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Gender Aspects of Extremisms in Serbia

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In recent decades, extremism has become a ubiquitous and serious global problem. However, one aspect of extremism, which often remains unexplored or insufficiently understood, is the role of gender in shaping and fueling extremist ideologies. As the key component of the social structure, gender can give special insights into the forms and causes of extremism, as well as the necessary interventions.

Gender is a fundamental category of the social structure, which shapes individual entities, social interactions and institutional practices. This is particularly reflected in the ways in which societies are organized and valued, and how they interpret the world around them. Although gender was traditionally associated with the private sphere and the issues such as education, health and employment, its influence extends much further. In recent decades, an increasing number of researchers has recognized the importance of a gender analysis in the context of extremism. Extremist ideologies often use and abuse the gender norms and values in order to articulate their views, recruit new supporters and legitimize their actions.

In the context of Serbia, with its complex historical and political situation, the study of gender in extremism obtains an additional dimension. The emergence of right-wing and Islamic extremism is not an isolated phenomenon. It is linked to wider geopolitical, social and cultural changes. While right-wing extremism glorifies traditional gender roles and promotes conservative values, Islamic extremism has a similar approach, including specific interpretations and implications in the context of religious teachings.

On the one hand, the understanding of the phenomenon of extremism and its dynamics cannot be complete without the integration of its extremely important gender aspects. On the other hand, we are the witnesses of a global attack on women's human rights, the significant echoes of which also occur in our region. The defense of these rights and further progress towards greater equality between men and women will not be possible without considering the toxic influences of misogyny whose narratives from extremist ideologies largely penetrate the mainstream society.

The consideration of the gender dimension of extremism in Serbia is crucial for several reasons:

- Understanding the motivation and recruitment. The gender norms and roles play a key role in encouraging individuals to join extremist movements. For example, the promise of "true masculinity" or "female purity" appeals to individuals who feel that their traditional gender identities are threatened by modern society.

- Key differences in radicalization. Men and women are radicalized by different motivations, means and channels. Extremist groups most often use gender-specific strategies to mobilize their supporters. For example, highlighting the role of a man as the protector or that of the woman as a pillar of the family serves as a strong motivational reason.

- Informing policies and interventions. Understanding the gender dynamics of extremism enables policy makers and experts on the prevention and countering of extremism to design targeted interventions that take into account the gender aspects of the phenomenon. For example, understanding the gender-specific pathways to extremism can help in designing preventive and treatment interventions, specifically for men and women.

- The influence on the goals and strategies of extremist groups. Gender issues directly shape the goals and strategies of extremist groups. This includes the imposition of regressive gender norms in society, attacks on women's rights and the normalization of misogynous violence.

- Understanding the consequences of extremism. Extremist ideologies often have direct and indirect consequences for the position and role of women and men in society. By examining these consequences we can understand a wider social damage caused by extremism.

- Global context. As gender issues are gaining in importance in the global context, understanding how they intertwine with extremist activities in Serbia can give insights that are also relevant for other regions.

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This analysis deals with the dynamics of extremism in Serbia, taking into account the specific cultural, historical and political circumstances. In so doing, we try to find out how gender norms and stereotypes are used and interpreted in right-wing and Islamic extremism in Serbia. This perspective enables a better understanding of how extremist ideologies emerge and spread and how they can be prevented or suppressed and redirected towards a more constructive social activity.

EXTREMISM IN SERBIA

In this analysis, we deal with right-wing and Islamic extremism in Serbia. The general ideological framework of right-wing extremism is Serbian ethno-confessional nationalism, while the general Islamic extremist framework is religious Islamic, which will be dealt with in more detail in the following sections. By right-wing extremism in this document we imply a wide (and very fluid) spectrum of political parties, organizations, movements, formal and informal groups and individual advocates of right-wing extremism, with or without a political party or organizational affiliation, which are present in Serbia. A modern and relevant wave of ultra-rightists emerged in the 1990s and has been evolving, adjusting and getting increasingly bigger until today. In recent years, the rise of the right has especially been pronounced and facilitated by the populist environment and government's permisiveness. It is violent towards minorities, human rights defenders, Roma, LGBT community and organizations, as well as migrants.

Among the most active far-right actors during the last decade mention should be made of the National Alignment, National Serb Front, National Front, Serbian League – New Serbian Right, Serbian National Front Movement, Honour of the Fatherland, Citizens' Association Delije North, Serbian People's Movement 1389, Serbian Right, Serbian Pride, Serbian Council Oathkeepers, Serbian People's Movement Zbor, Patriotic Movement Obraz, Rise Up for Kosovo, Serbian Action, Serbian Honour Youth Club, Starostavnik Reading Room, Serbian Volunteer Corps 1941–1945; Serbian People's Movement Ours, Cultural Revival Centre Arheofutura, Student Action, Solidarity for Kosovo, Blood and Honour Serbia, National Avant-garde. In their efforts to adapt, survive and strengthen themselves, some of these actors also tie up with

clerical circles (for example, Obraz and Rise Up for Kosovo) and/or have political ambitions. There is also a number of political parties that are often classified as belonging to the far right like the Serbian Radical Party, Serbian Right and New Democratic Party of Serbia, Oathkeepers and Dveri. However, it is important to note that some of them reject such a classification.

Overall, various far-right wingers have tens of thousands of members, followers and supporters with different status, whose number and influence in society are increasing.

On the other hand, Islamic extremism is not significantly represented in Serbia. After the peak of this kind of activity until ten or so years ago, when radicalization and recruitment culminated in the departure of only a few dozen individuals, some with wives and children, for the Syrian battlefields, departures for foreign battlefields have not been recorded for a long time, while the recruitment for foreign battlefields has also stopped. And if this issue is considered from a broader perspective, it should be noted that, apart from the recruitment for foreign battlefields, Islamic fundamentalism has been in a significant decline over the last decade. There is currently no evidence of violent activities or real potential for them.

As for Islamic extremism in Serbia, there is currently one Salafi community in Sandžak in which 20–30 families from Serbia live under the strict guidance of Sharia law rules. There are also the advocates of extremist Islamic variants and their families and supporters, mostly in online groups and small informal groups. For our analysis these groups are interesting because of their exclusivity and attitude towards women, which is contrary to the understanding of the gender policies

based on the international human rights standards. These forms of Islamic extremism are not accepted by the local mainstream community, which includes the Muslim majority, institutions and local actors, who publicly and officially condemn extremism, educate the public and call for a peaceful Islam. These groups exist on the margins of community.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXTREMISM AND THE MAINSTREAM

The strengthening of far-right organizations and their entry into the mainstream political space has been going on for almost four decades[1]. The far right in Serbia is linked to the ruling party (Serbian Progressive Party)[2], the system[3], institutions and states bodies at all levels[4] and contaminates the public space and culture with its extremist contents. The connections, overlaps and dynamics of the right's relationship with the authorities are not only at the political, organizational and personal levels, or only at the levels of resources, power and decision making. They also reflect deeper ideological sympathies and the convergence of views. All in all, this poses a serious problem due to the already

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1 "Desni ekstremizam u Srbiji", Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2020, *https://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/desni%20ekstremizam.pdf*

2 Saša Dragojlo, "Mreža parapolicijskih organizacija: Pravoslavni templari i veze sa SNS-om", BIRN, 2021, *https://balkaninsight.com/sr/2021/12/09/mreza-para-policijskih-organizacija-pravoslavni-templari-i-veze-sa-sns-om/*, Ivana Pejčić, "Jačanje ekstremne desnice u Srbiji: Ko koga kontroliše?", Novi magazin, 2022, *https://novimagazin.rs/iz-nedeljnika-nm/279959-jacanje-ekstremne-desnice-u-srbiji-ko-koga-kontrolise*

3 Nikoletić, I. "Ekstremna desnica u Srbiji na državnom budžetu", *Danas*, 2021, *https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/ekstremna-desnica-u-srbiji-na-drzavnom-budzetu/*

4 Filip Mirilović, "Ekstremna desnica u Srbiji: Novo buđenje", Vreme, 2022, *https://www.vreme.com/vesremna-desnica-u-srbiji-novo-budjenje/*

mentioned consequences for the cohesion and stability of society, deepening polarization between different groups in society and creation of an atmosphere of hostility, misunderstanding and violence.

The penetration of extremism into institutions is reflected in their dysfunctionality. non-transparency and instrumentalization for political ends or, in other words, "the capture of institutions".[5] The example that best summarizes the state's attitude towards right-wing extremism is the National Strategy for the Prevention and Countering of Terrorism, which did not envisage any activity in this area.[6] Thus, extremist ideas are normalized through politics and legislation, discrimination, prejudice and intolerance are institutionalized, while vulnerable groups[7] often become targets, while the basic human rights and freedoms are diminished. There is also the increasing integration of extremist narratives into institutional mechanisms such as the Serbian Assembly[8], educational institutions[9], law enforcement bodies

and media[10], which often act according to dictates and not according to their competencies[11]. Official public statements of representatives of institutions also have extremist contents[12], which further legitimizes such ideas and normalizes their presence in everyday life.

