely held attitudes. Mainstream politicians have shown hostility to LGBT issues and have referred to Pride as a 'security issue'. Figures in the Orthodox Church equate homosexuality with paedophilia and have spoken against Pride. The state has done little to prosecute those involved in attacks on the Pride marches in 2001 and 2010. The march in 2010 was protected by 5,000 police, but there were nevertheless attacks elsewhere in the city. The march was not allowed to go ahead in 2011-13, but resumed in 2014.

These views are supported by significant portions of the population. A survey from 2010, 'specifically examining the attitudes towards homosexuality, show[ed] that two thirds of the population of Serbia still [thought] that homosexuality is a disease, while more than half believe[d] that homosexuality is dangerous for society (56 per cent) and that state institutions should work on suppressing homosexuality (53 per cent). More than one third of the population (38 per cent) agree[d] with the claim that homosexuality was fabricated in the West, with the aim of destroying the family and Serbian tradition.' In addition, 45% saw Pride as a 'provocation' against 'normal' people and 20% saw violence against Pride as justifiable (Stakic, 2019).

## International links

The Serbian Radical Party has branches in Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia in line with its ethnic nationalist views. Far-right groups have undertaken a number of acts in Kosovo.

Ana Devic has traced the links between Serbian and Russian extremists. These include academic and para-academic links, such as media coverage of the 'Eurasianist' philosopher Alexander Dugin in Serbia. Russian far right parties such as 'Kosovo Front', sometimes with close ties to the government, have invited Serbian groups to the country on several occasions. Devic relates how the 'SNP Naši delegation was counselled by a Russian Orthodox priest in the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, the largest pilgrimage and monastic centre in Russia (located near Moscow), who introduced them to a special blend of spiritual and military survival exercises practiced on the temple premises. Upon learning that there were around three thousand such church-military societies in Russia, gathering teenage and older youth, the Serbian Naši vouched that they would establish such clubs in Serbia as well.' The Serbian far right group Zavetnici have been guests of the ruling United Russian party at the Duma (Devic, 2019).

## 4. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Most of the literature on extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina focuses on Islamic groups among the Bosniak population. However, there is at least one secular organisation that can be classified as far right. The Bosnian Movement of National Pride, BPNP, is a far-right Bosniak organisation based on ethnicity rather than religion. It is antisemitic, anti-communist and aims to prevent the secession of Serb and Croat populations (Ristic et al., 2017).

Right-wing extremism centres on the ethnic Serb population, centred in the Republika Srpska. Milorad Dodik, the Serb representative in the country's tripartite presidency, has engaged in nationalistic rhetoric. For instance, he 'has disputed that a genocide of Bosnian Muslims took place in Srebrenica' and honours convicted war criminals (Hussain, 2018)

It is estimated that seven citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have travelled to fight in Ukraine, and some have also travelled to fight in the pro-Russian Serbian Hussar Regiment in Syria. They travelled through Serbia where they were helped by the Serbian Chetnik group (Hamideicevic & Plevljak, 2018, p. 57).

As in Serbia, this is partly facilitated by a permissive environment. An Atlantic Initiative survey of 2,110 citizens of Bosnia Herzegovina and 12 focus groups found much higher support among Serbs for fighters going to Ukraine, than from Bosniaks for fighters going to Iraq or Syria.

**See Figure 1: Support for joining foreign conflicts** (Atlantic Initiative, 2018:1)

<http://atlantskainicijativa.org/wp-content/uploads/CVE-Baseline-Research-Findings-December-2018.pdf>

They show that for Serbs, ethno-nationalist violent extremism was 'associated with feelings of stability, agency, and safety' and had not been condemned by political or religious leaders.

The research showed some factors which might predict a person's likelihood of undertaking violent extremism (VE): 'There is no evidence that level of education, marital status, employment status, or frequency of Internet use are associated with VE sympathy. Support for women's empowerment is powerfully associated with resiliency to VE. Other potential resiliencies include living in an urban location and having a more active online presence. However, more research is needed to determine if these are causal relationships.' In addition, 'Witnessing or falling victim to a VE incident or act of violence more generally is a moderate to strong predictor of vulnerability to VE' (Atlantic Initiative, 2018).