When extremist contents infiltrate mainstream culture and public discourse – either through popular music, film, literature and educational materials[13] or the appearance of public figures[14] – their toxic

5 "Mišljenje stručnjaka: Srbija pala po Indeksu demokratije jer su institucije zarobljene", Danas, 2023, *https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/misljenje-strucnjaka-srbija-pala-po-indeksu-demokratije-jer-su-institucije-zarobljene/*

6 "Uspon desnice slučaj – Srbija, ekstremizam, terorizam, strani borci", Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2022, *https://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/Uspon%20desnice%20-%20slucaj%20Srbija.pdf*

7 For example, independent media journalists and human rights defenders: Mila Manojlović "Od pretnji do napada na novinare u Srbiji", Radio Free Europe, 2023, *https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-novinari-pretnje-napadi/32311969.html,* "Građanska Vojvodina: Opasno targetiranje boraca za ljudska prava iz Crne Gore", Autonomija, 2022. *https://autonomija.info/gradjanska-vojvodina-opasno-targetiranje-boraca-za-ljudska-prava-iz-crne-gore/*

8 Like the everyday occurrence of verbal violence and hate speech in the Assembly. See: "U Skupštini opet niz uvreda, ko je kriv za nasilje, zašto se ne hapse navodne ubice", Autonomija, 2023, *https://autonomija.info/u-skupstini-opet-niz-uvreda-ko-je-kriv-za-nasilje-zasto-se-ne-hapse-navodne-ubice/*

9 The presentation of Kristijan Golubović at a school: "VIDEO: Kristijan Golubović i Crni Cerak u osnovnoj školi u Beogradu, reagovali roditelji", N1, 2023, *https://*

www.021.rs/story/Info/Srbija/338308/VIDEO-Kristijan-Golubovic-i-Crni-Cerak-u-osnovnoj-skoli-u-Beogradu-reagovali-roditelji.html, and "Ovo ima samo u Srbiji: Osuđivani kriminalac Kristijan Golubović posetio osnovnu školu, ljudi šokirani" Irena Dedakin, Nova, 2023, *https://nova.rs/zabava/sudbine/ovo-ima-samo-u-srbiji-osudjivani-kriminalac-kristijan-golubovic-posetio-osnovnu-skolu-ljudi-sokirani/*

10 Ivana Krstić, "Izveštaj o upotrebi govora mržnje u medijima u Srbiji", COE, 2020, *https://rm.coe.int/hf25-hate-speech-serbian-media-srp/1680a2278f*

11 For example, the treatment of civil activists in connection with the Ratko Mladić mural: Milica Stojanović, "Srbija: Ratni zločinci osuđeni u Hagu, veličani u Beogradu", BIRN, 2021, *https://balkaninsight.com/sr/2021/12/30/srbija-ratni-zlocinci-osudeni-u-hagu-velicani-u-beogradu/*

12 For example, Ružić on Western values, Vulin on the Serbian World, the denial of war crimes committed during the wars of the nineties: Milica Stojanović, "Srbija: Ratni zločinci osuđeni u Hagu, veličani u Beogradu", BIRN, 2021, *https://balkaninsight.com/sr/2021/12/30/srbija-ratni-zlocinci-osudeni-u-hagu-velicani-u-beogradu/*

13 For example, the gender analysis of textbooks, Stakić Mirjana "Analiza istraživanja rodne osetljivosti udžbenika za srpski jezik", "Nastava i vaspitanje, 2017, Vol. 66, No. 3, pp. 483–495, *https://bic-pk.ceon.rs/aticle.aspx?artid=0547-33301703483S,* Jelena Ćeriman, Jelena Stefanović, Saša Glamočak, Maja Korolija, "Rodna analiza nastavnih programa i udžbenika za srpski jezik od prvog do četvrtog razreda osnovne škole", Team for the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2019, *https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Rodna_analiza_nastavnih_programa_i_udzbenika_SIPRU.pdf*

14 V. Jeremić, "Stotine tomova govora mržnje: Književni doprinos Vojislava Šešelja", *Danas*, 2022, *https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/stotine-tomova-govora-mrznje-knjizevni-doprinos-vojislava-seselja/*

influence becomes even more lethal. The contamination process is often gradual, subtle and wrapped with attractive narratives, so that it may seem benign at first glance. However, it has profound and lasting consequences for social values and norms.

As a product of all of the above, the most destructive and far-reaching consequence of contaminating the mainstream with extremist contents is the change of the collective consciousness of society. When harmful ideas remain unchallenged and without counter-narratives, younger generations are educated without developing critical thinking and media literacy, and are socialized by accepting extremism as a normal part of their everyday life.

From a gender aspect, the process of mainstream contamination, in which extremist ideas and values infiltrate the basic social assumptions, can have particularly harmful consequences for women's rights and freedoms. Once extremist views on women become part of mainstream thinking, the environment hostile to gender equality is created. Women begin to be threatened by the erosion of their rights acquired over the decades and, the return of retrograde views on women's role in society, thus reducing their autonomy and right to education, employment and free participation in public life.

Consequently, as patriarchal and misogynistic views are increasingly normalized, this provides the basis for the institutionalization of discrimination against women. Laws and policies can be revised, so that they no longer protect women's rights. Such is, for example, a broader right-wing initiative for the withdrawal of the Gender Equality Law[15] with strong support from the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC).

15 "Ideološki nametnut zakon", *Pečat*, 2023, *https://www.pecat.co.rs/?p=170180*

They are even used as tools for their violation, including the repeated anti-abortion initiatives.[16]. The increasing normalization of gender-based violence is equally worrisome. Misogynistic views and ideas are insufficiently challenged, thus creating a climate in which violence against women is acceptable and even justified[17].

THE CONCEPT OF EXTREMISM IN THE CONTEXT OF BLURRING THE BORDER WITH THE MAINSTREAM

Extremism is the term used to describe the ideologies and practices that are far from the political, religious or social mainstream of a community. However, the modern development directions of the far right and, to some extent, Islamic extremism, show the clear strategy of blurring the borders with the mainstream and then contaminating the mainstream with extremist contents.

The main dividing line between the mainstream and extremism should be reflected in the basic values and principles that shape and support the social structure. In the centre of the mainstream in

16 "Srpska pravoslavna crkva je za zabranu abortusa: Dete nije privatno vlasništvo majke, ono pripada životu koji je od Boga darovan", Pouke, 2016, *https://pouke.org/forums/topic/44761-srpska-pravoslavna-crkva-je-za-zabranu-abortu-sa-dete-nije-privatno-vlasni%C5%A1tvo-majke-ono-pripada-%C5%BEivotu-koji-je-od-boga-darovan/*, "Poverenica i potpredsednica Vlade: Opasna inicijativa za zabranu abortusa u Srbiji", Voice of America, 2022, *https://www.glasamerike.net/a/srbija-abortus-inicijativa-zabrana-poverenica-ministarka/6435459.html*

17 Leposava Čolić, "Relativizacija nasilja nad ženama", 2022, FoNet, *http://www.fonet.rs/drustvo/36216231/relativizacija-nasilja-nad-zenama.html*, Katarina Živanović, "Relativizuje nasilje nad ženama, zamenjuje teze": Dušica Sremčević, govornica sa protesta, razočarana Vučićevim obraćanjem na Pinku", 2023, *https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/dusica-sremcevic-vucic-obracanje-pink-protest-srbija-protiv-nasilja-nasilje-nad-zenama/*,

democracies there are the values of democracy, that is, the rule of law, universal human rights, individual freedoms, mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. On the other hand, extremism challenges these core values by violent or nonviolent means, striving for radical change or a complete destruction of the existing order.

In the societies where there is the mainstream "contamination" extremist ideas and activities are increasingly present in the public discourse, media space and institutional structures. When extremist narratives become more evident and frequent, there is an increasing risk that they will be perceived as less extremist or even acceptable.

Although the supporters of right-wing ideology are increasing in number, while the fighters for democracy and human rights are becoming increasingly marginalized and threatened, the number of supporters of a certain position or idea cannot be the basic criterion for distinguishing mainstream from extremism. The key difference lies in the essence and the values that are advocated by these ideologies and views. Just for this reason and in such a society where extremist ideas are becoming ubiquitous; it is necessary to preserve and affirm the basic values of a democratic society such as the rule of law and human rights. Therefore, the key demarcation line between mainstream and extremism is their connection with the basic democratic values and principles regardless of the number of their supporters or their social visibility.

That is why we opt to consistently use the term "extremist" for such groups, organizations and ideologists, although a significant number of them rejects this designation, as being frequently used as part of the manipulation of narratives that facilitate the further contamination of the mainstream with extremist contents.

METHODOLOGY

This analysis of the narratives, messages and practices of extremist groups has included a gender analysis mainly at the micro level and partly at the meso and meta levels. It is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of extremism in Serbia and for the formation of strategies and interventions that will effectively deal with its prevention and suppression. The complex picture of how gender stereotypes, norms, roles and dynamics shape extremist groups and their members, their functioning and interaction with the wider community, has been analyzed. It has been discussed how gender norms influence the decisions and motivation of individuals – women and men – to join an extremist group, that is, how the recruitment process evolves, how those norms shape their attitudes, values, roles, relationships, hierarchies and behaviour within these groups, as well as how the overall dynamics within extremist groups determines their eventual abandonment. The analysis has laid a special focus on the consideration of gender-based violence, both within extremist groups and in the narratives linked to a wider social context.

A gender analysis at the micro, meta and meso levels gives a valuable perspective on how gender norms shape and influence extremist groups and their members. This is crucial for understanding the complexity of extremism in Serbia and developing targeted interventions for its suppression.

For an analysis of the gender aspects of right-wing and Islamic extremism in Serbia, several data sources have been used: public sources and interviews conducted by the Helsinki Committee during 2023, as well as the data collected by it during the previous research.

The data on the messages and activities of extremists have been obtained from publicly available sources, including:

- Web portal analysis – the monitoring and analysis of the official websites of extremist groups, individuals and organizations that support and spread extremist ideas; the study of contents, comments and visits;

- Social media analysis – the monitoring and analysis of the official accounts of extremist groups, individuals and organizations that promote extremist ideas or engage in radicalization[18]; the study of contents, comments and visits;

- Media content analysis – the monitoring and analysis of printed and online newspapers and journals, TV and radio programmes; the study of news, articles and media reports on the activities of the actors in Serbia and the region who are linked to right-wing and Islamic extremists, as well as the reaction of the general public and its perception about it. (*The data sources are cited at the appropriate places in this document.*)

- Reports by other organizations – monitoring and analysis of the reports and announcements by other nongovernmental organizations and international bodies dealing with the issues of extremism in Serbia (*The data sources are cited at the appropriate places in this document.*)

- Public data from state institutions – the monitoring and analysis of reports, addresses and statements on extremism in Serbia by various government bodies. (*The data sources are cited at adequate places in this document.*)

- Professional and academic publications – the monitoring and analysis of professional magazines, announcements from various meetings, academic studies and research. (*The data sources are cited at the adequate places in this document.*)

Interviews have also been made with the key experts dealing with extremism in Serbia for a number of years – local leaders, activists, members of specific groups and community experts, who have provided access to the reliable data on the current events relevant for this research. The previous data obtained in the interviews with the focus groups, conducted by the Helsinki Committee during the last five years, have also been included (more than 150 persons have been covered by this research).

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18 Access to the data on social media has been aggravated in the case of far–right organizations where even their followers had to be personally identified, checked and proven as the fans af a certain group. Therefore, access to the particularly extremist and violet contents has been limited.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FAR—RIGHT AND EXTREMIST ISLAM

Various forms of extremism, although diverse in their cultural and historical contexts, still share the essential characteristics that define them as exclusive, radical, authoritarian and oppressive ideological systems. In other words, right-wing extremism and Islamic extremism have a number of common characteristics that are recognized at the global level[19] as well as in the context of Serbia and the region[20]. It is also important to note that, in addition to these similarities, there are also significant differences between Islamist extremism and right-wing extremism in Serbia, since they are laid on different ideological foundations, as well as the nuances within different extremist groups, which will be separately discussed. For the purposes of this analysis,

we single out the most relevant common characteristics of these forms of extremism:

- The superiority of one's own group instead of the universality of human rights and freedoms;

- Clericalization instead of secularism;

- Authoritarianism instead of democracy;

- Retraditionalization instead of development;

- Repatriarchalization instead of advancing women's human rights.

THE SUPERIORITY OF ONE'S GROUP INSTEAD OF THE UNIVERSALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

This common characteristic of extremism is especially dangerous, because it undermines the basic foundations of a civilized society – equality, human rights and freedoms. This refers to the extremist position that is opposite to the mainstream in value terms – placing the interests, culture and human rights of one's own group above the common good and human rights of all others. At its core, extremist groups often do not recognize or even openly reject the equality and dignity of all people. Instead, they focus on the superiority of their own group. So, right-wing extremists glorify the "purity" of Serbian identity. Islamist extremists emphasize the superiority of their religious beliefs. Extremist narratives about superiority often entail the need to preserve the "purity" of the nation, race, religion or culture.

This is one of the primary characteristics that makes them extremist, as they move away from the moderate mainstream postulates.

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19 Social media extremism can be "asymptomatic", ENAR, 2020, *https://www.enareu.org/social–media–extremism–can–also–be–asymptomatic/*, Tahir Abbas, "Ethnicity and Politics in Contextualizing Far Right and Islamist Extremism", Perspectives on Terrorism, 2017, *https://www.jstor.org/stable/26297841*, Diana Rieger, Lena Frischlich, Gary Bente "", 2013, *https:/eucpn.org/sites/default/files/document/files/39._propaganda_–_2.0_–"psychological_effects_of_right_wing_and_islamistic_extremist_internet:videos_pdf*, K. Jasko, G. LaFree, J. Piazza, M.H. Becker, A comparison of political violence by left–wing, right–wing, and Islamist extremists in the United States and the world, Princeton University, 2022, *https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2122593119*, T. Abbas, Far–Right Versus Islamist Extremism, T. Abbas, 2019, *https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190083410.003.0008*

20 Nejra Veljan and Maida Ćehajić Čampara, "Rodne ideologije: kako ekstremisti iskorištavaju borbe za ženska prava i pokreću recipročnu radikalizaciju" Atlantska inicijativa, 2021, *https://atlantskainicijativa.org/rodne–ideologije–kako–ekstremisti–iskoristavaju–borbe–za–zenska–prava–i–pokrecu–reciprocnu–radikalizaciju/*, "Desni ekstremizam u Srbiji", Helsinški Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2020, *https://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/desni%20ekstremizam.pdf*

Founding an ideology on the superiority of one's group is also dangerous, because it opens the way to intolerance, discrimination and violence against those who do not belong to their group, because disrespecting "others" is the first necessary step and justification for any bad treatment of them. Director Dragoslav Bokan[21] does all this when he disqualifies Marinika Tepić for national reasons. "Marinika Tepić is a member of a national minority who hates Serbia and the Serbian people, who joined Čanak's anti-Serb organization when she was a young girl and studied what? The Romanian language! From a Romanian family! The Romanian mother and the Romanian father. She worked in a Romanian organization. She is our enemy! She is a national enemy and not only an ideological and political one"[22].

In continuing to emphasize their superiority, both extremist groups often use the "we against them" rhetoric where "others" (be it "Western values", migrants, religious minorities or secular liberalism) are seen as

a threat. Pavle Bihali's statement[23]: "Ana A. (22), a girl from Belgrade, was beaten after coming to a Chinese shop to return some items. This minority allows itself in Serbia to commit criminal acts against our people and goes unpunished with a minor offence charge. This is what we point out. The minorities in Serbia have greater rights than the majority. That is why Roma harness horses, that is why the Chinese slaughter and eat horses. That is inadmissible!" shows that extremist narratives also contribute to the feelings of marginalization, vulnerability and exclusion from the dominant social structures and trends. This is used, through further radicalization, for strengthening intra-group cohesion and extremist views. Both groups often point out that their values and identities are threatened by modern society, globalization or the dominant social and political structures, and that even the "system" is against them. This further entails an anti-establishment position like Počuča's threat to Prime Minister Vučić that he will "end up like Ceausescu"[24], distrust towards traditional media, educational institutions and political leaders. as well as emphasis on the need to oppose "others". In the groups in which radicalization has gone far enough, radical solutions for all these perceived problems have also emerged, including isolation, the rejection of the mainstream and even violence as the legitimate means for achieving political and social goals.

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21 Bokan is a director from Belgrade, President of the Institute for National Strategy and member of the Council of the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, He is known to the public for his unreserved and uncritical support for the current Serbian government, while in the 1990s he was known for his ultra-right views and activities, as well as robbery conviction. He is the founder and ideologist of the White Eagles paramilitary organization with which he was on the battlefields in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the war, he founded and led the Serbian Fatherland Association (SOS. He also participated in the republican presidential election in 1992 as the President of SOS. He was the media advisor to the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Yugoslavia, Nebojša Pavković, worked for numerous media and was one of the founders of the Russian-Serbian Cultural Centre. He also campaigned for the right-wing parties and organizations such as the Serbian Radical Party, "Obraz" and SNP Ours.

22 Boško Nicović, "Govor mržnje trešti sa Pinka, Marinika Tepić proglašena za narodnog neprijatelja", N1, 2021, *https://n1info.rs/vesti/govor-mrznje-tresti-sa-pinka-marinika-tepic-proglasena-za-narodnog-neprijatelja.* He later retracted that statement.