## 5. North Macedonia

Macedonia has ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian nationalists. The former focus on revising the borders with Greece and Bulgaria and the dispute over the country's name. Albanian nationalists advocate a more federal Macedonia (ie more autonomy for ethnic Albanians) or a greater Albania.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement (2001) ended a conflict between ethnic Albanians and the Macedonian state and guaranteed more rights to Albanians. Another reference point for far right groups is the Bucharest Treaty (1913) which saw Greece and Bulgaria win territory that nationalists believe is Macedonian. Greece's objection to the country using the name 'Macedonia', backed with a veto on Nato membership, saw the country call itself the 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' until a compromise of 'North Macedonia' was agreed in 2018.

Macedonian groups have links abroad. Albanian extreme groups link with counterparts in Albania and Kosovo. The attempted coup in 2017 involved a Serbian who had fought in Ukraine (Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018).

### Ethnic Macedonian extremist organisations

**Figure 2: Ethnic Macedonian right-wing parties**

Group	Aims
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<b>TMORO-VEP (Tatkovinska Makedonska Organizacija za Radikalna Obnova – Vardar Egej Pirin)</b>	<p>Established in 2006, TMORO refers to the old Macedonian national liberation movement, while VEP refers to the 'wider Macedonia'.</p> <p>It calls for the revision of borders with Bulgaria and Greece set out in the 1913 Bucharest Peace Treaty.</p> <p>It wants a state for ethnic Macedonians, and is therefore against the 2001 Ohrid Framework agreement with the Albanian NLA (National Liberation Army).</p> <p>It has achieved only small vote shares but has been in coalition with the VMRO-Democratic Party and VMRO-DPMNE in 2009 and 2011.</p>
<b>TMRO</b>	<p>Established in 2002, TMRO is the name of the old Macedonian national liberation movement.</p> <p>It wants to put Macedonia on the Balkan agenda, as well as good relations with US, Turkey and Israel, as it sees parallels between Macedonia's situation and Israel's. It wants a neutral status for the country.</p> <p>It is against 1913 Bucharest Treaty and wants lands returned based on disputed claims of large numbers of ethnic Macedonians in Greece, Bulgaria and Albanian.</p> <p>It has also worked in coalitions.</p>
<b>People's Movement of Macedonia (NDM)</b>	<p>It was established in 2002. It is against the Ohrid Framework.</p> <p>It seeks to expand Macedonia to its 'ethnic borders' and aims for 'redefining the state organisation on the basis of the ASNOM (Anti-Fascist Assembly for the People's Liberation of Macedonia) Manifesto of 1944 and the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia'.</p> <p>It pro-EU and Nato, but believes the issue of the country's name is more important.</p> <p>It harbours conspiracy theories and has sought to put criminal charges against people it believes are 'spies'.</p> <p>Its economic ideas are left wing.</p> <p>It has served in coalitions.</p>
<b>World Macedonian Congress (WMC)</b>	<p>The Congress works for the 'rights and interests of Macedonians' in Macedonia and other countries, including the name dispute.</p> <p>It believes the 2002 census over-counted Albanians in the country.</p> <p>It has not stood for election.</p>

**Source:** (Saveski & Sadiku, 2012).

There are also Neo-Nazis among ethnic Macedonian populations in Bitola and Skopje. Their activities centre on painting swastikas, Celtic crosses or the name of the football ultras group 'Komiti'. They have also desecrated Jewish cemeteries and placed an obituary for Rudolph Hess

in the local paper. They show ‘extreme hatred towards Albanians, Greeks and Roma, by their talk of purifying Macedonia’ (Saveski & Sadiku, 2012).

Extremism is shared by and enabled by mainstream political parties. VMRO-DPMNE is the country’s main centre-right party and has been the main party in government since 2006. VMRO–NP, a more radical right wing party split from VMRO-DPMNE and won six seats in 2006, but none in later elections (Stojarová, 2014, pp. 36–37). VMRO-DPMNE’s ethnonationalist programme has included renaming buildings and streets with names from antiquity in order to evoke Macedonian nationalism and minimise the Albanian presence (Ceka, 2018). It has brought ultranationalism into the mainstream, including working in coalition with the above-mentioned extremist parties. In addition, ‘in the city of Bitola, where VMRO-DPMNE has been in power since 2005, the local authorities have for years ignored the fact that swastikas have been painted in many public locations, including the centre of the city’ (Saveski & Sadiku, 2012). Several ‘patriotic’ NGOs have also been formed with strong links to the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party since 2017 (Ristic et al., 2017).