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23 Pavle Bihali, founder of the Leviathan group in 2015, activist and politician. The activity of Leviathan quickly expanded from the initially proclaimed concern for animals to the fight against migrants, vaccines, detection of affairs, violent incidents. Bihali is the former official of the Power of Serbia Movement — BK (PSS-BK) and, in 2020, Leviathan, as a clearly profiled right-wing group, also took part in the elections.

24 "Stefanović: Počuča pretnjama ne može postići cilj", RTS, 2015, *https://www.rts.rs/lat/vesti/Hronika/2039516/Stefanovi%C4%87:+Po%C4%8Du%C4%8Da+pretnjama+ne+mo%C5%BEe+posti%C4%87i+cilj.html*

All above mentioned characteristics have significant repercussions for the extremist attitudes towards women, their treatment and prescribed work roles. In addition to the expressed patriarchalization, emphasis on the superiority of one's group is also manifested through the idea that women are subordinate to men and that their primary role is to serve their nation, community, family and husbands. While right-wing extremism glorifies women as the traditional protector of family values, Islamist extremism does the same through strict religious norms about women's chastity and role in the family. As a rule, the preservation of "purity" implies control over women's sexuality and body. For example, emphasis on "purity" puts pressure on women to remain "a virgin" until marriage or wear clothes that cover everything, like in Islamist extremism. At the same time, right-wing extremism, can glorify a woman as the symbol of the nation and expect her to bear children in order to preserve racial and national "purity". The rhetoric of "we against them" encourages the ideas that women who do not obey the prescribed patriarchal norms become "enemies" who threaten the "purity" and superiority of their group. For example, women who stand up for their rights, feminists or those who reject traditional values are stigmatized and even become the target of violence.

In addition, these narratives also emphasize external threats. Extremist groups use the feelings of marginalization and vulnerability to encourage women to accept their traditional role as the way to "save" their culture or religion from external threats. When it comes to women, radical solutions often include violence or severe punishment of those who break patriarchal norms, whether it is through "inappropriate" dressing, behaviour or the expression of their rights For example,

hooligans and sports fans have been called on Facebook to beat Women in Black.[25]

All in all, these characteristics of extremism usually lead to strong pressure on women to fit in patriarchal norms, limiting their freedom, rights and opportunities, which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

CLERICALIZATION INSTEAD OF SECULARISM

As another common characteristic in a complex interaction with other characteristics of extremism and, as another common characteristic, there appears clericalization, which includes the processes in which religious institutions and their representatives have an increasingly dominant role and influence in society and politics to the detriment of secular institutions and values[26]. As a result, rigid interpretations of religious dogmas and teachings are placed above the state legislation and secular principles, thus strengthening patriarchal norms and limiting the freedoms of individuals, primarily women.

In the context of Serbia, right-wing extremists call for the greater influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in society and state institutions.[27] and have established significant cooperation with the Serbian

25 "Bio je voditelj, osuđen je zbog ratovanja u Ukrajini, pretio "Ženama u crnom", a sad je kandidat za poslanika: "Zavetnici" stavili Radomira Počuču na listu za Skupštinu", Blic, 2022, *https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/bio-je-voditelj-osudjen-je-zbog-ratovanja-u-ukrajini-pretio-zenama-u-crnom-a-sad-je/5tfc7qx*

26 "Kritika klerikalizacije Srbije", Antifascist Action, Novi Sad, 2007, *https://www.kuda.org/sites/default/files/docs/Kritika%20klerikalizacije%20Srbije_final.pdf*

27 On 11 August 2023, at 9 p.m., TV show Taboo dealt with clericalization and the malignant influence of the SOC in society, leading to misogyny.

Orthodox Church in achieving their goals. At the same time, Islamist extremists strive for the rigorous implementation of religious principles in everyday life and legislation, at least informally, in their communities by giving primacy to Sharia laws over state ones.[28]

The clericalization of Serbia occurs in the interaction of a complex combination of factors. First of all, this is the political influence of religious leaders, which has continuously been strengthened since the fall of socialism, when political leaders began to develop strong ties with the heads of the SOC. This resulted in a greater influence of religion in public life and the making of political decisions that support religious values. The recent case of "crawling clericalization in education" was recorded on Saint Sava's Day, when a local priest conducted a church service in a school without the approval of its Principal. It exactly demonstrates the power of the Church vis-à-vis institutions and laws. The adequate reaction of state institutions was totally absent.[29] Namely, the principal of the Aleksa Šantić Primary School in Sečanj, Olivera Marjanović, respected the secularism of the state, which is guaranteed by the Constitution and relevant laws, and ordered that no religious rites be allowed in the school to mark St Sava's Day. After the people's protest, the principal's decision was not carried out and the priest conducted a religious service, without her presence.

At the same time, social values were also changed. This especially refers to the trust in institutions, whereby the Church remains the only institution that enjoys trust and it is increasing. Religious revival, which occurred after the fall of socialism, has further stimulated interest in religious activities, the promotion of religious norms and the rise of religious institutions in society. The social and economic factors, such as poverty, unemployment and insecurity, have also prompted the need for turning to religious institutions for comfort, meaning and support, The Church has got a significant media space and the opportunity to start its own media.[30].

By the nature of its organization and functioning, as well as the content of its doctrines, the Church particularly encourages retraditionalization, patriarchalization, clericalization and authoritarianism at an individual level as well as the model of social functioning, whereby it itself sets an example.

The influence of the clergy on women's rights is particularly significant as the Church has an elaborate set of strict, rigid and retrograde patriarchal norms. In addition, the Church is one of the oldest institutions in society, which has a country-wide membership and enjoys great trust among citizens. All this paves the way for its significant influence on social attitudes and practices. In addition, if the SOC, as a social actor that belongs to the institutional mainstream, allows the extremist contents such as Metropolitan Amfilohije's statement that "Serbian women have become infanticide mothers who kill more children in their wombs in one year than Mussolini, Hitler and Broz, as well as

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28 Nejra Veljan and Maida Ćehajić Čampara: "Rodne ideologije: kakSaint o ekstremisti iskorištavaju borbe za ženska prava i pokreću recipročnu radikalizaciju" Atlantic Initiative, 2021, *https://atlantskainicijativa.org/rodne-ideologije-kako-ekstremisti-iskoristavaju-borbe-za-zenska-prava-i-pokrecu-reciprocnu-radikalizaciju/*

29 "Gosti N1: Puzajuća klerikalizacija društva bez adekvatne reakcije države", N1, 2023, *https://n1info.rs/vesti/gosti-n1-puzajuca-klerikalizacija-drustva-bez-adekvatne-reakcije-drzave/*

30 For example, TV Hram, SPC television, *https://www.tvhram.rs/*

those in Kosovo and Metohija taken together"[31], women's rights are in particular danger.

Clericalization in Serbia, in combination with retraditionalization and repatriarchalizion, as well as ethnonationalism, brings significant negative repercussions for the attitudes towards women, their treatment and prescribed gender roles. There is an increasing emphasis on the patriarchal role of a woman as a mother and a housewife, while a man is the head of the family; women's participation in public life, whether political, economic or otherwise, has declined; there is an increase in the requests for a stricter control over the female body and sexuality as the norms of "decent" dressing and behaviour, the norms related to premarital sexual relations and the attitudes towards contraception, abortion and divorce; there is an increase in the pressure to adjust women's education to the "appropriate" female roles, thus reducing their access to comprehensive education, especially the one about sexuality and women's rights; there is an erosion of women's rights and there is also an increase in the resistance to the initiatives such as the adoption of the laws on gender equality, reproductive health rate and the like, under the influence of religious doctrines; clericalization ensures an additional justification for gender-based violence, especially by interpreting the religious norms in favour of male dominance and female subordination. This will be analyzed in detail in the section devoted to the norms and roles of women in extremist organizations and political parties.

AUTHORITARIANISM INSTEAD OF DEMOCRACY

Aa a characteristic of extremism, authoritarianism refers to the aspiration towards centralized power where one person or a small group of people has (almost) absolute control, coupled with the suppression of individual freedoms and rights. This aspiration is contrary to the democratic values that promote pluralism, freedom of expression and protection of the rights of all citizens, which makes authoritarianism one of the fundamental and distinct characteristics of extremism.

Extremist groups glorify strong leaders and reject pluralistic democratic values. Strong, distinguished and charismatic leaders are also one of the important factors of the attraction of extremist groups. Right-wing extremists in Serbia idealize certain historical figures or current political leaders as irreplaceable, while Islamist extremists insist on the absolute power and authority of religious leaders.

It is important to look at authoritarianism from two complementary sides – individual and – socio-political[32]. At the individual level, authoritarianism manifests itself as an "authoritarian personality"[33], whose key characteristics are rigidity, conformity, excessive obedience to authorities and intolerance towards those who are different and marginalized[34].

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31 "Svi nadležni ćute o poređenju žena i nacista koje je napravio Amfilohije", 021, 2017, *https://www.021.rs/story/Info/Srbija/173910/Svi-nadlezni-cute-od-poredjenju-zena-i-nacista-koje-je-napravio-Amfilohije.html*

32 Flere, S. "Autoritarizam i retradicionalizacija", Sociologija, 1991.Vol XXXIII, No. 3

33 The concept developed by Adorno and his associates in their work ". In 1950, Theodor W. Adorno and his colleagues defined this personality type in their work "The Authoritarian Personality" and developed a scale for measuring authoritarian tendencies.

34 Kuzmanović, B. "Autoritarnost kao socijalno psihološka karakteristika", in: Z. Golubović (ed.). "Društveni karakter i društvene promene u svetlu nacionalnih sukoba", 1995, Belgrade: IFDT and Filip Višnjić

In the context of social structures and institutions, authoritarianism refers to social systems in which power and control lie in the hands of a small number of people or institutions and where there is little room for individuals to express resistance or dissatisfaction. In the social sense, authoritarianism is also manifested through traditional norms, values and customs that support an authoritarian hierarchy and dominance. In politics, authoritarianism refers to political regimes in which power lies in the hands of individuals, an elite group or political party, with a limited political plurality, media freedom and civil liberties. Authoritarian regimes differ from totalitarian regimes (where the government controls all aspects of society) and democratic regimes (where there are political competition and civil liberties). The basic characteristics of authoritarian regimes are the limitation of political freedoms, media freedom and civil liberties, while at the same time allowing a certain degree of social and economic autonomy.

The relationship between an authoritarian personality and authoritarian socio-political systems has a complex and two-way dynamics. An authoritarian personality and authoritarian society feed on each other and support each other, thus creating a feedback loop that strengthens both phenomena. We can see this phenomenon in the continuous decline of trust in democracy and rise in the opinion of young people that "Serbia needs a strong leader and the leader whom the people will follow". These results have a special weight because they point to a continuous negative trend since 2017, according to the annual reports of the NYCS (National Youth Council of Serbia), the largest survey of young people in Serbia[35].

Shifting attention to the authoritarian aspect of extremist phenomena is especially significant due to the mentioned potential of authoritarianism to create vicious circles in which individual authoritarianism, deeply rooted in individuals and their cognitive and emotional tendencies, lends itself easily and motivatedly to authoritarian social and political systems, supports them and empowers them. On the other hand, authoritarian social groups, political organizations, institutions and culture strengthen the authoritarian social norms, values and power structures, and work systematically on the transmission and preservation of authoritarian values within societies and among generations, thus creating conditions for their remaining in power. In this way, an authoritarian society creates authoritarian figures through socialization and education processes. In return, these figures support and strengthen the authoritarian society through their policies and social choices. As a result, this dynamics creates a stable system which is self-sustainable and resistant to change[36].

According to the rare studies of this topic from the SFRY period, the authoritarian personality structure was the most frequent among citizens[37], which is one aspect of the explanation why the democratic achievements easily collapsed during the 1990s. During the last decade, there was again the rise of authoritarianism at the individual[38]

35 "Prezentovani rezultati ovogodišnjeg Alternativnog izveštaja", KOMS, 2023, *https://koms.rs/2023/08/11/prezentovani-rezultati-ovogodisnjeg-alternativnog-izvestaja/*

36 "Od autoritarizma do autoritarizma — kako je Srbija napravila krug", Al Jazeera, 2020, *https://balkans.aljazeera.net/teme/2020/5/18/od-autoritarizma-do-autoritarizma-kako-je-srbija-napravila-krug*

37 Gredelj, S. "Dominantne vrednosne orijentacije", in M. Lazić (ed.). "Razaranje društva", Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 1994.

38 Lazić, M., Pešić, J.. "Društvene promene i promene vrednosnih orijentacija pripadnika osnovnih klasa u Srbiji", in: M. Lazić and S. Cvejić (eds.). "Promene osnovnih struktura društva Srbije u periodu ubrzane transformacije", Belgrade: ISI FF and Čigoja štampa, 2013

and socio-political levels[39], while the mutual strengthening of these two generators of anti-democratic phenomena is also noticeable.

Although authoritarianism itself does not necessarily manifest itself as extremism, the tendency towards authoritarian thinking can create fertile ground for the radicalization of individuals, whether through the right-wing or Islamist extremist ideologies. If we consider the characteristics of authoritarian figures in more detail[40], we can observe how desirable and useful they are for extremist groups: a high level of adherence to traditional and socially accepted norms and values, unreserved acceptance of authority and the belief that persons in the position of power have the right to issue orders, the tendency to punish or judge those who do not adhere to traditional and socially accepted norms and values, or who are perceived as "less valuable" or "different", the feeling of hostility towards those who are physically, emotionally or intellectually weaker, the tendency to believe in irrational things and that people are classified in accordance with simplified categories or stereotypes, the belief in power as the key social goal and value, respect (exclusively) authoritative leaders who demonstrate "hardness", skepticism towards humanitarian goals and values, projection of their undesirable feelings and thoughts onto others, resistance to creativity and subjectivity, excessive fascination with sex through rigid attitudes towards sexuality, excessive fears of sexual deviation and preoccupation with sexual "purity", tendency towards a simplified black-and-white way of thinking, preference for clear and simple answers to complex questions and so on.

The recent studies of authoritarian figures confirm their tendency to support populist and authoritarian leaders, as well as the fact that the fear of social changes, loss of status or physical security is the main driver of the authoritarian way of thinking.

The rise of authoritarianism at the individual and socio-political levels in Serbia is also strongly reflected on the attitudes towards feminism and gender equality[41] through the insistence on traditional gender roles and conservative values, the tendency to limit women's freedoms and rights, pressures on feminist activism, the presentation of feminism as a threat to traditional values, the use of anti-feminist messages in order to polarize society and mobilize the base of support against the advancement of women's human rights.

RETRADITIONALIZATION INSTEAD OF DEVELOPMENT

This common characteristic of extremism refers to the advocated return to the "old" and "traditional" values, practices and norms, while at the same time rejecting modern and progressive ideas and bringing anti-modernism and anti-globalism. Extremist radicalizers describe the contemporary social changes as a threat to traditional values, as the destruction of traditional culture, religion and identity of their groups, and strive for their re-establishment and return to the "golden era" in which their values were dominant. Recent research shows that these trends are on the rise and that traditionalization, nationalism,

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39 Pešić, J. "Vrednosne orijentacije u postsocijalističkim društvima Srbije i Hrvatske", Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, PhD Thesis, 2016.

40 Kuzmanović, B. "Autoritarnost", in: M. Lazić (edr.). "Razaranje društva", Belgrade: Filip Višnjić. 1994.

41 "Nova/stara rodna očekivanja – konformizam ili otpor patrijarhalnoj podeli rodnih uloga u porodici", Limes. No. 2., 2017,

authoritarianism and patriarchalization are related and that they reinforce each other [42].

Retraditionalization is manifested in various aspects of society such as marriage, family, gender roles, religious forms of behaviour and culture. It is especially significant when these narratives come from the mainstream actors such as, for example, Patriarch Porfirije. In his Easter Epistle[43] he emphasized the need for the protection of "marriage and family as the God-ordained sanctities and natural forms of man's personal and congregational life". As a rule, with the emergence of differences, nuances and evolution of the narrative, right-wing extremists insist on the preservation of "old Serbian traditions" and the "natural" family, while Islamist extremists advocate a strict interpretation of Sharia law. Both right-wing and Islamist extremists emphasize the role of the family, greater importance of marriage, traditional gender roles, greater role of a mother in the family, greater respect for religious norms and promotion of traditional cultural practices.

However, this retraditionalization is more complex than it might seem at first glance, because this is not an authentic return to traditional values and norms. It is about quasi-traditionalization which is largely presented as a return to traditional values and norms. However, they have carefully been selected, reinterpreted and adjusted to the

contemporary conditions and needs of extremist groups. Although this quasi-traditionalization superficially seems as the revival of traditionalism, power relations. values and roles in society are actually changing.[44]

Thus, in the case of right-wingers this quasi-traditionalization is based on a massive historical revisionism and an idealized representation of "old" society. As for Islamist extremists, it is based on an idealized image of a community that completely follows "pure" Sharia law, which did not exist in this region. Both groups of extremists ignore fifty years of living in a secular and, at least formally, egalitarian society, with the equality of women and men during socialism[45].

Quasi-traditionalization is a form of manipulation with extremist narratives for political reasons as it is used as a political tool to attract targeted groups of voters or supporters, but without the actual respect for traditional values. It is also a form of adjusting the narrative in order to attract followers, strengthen their motivation and loyalty, and offer an attractive identity with the ultimate goal being deeper radicalization and massification. Quasi-traditionalization is also used as a means for the preservation of the existing social and gender-specific forms and hierarchies, giving them a stronger legitimacy based on different pretexts and arguments.