## Ethnic Albanian extremist organisations

**Figure 3:** Ethnic Albanian nationalist organisations

Group	Aims
<b>National Democratic Union</b>	<p>Established in 2007, this organisation has little support and no seats.</p> <p>It undertakes rallies and protests and calls for the Federalisation of Macedonia.</p>
<b>Illyricum Libertas</b>	<p>This organisation has fewer than 12 members. It is linked with Kosovo.</p> <p>It calls for the unification of Balkan Albanians, through peaceful means.</p> <p>It is active in Tetovo and works mainly through graffiti and online messages.</p>
<b>Ballista</b>	<p>A group for fans of the football team Shkendija from Tetovo. It is made up of youths and students.</p> <p>It calls for a federal Macedonia. It sings anti-Slav and anti-Serb songs.</p> <p>It has little influence but is nevertheless a mobilising force</p>

**Source:** (Saveski & Sadiku, 2012).

In addition the 'Army of the Republic of Ilirida was created in 2002 in Macedonia, fighting for the annexation of western Macedonia to either Kosovo or Albania. The group allegedly has around 200 members, who are said to have sworn loyalty to Leka Zogu' (Stojarová, 2014, p. 140).

Of the mainstream parties, the most important is the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA). Although it participated in the Ohrid Agreements, it uses strong rhetoric against it (Saveski & Sadiku, 2012).

## 6. Montenegro

According to a 2014 publication, 'there are currently no extreme Right-wing parties defining themselves as ethnic Montenegrin – Montenegrin identity has so far been too inclusive to allow for such a political agenda. When independence was declared, the only Far Right entities were subregional in nature (Albanian formations claiming Greater Albania) or sister parties of Serbian radical entities seeking the creation of Greater Serbia' (Stojarová, 2014). Nationalism is dominant in the country and Montenegrin 'populism' combines elements of right and left wing populism with clientelism (Džankić & Keil, 2017).

Since then, five Montenegrins are reported to have fought for the Russian side in Ukraine. Four escaped prosecution as they returned to Montenegro before a change in the law to allow the prosecution of foreign fighters. The fifth was prosecuted for participated in a foreign armed formation, rather than the charge against the Montenegrin who fought for the Islamic State – terrorism. An alleged attempted coup in 2016 involved Russian nationals as well as the Serbian national Aleksandar Sindjelic, who has previously fought in Ukraine for the Russians (Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018, p. 92).

## 7. Kosovo

Kosovo has two types of right-wing extremism: Albanian nationalism, calling Kosovan independence and for links with ethnic Albanians in Albania, Serbia and Macedonia; and nationalism among the ethnic Serbian minority.

Serb nationalists are linked with the Serbian National Party and Obratz (see section on Serbia). A report by the Kosovan government says that Serbian extremist groups attack Albanian citizens and Kosovan institutions, and are linked with criminals from northern Kosovan and financed by the Serbian government in order to oppose Kosovan independence (Kosovo, 2015). However, given relations between Serbia and Kosovo, this may be exaggerated.

Ethnic Albanian groups work alongside organisations in south-eastern Serbia, Albania and Western Macedonia, and communicate with the Albanian Front of National Unification (Fronti Për Bashkim Kombëtar Shqiptar , FBKSH) in Tirana (Stojarová, 2014, p. 140). However, according to Stojarová, the 'declared fight for Greater Albania or Greater Kosovo serves as a cover for OC profit-making activities rather than working for the liberation of the Albanian nation (Stojarová, 2014, p. 140).

## 8. Albania

Most of the literature on extremism in Albania focuses on Islamic extremism. Right-wing extremism is centred on ethnic nationalism.

The National Front (Balli Kombëtar, BK) won two seats in 1996, three in 1997, and three in 2001, when it was part of the Union for Victory Coalition (46 seats out of 140). It did not win any seats in 2005 or 2009. The PBKD (*Balli Kombëtar Demokrat* [Democratic National Front Party]) broke away from the BK in 1998 (Bušćiková, 2018). The other right wing parties are the Legality Movement Party (Partia Lëvizja e Legalitetit, PLL) and the Albanian National Unity Party (Partia Bashkesia Kombetare Shqiptare, PBKSh). Neither had won seats in the National Assembly (Stojarová, 2014, pp. 36–37).

Outside of parliament, the 'Albanian National Army (ANA) fights for a 'greater Albania', and operates in Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo and northern Greece. However, little is known about the organisation, including the name of its leader, or its aims. It tried to assassinate the president of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, in 2005, and has an internet presence. According to Stojarová, it 'oscillates somewhere between a militia, paramilitary organization and insurgent group using terrorist means linked to the organised crime' (Stojarová, 2014, p. 140).

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