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42 "Patrijarhalnost, autoritarnost i nacionalizam u Srbiji — promene vrednosnih orijentacija", Research Gate, 2020, *https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Irena-Petrovic/publication/339460079_PATRIJARHALNOST_AUTORITARNOST_I_NACIONALIZAM_U_SRBIJI_-_PROMENE_VREDNOSNIH_ORIJENTACIJA/links/5e5409d592851c1dcb8a07e9/PATRIJARHALNOST-AUTORITARNOST-I-NACION-ALIZAM-U-SRBIJI-PROMENE-VREDNOSNIH-ORIJENTACIJA.pdf*

43 The Easter Epistle of the Serbian Orthodox Church, SOC, 2023, *https://spc.rs/vaskrsnja-poslanica-srpske-pravoslavne-crkve/*

44 TV Insider Show Taboo on Friday, at 9 p.m., 11 August 2023.

45 "Rod i nenasilni ekstremizam u Bosni i Hercegovini, Atlantska inicijativa, 2023, *https://atlantskainicijativa.org/rod-i-nenasilni-ekstremizam-u-bosni-i-herce-govini/*

PATRIARCHALIZATION INSTEAD OF THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

Patriarchalization is the key factor of retradionalization and is manifested as a reaction to contemporary tendencies in the affirmation of women's rights. This social regression is deeply rooted in cultural, social and psychological fears and is derived from resistance to the expansion and recognition of women's rights in various areas. The process of patriarchalization includes the reaffirmation and frequently exaggerated idealization of "traditional" gender roles and norms, whereby men are presented as the main pillar of society, dominant and primary authority and decision maker. At the same time, women are assigned a subordinate position, limited primarily to the role of mother and housewife. This tendency not only inherently violates women's human rights and autonomy, but also has a direct impact on their economic, political and social power, as well as the freedom of expression and participation in society.

The SOC's views on patriarchy are strict and unchanging, as is its support to the initiatives for the repatriarchalization of society. It is especially harmful when extremist narratives about women come from institutional mainstream actors like Bishop Amfilohije, who called women infanticide mothers, or Bishop Irinej, who said that women "have the duty to procreate"; or Patriarch Pavle, who explained that "a man has the right to beat a woman when he concludes that she 'deserves' that, but not 'so strongly as to injure her"[46].

Other mainstream actors also encourage the strengthening of patriarchal norms and frequently extremist narratives as well. So, at the gathering at Matica Srpska regarding the initiative on the prevention of the use of gender-sensitive language, it was heard that "the woman's natural position is under the domination of the patriarchy"[47]. In 2022, Aleksandar Šapić, Mayor of Belgrade, organized the Belgrade Family Days as a reaction to the EuroPride parade: "This will be the event I will open, this will be the event in which I will participate"[48]. This event was also publicly supported by the Serbian Orthodox Church[49]. The Mayor announced this event as "a big gathering that should show unity not only in the family, but also the unity of our people" and should promote traditional values.[50] He opened this event by laying emphasis on the *natural* family[51].

Despite being different in many aspects, when it comes to gender dynamics, right-wing extremism and Islamist extremism show similar

46 "Žene u Srbiji su iznova na tapetu vrha Crkve", Al Jazeera, 2023, *https://balkans.aljazeera.net/opinions/2023/5/25/zene-u-srbiji-su-iznova-na-tapetu-vrha-crkve*

47 Round table titled "Položaj srpskog jezika u savremenom društvu (izazovi, problemi, rešenja)", Matica srpska, 2021, *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmiZgu7P-bY, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0m95D7A1Erk, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tUfqPKU8S8*

48 "Šapić: Sigurno neću otvoriti Europrajd, ali ću otvoriti Dan porodice", N1, 2022, *https://n1info.rs/vesti/sapic-sigurno-necu-otvoriti-europrajd-ali-cu-otvoriti-dan-porodice/*

49 "Epilog sastanka gradonačelnika Beograda i patrijarha Porfirija: SPC će podržati Dan porodice", Danas, 2023, *https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/epilog-sastanka-gradonacelnika-beograda-i-patrijarha-porfirija-spc-ce-podrzati-dan-porodice/*

50 "Novi slogan grada će biti – Beograd grad radosti": Šapić najavio manifestaciju "Beogradski dani porodice", Telegraf, 2023, *https://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/beograd/3662964-gradonacelnik-sapic-najavio-beogradskr-dane-porodice*

51 "Aleksandar Šapić – Obraćanje na otvaranju manifestacije "Beogradski dani porodice" – 24 June. 2023. , YouTube, 2023, *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rORcQFhnwII*

tendencies towards conservatism, where men and women are viewed through the prism of patriarchal gender norms. Right-wing extremism often idealizes women as the protectors of national identity and culture, promoting them as the keepers of traditional values and family support – "the keepers of the home hearth". In an affirmative tone, such ideas are also presented by Dveri; for example, a campaign for the legal initiatives that will allow motherhood to be an occupation (2017)[52], or the more recent initiative titled "Only One Mother" (2023)[53], which aims to improve the position of pregnant women and new mothers. It was announced by emphasizing the need "for the family to come first again in our society and state". Essentially similar, Islamist extremism bases its position on a strict interpretation of religious texts, advocating rigid gender norms, which prescribe gender segregation, modesty and limitation of women's participation in public space. Both right-wing extremism and Islaamist extremism invoke the idea of "natural order" when it comes to gender and gender roles, arguing that there are a (naturally or divinely) predetermined and unchanging hierarchy and dynamics between men and women. In both cases, these extremist views bring about the violation of women's rights, reduced autonomy and hindering their full potential in society.

THE PRESCRIBED GENDER NORMS AND THE POSITION AND ROLE OF WOMEN

In considering the gender norms and roles in right-wing extremism and Islamist extremism in Serbia, it is important to point to their significant ideological heterogeneity. It is also clear that they contain a wide range of ideological currents, subgroups and interpretations, whose attitudes – albeit fundamentally extremist – can significantly differ in nuances. However, it is possible to identify some common gender-political tendencies and broader characteristics of both forms of extremism. Therefore, this analysis seeks to focus on these tendencies, providing a synthesized view that draws on those aspects of the prescribed gender norms and roles which are most noticeable and widely accepted by both extremist groups. We point out that this analysis does not seek to analyze or homogenize the differences between these groups, but rather to identify the key gender tendencies and the ways in which most of their members perceive gender roles and norms.

52 Emina Kovačević: "Dveri predlažu da majčinstvo bude zanimanje", N1info, 2017, *https://n1info.rs/vesti/a248983-Dveri-majcinstvo-kao-zanimanje/*

53 "Nova kampanja Srpskog pokreta Dveri 'Jedna je majka' predstavljena u Beogradu", Dveri, Saopštenja, 2023, *https://dveri.rs/saopstenja/nova-kampanja-srpskog-pokreta-dveri-jedna-je-majka-predstavljena-u-beogradu*

THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN EXTREMIST GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Right-wing extremist groups are "men's societies" and the presence of women in them is marginal. The representation of women is also small, because the more extreme and aggressive the group, the less women are represented. This is one of the biggest problems faced by right-wing groups, because they cannot attract a sufficient number of women. This especially affects political parties due to which they have problems with massification, branding, legitimization, meeting of electoral quotas and the like. In this sense, for example, the Serbian movement Dveri is leading the way as a party that *wants to present itself* as being inclusive for women. It has a women's section, which supports female entrepreneurs. More than any other political party it puts women forward in its public activities. Apart from Boško Obradović, most of the persons representing Dveri in public are women[54]. However, this is interpreted not as a fundamental change of its ideology, but as the necessary strategic rebranding, that is, the change of image in accordance with the lessons learned and the instructions of Steve Bennon[55] as well as the German[56], French[57] and Italian right-wing parties. The Italian right-wing party, has achieved the greatest

54 The web page of the Serbian movement Dveri, *https://dveri.rs/*

55 "Steve Bannon", Article, Wikipedia, *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_Bannon*, "5 Things to Know About Steve Bannon", National Women's Law Center, 2016, *https://nwlc.org/5-things-to-know-about-steve-bannon/*

56 Alternative for Germany.

57 Marine Le Pen, who broke free from her father's organization, which was practically made up of street thugs, created a political party on an ultra-right platform.

success since the Second World War after putting a woman in the foreground[58].

In the majority of far-right groups there are very few women and, as a rule, they are partners of male members and possibly relatives and friends if they are very young girls. There are very few ideologically motivated women and women with political aspirations. The representation of women in neo-Nazi groups and, in particular, extremist groups having a significant part of *incel membership*[59] is minimal and pro-forma, confined to the fact that male members ask their relatives or partners to attend public events so as not to be seen in public that their membership is exclusively male. Such groups also have the greatest problem in attracting female members. In order to improve their image, they sometimes resort to exaggerating the number of their members as well as falsifying female membership[60].

Women appear as members of these groups on the social media of almost all right-wing extremist groups in very small numbers. They are not significantly active and visible, especially not in chats the content of which is not publicly available and contains much more aggressive

58 Andrej Ivanji, "Italija posle pobede radikalne desnice, Bog, otadžbina, porodica i Duče u srcu", Vreme, 2022, *https://www.vreme.com/svet/bog-otadzbina-porodica-i-duce-u-srcu/*

59 An incel is a member of a group of men on the Internet who cannot find sexual partners even though they want to, and who express their hatred for the people they blame for it. In English, *incel* is an abbreviation for "involuntary celibate", "Meaning of Incel in English", Cambridge Dictionary, *https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/incel*
The description of the ideology: Lewys Brace, "A Short Introduction To The Involuntary Celibate Sub-Culture, Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, 2021, *https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/a-short-introduction-to-the-involuntary-celibate-sub-culture/*

60 Interviews by the the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

statements. As a rule, young girls do not share any ideological content dealing with more serious topics, but mainly jokes and comments. Older, adult women also rarely share contents and when they do the contents are neutral, like those dealing with art[61].

The representation of women in Islamist extremist groups is equal to the representation of men, which is explained by the basic and rigorous gender norm, which dictates to both men and women that they must start families in order to follow Sharia laws, the rigid interpretation of which is the basis of Islamic extremist ideology. These groups live in communities that share the same ideology and what they have in common is the formation of families with children as the basic component of society.

On the other hand, the visibility of women in these groups is minimal due to the norm that prohibits women from participating in the public sphere. Furthermore, outside of families, these extremist communities are strictly gender-segregated. If a woman (rarely) goes to a lecture, to visit a doctor and the like, she must be accompanied by another women, her child or husband.

Women have their groups on social media the members of which are other women from the same community. They initiate, organize and lead them with the approval of their husbands. These groups are very active and women are active in them. They serve for the exchange of information, advice, organization of purchases, mutual assistance in buying or selling something, looking for a handyman and the like. These groups actually function as cooperatives in a community and

one can notice a significant intra-group cohesion and complete closure to the external environment.

Mixed groups on social media are led by men, while women are present only as members and followers, but only to some extent and not publicly. Those belonging to such groups are not active and visible to a significant extent. When they put questions and ask for some information, they remain anonymous. Mixed gender groups deal with the ideology, spreading of instructions and information about ideology.[62]

WOMEN'S ENTRY INTO EXTREMIST GROUPS

The most frequent way for women to join right-wing extremist groups is through a certain man. He is most often their partner or, much less often, a family member. This is also in line with the key patriarchal norm that only men can deal with "important issues" in life and make important life decisions, while the role of women is to listen, follow and support them. As already mentioned, in most of far-right groups there are very few women and, as a rule, they are partners of male members or, much less often, relatives and friends if tit is a question of very young girls.

Younger girls join right-wing groups (mostly informally) through subculture, music and gathering places, because they like boys in such groups, or are impressed by such an environment where there are few girls and many boys, or want to stand out in comparison with other girls of their age. There is no noticeable ideological choice or awareness among them, their main motives are social and romantic.

61 Interviews by the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

62 Interviews by the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

Adult (young) women join right-wing parties mostly through their partners, with a more or less clear ideological right-wing motivation. Some actively support their partners or family members on social media, some are only present at gatherings without any ideological commitment. This is completely in line with the gender norm that women should accompany and support their partners in their engagement, as well as in line with another norm which prescribes that a "good" woman or girl will treat her partner's friends as her own and will accompany him in taking part in social activity as well.

Highly educated young women join right-wing groups through their faculty. The Faculty of Law in Belgrade[63] stands out as a fertile ground for the recruitment of right-wing students. Some of these girls and women have adopted not only the right-wing social ideology, but also the patriarchal part of its ideas. They have realized that right-wing men "do not like" feminism and liberal girls and have decided to present themselves as traditional girls in line with the norms that women should be the pillar of the house, that they should support men and the like. (At the same time, they often care about their appearance, which is in line with the conflicting gender norm according to which an attractive woman is the "trophy" of a successful man, that is, an indicator of *his* success as a man.) Despite their small number, these ideologically motivated women are also active in spreading and advocating right-wing ideologies, sometimes with the ambition to rise up the group ladder[64].

Women most often join Islamic extremist groups pursuant to the decision of a man, their husband or brother, because in line with

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63 Interview by the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

64 Interviews by the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

the gender norms they must obey a male authority figure. Moreover, according to the religious foundation of these norms, their going to heaven is conditioned by the obedience to these men. Girls with a radical father or brother have no other option but to accept such an ideology and behavioural norms. Later in life, these norms will further lead to the situation that their father or brother will "marry them off" to someone who is ideologically oriented like them. Someone else would be considered unworthy. There is a rare opportunity for such girls to choose someone more moderate by themselves, but such cases are rare and are accompanied by primary family disownment, severance of contacts and other social and emotional challenges.

Another optional entry path, which is currently the most common one, is the recruitment of young girls to marry extremists who live in such communities either online or via social media, thus joining extremist groups. Significant abuses of Sharia law have also been recorded in such communities, because these girls become someone's second, third or fourth wife and are often abandoned by such husbands.

A rare exception concerning the way of joining an Islamist extremist group, are women from Muslim communities who, in their earlier youth, lived outside moderate Islamic norms, were "problematic" and later actively sought "salvation" by joining extremist groups which is again by marrying an extremist, who is already a member of the chosen group.

The second and third paths of women's entry into extremist groups also show gender specificity, that is, a difference in the way of men and women's radicalization. Namely, as a rule, women are radicalized

at home, through online contacts with radicalizers, while personal contacts will follow later, after the ideology was accepted and the steps were agreed upon. Men are primarily radicalized in personal contacts with an extremist group, especially when the later, most extreme steps are in question. Without these contacts men do not decide to take major steps in their life, including relocation, departure, marriage, ideological change and the like.[65]

THE POSITION AND ROLE OF WOMEN ACCORDING TO EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES

The primary ideological framework of far-right extremists in Serbia is ethno-racial-nationalist with the nuances that depend on the group. This framework is based on the need to protect one's nation, which is obligatorily threatened by "others", as well as its prosperity and expansion. Thus, at the press conference of the Natural Family Coalition[66] regarding the appeal to stop the adoption of the Law on Same-Sex Unions, the Gender Equality Law and the Anti-Discrimination Law, it was emphasized that their adoption would be a blow not only to the family, but also to the fundamentals of liberal society, that they bring back communism and verbal delict, that they were drafted in foreign embassies, that "someone" wanted to impose them on the people

and the ruling majority, that they abolish the freedom of speech and expression, that scientists will not be allowed to say and write what they think, that it is an attack aiming to change the social being, that these laws destroy Orthodox culture and the like. The participants of this conference also mentioned the danger of accepting incestuous relationships as normal over a long term[67].

In addition, the primary purpose of a woman in an ethno-racial-nationalist ideological framework is to secure children and the family and, though childbirth and family care, enable men to feed and develop the nation. Women are glorified as the "seed of a new Serbdom", but their place is in the house. All the more so if the group is more extreme. That is why, in the context of right-wing extremism, we observe an emphasis on the patriarchal gender roles where male dominance and female subordination are glorified as part of the "natural" order. In this sense, the *Serbian Action* explains on Telegram that "the family is such a human society in miniature where the gender divide has been imposed on man by nature: the husband is the father and protector of the family, while the wife is the mother who bears children and raises them. The roles have already been divided by the male and female body structure, whereby nature has imposed the form of community on man and woman" [68].

65 Interviews by the Helsinki Committee, 2021–2023.

66 Marija Stajić: "Nikada nećemo prestati da se borimo za očuvanje po-rodice", Serbian Movement Dveri" *https://dveri.rs/tag/%D0%BA%D0%BE%D 0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0- %D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%83- %D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%86%D1%83* and Klaudija Čobanu, 'Novi svetski poredak': Globalizacija kampanje za 'prirodnu porodicu'", BalknInsight, 2018, *https://balkaninsight.com/sr/2018/11/21/novi-svetski-poredak-globalizacija-kampanje-za-prirodnu-porodicu-11-05-2018/*

67 The press conference of the Natural Family Coalition, 2021, *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDD1KuX-bbw, "Koalicija za prirodnu porodicu po svaku cenu želi da zaustavi usvajanje zakona o istopolnim zajednicama", Noizz, 2021, https://noizz.rs/noizz-news/koalicija-za-prirodnu-porodicu-zeli-da-zaustavi-usvajanje-zakona-o-istopolnim/9jw2fgt*

68 The Serbian Action's website, *https://akcija.org*

The right-wing ideology is intertwined with nationalist and ethnic identities, where gender becomes a means for preserving the "purity" of a nation or an ethnic group. This is clearly indicated by the reaction of the head of Dveri to in vitro fertilization with the donated reproductive material from Spain and Denmark. According to him, this requires a special moral and ethical assessment, because the mixing of genetic material "can change the genome of future generations".[69]

In order to preserve the nation and its purity, female subordination is presented as a privilege through the narrative that a woman is subordinated to a man, that she should stay at home and do housework. However, this is a great privilege, because she enables the nation to grow. According to this understanding, a woman is the pillar of the family and without such a subordinate woman a man would not be able to fulfil his role and Serbia would not be able to develop.

Far-right groups and organizations explicitly advocate, favour and prescribe for women only the role of a mother in the family. The narratives on these topics are ubiquitous, glorifying and continuously repeated.

The roles that the far-right ideology prescribes for men and particularly glorified are the following: leaders, protectors, breadwinners and fighters, as well as warriors if necessary.

The right-wing ideology does not loudly advocate and does not offer anything else to women but motherhood and a family role, but it does not explicitly prohibit any other engagement. Right-wing narratives do not prohibit women from being educated and employed or being active in their community. However, they do not support, or praise and appreciate women who are oriented in such a way. They criticize women who "pursue a career", because they neglect their basic responsibilities as mothers and in the family. Fighting for the preservation of these norms for women, "Pravoslavni roditelj" (Orthodox Parent)[70], a portal for Orthodox parents, has launched the campaign "Women Speak for Themselves"[71] with an aim to "finally have the public hear the voice of real, family-oriented, traditional women", "women who defend love, children and family", as well to prevent "LGBT lobbyists" from "planting their ideological understanding of the so-called 'women's rights'" with which, as they say, many of them do not agree.

It is evident that, with very rare exceptions, leadership positions are inaccessible to women, while providing help and support, as well as giving ideas, in particular, are not disputed. In this respect, political parties are a formal exception. Due to the gender quotas, they must have women as their members and candidates in elections. The most frequent female roles in right-wing extremist groups are only auxiliary and marginal, which men need and have approved or assigned to them. Thus, some women try more or less successfully to find a place for themselves in right-wing groups and organizations as workers at stands at various events, as "traditional" artists (the invented Slavic tradition, medieval tradition, painting, carving, taking photographs and

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69 'Nižu se osude Dveri i njihovih opasnih ideja o 'čistom srpskom genomu', Boško Obradović: Stav ne menjam", Euronews Serbia, 2022, *https://www.euronews.rs/srbija/politika/70306/nizu-se-osude-dveri-i-njihovih-opasnih-ideja-o-cistom-srpskom-genomu-bosko-obradovic-stav-ne-menjam/vest*

70 "Pridružite nam se — Lista Pravoslavnih Roditelja", "Pravoslavni Roditelj", 2013, *https://www.pravoslavniroditelj.org/pridruzite-nam-se-lista-pravoslavnih-roditelja/*

71 "Porodične žene poručuju 'ženskim pravašicama': umemo da govorimo U SVOJE IME!", "Pravoslavni Roditelj", 2017, *https://www.pravoslavniroditelj.org/porodicne-zene-porucuju-zenskim-pravasicama-umemo-da-govorimo-u-svoje-ime/*

the like) and organizers of business activities of these groups, including online sale and the like. In extreme and most aggressive right-wing groups[72], women are given decorative and propagandist roles, that is, they appear only on photographs as a proof that they have not been completely excluded. There are very few female activists and active agitators who publicly spread right-wing narratives, especially extremist and aggressive ones.[73] In essence, they have no significant role or position in right-wing groups because they do not allow them even if groups do not allow them this, even if they want to.

The female characteristics, which are especially appreciated, praised and prescribed, are, first of all, the striking physical attractiveness of "outstanding beauties"[74] or the modesty, humbleness and inconspicuous appearance of "good" patriarchal women. So, for example, during his stay in Belgrade, American extremist Robert Rando[75] had a very attractive girlfriend. This example was particularly emphasized and praised even for propaganda purposes. First, because "he has a Slavic beauty" and then because she has adopted "his" ideology and spread it. Paradoxically, the more extreme the group, including aggressive neo-fascists, the more valued and prestigious the female beauty is. However, this refers much more to the patriarchal norm for a man,

that is, his success is reflected in his ability to "have" the most beautiful woman. This is also where this norm is in conflict with the norms prescribed for women. They are primarily expected to be mothers and look after their family, while laying excessive emphasis on their beauty and physical appearance in general is considered immoral when women do that. Albeit rare, "female protectors of patriarchy" are especially appreciated. Those are the women who accept their subordinate position, who emphasize that they are "traditional" and "patriarchal", that they hate feminism and, in particular, that they want to spread such an ideology. As right-wing groups cry out for such women, this enables them to get a better position in the group itself.

The desirable characteristics and behaviour of both women and men are to start a family and look after it, have a healthy lifestyle (without alcoholic drinks, drugs and smoking, practice physical activity / only men/, practice a healthy diet and health care), be dedicated to the preservation of his or her nation and respect the requirements of Orthodoxy[76].

The desirable male characteristics and behaviour include physical strength, courage and ability in all aspects, as well as material wealth, "possession" of beautiful women and other status symbols. Traditional "Serbian young man" is not allowed to do everything (this is part of youth ideological education); he must be loyal to his wife and family, protective and Orthodox. He must also ensure that his nation is preserved. Male promiscuity and hypersexuality are not desirable any more. In addition to ethno-nationalism and clericalization, these patriarchal norms for men also prescribe that he can have sexual

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72 "Zentropa" and the like.

73 Interview by the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

74 For example, Captain Dragan's widely quoted answer to the question how he would like to die: "from a heart attack, in military boots or die with a racial blonde", "Dragan Vasiljković – Kapetan Dragan", Istinomer, *https://www.istinomer.rs/akter/dragan-vasiljkovic-kapetan-dragan/*

75 "Vođa američkih ultradesničara se preselio u Srbiju: 'Došao sam da podržim srpsku braću'", Objektiv.rs, 2020, *https://objektiv.rs/vest/395856/vodja-americkih-ultradesnicara-preselio-se-u-srbiju-dosao-sam-da-podrzim-srpsku-bracu-fotovideo/*

76 Interview by the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

relations "but not with every woman, not with a prostitute. Wait for a woman who is like you, who is Orthodox." Pornography is also forbidden as "filth" and a sin[77].

The explicitly criticized and punishable female characteristics and behaviour are all those which deviate from the patriarchal duties of a mother and family care. First of all, the refusal to have children is considered a rejection of one's natural purpose and obligation, as well as a betrayal of one's people and race. Thus, abortion is a sin because, according to the Church's explanation, life begins with conception. These ideas further converge with the *pro-life* movement and gain even more momentum. Initiating a divorce is also unacceptable for women and is considered as an act of immorality and selfishness, because it is contrary to the norm according to which the duty of a woman is to "save" her marriage, suffer, forgive and make sacrifices for her family. On the other hand, it is permissible and commendable for men to initiate a divorce, because thereby they confirm their dominant role and refusal to "put up with anyything" from a woman. As the incel presence in right-wing groups strengthens, one can observe the penetration of this ideology, which denies women the right to choose their partners, especially sexual ones, because according to these norms men should make decisions and women should obey them.

In extremist groups women do not make decisions, at least not officially and publicly, because this would violate all norms of male dominance and female submission. This division of power is considered natural, especially because it is a logical extension of the same behaviour transmitted by couples from the private sphere to their joint

participation in groups. In society, it is also unacceptable for women to have a leadership position, stand out, dominate and make decisions despite falling within their competencies. They should only make decisions with respect to housework, child care and assistance to family members. It is desirable that women are capable of carrying out these activities in which case they are called a "good" mother and a housewife, and not a capable woman.

In the context of Islamic extremism, which can be observed in small close-knit Islamic communities in Serbia, gender is looked at through the prism of rigorous religious doctrines and interpretations. Emphasis is, laid on strict patriarchal gender roles and norms, whereby male dominance and female submission are glorified as part of the "divine" order.

Such a model of gender relations is based on the deep religiosity of both men and women, and orders them to respect all religious norms in order to deserve heaven, which is prescribed as the supreme purpose of their lives. This type of religiosity implies "living completely a religious life"[78] and practicing religion *by* observing religious norms that precisely regulate every aspect of life, including daily routines.[79] Numerous online sources offer detailed instructions in this sense[80],

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77 Interviews by the Helsinki Committee, 2022 and 2023.

78 Interview by the Helsinki Committee, 2021. According to the source, they "managed to infiltrate every pore of life", so that believers must consult and seek approval and guidance from spiritual leaders for the most insgnificant activities.

79 Majda Halilović, Aner Zuković, Nejra Veljan, "Mapping online extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: findings and reflections", Atlantic Initiative, 2019

80 The Facebook page of Safet Kuduzović, *https://www.facebook.com/kuduzovicsafet/?locale=sr_RS, veb-sajt N-um, https://www.n-um.com/, veb-sajt Minber, https://minber.ba/*

an opportunity to ask specific questions[81] and individual sessions with ideologists[82]. By doing so, both men and women show enormous respect for the absolute authority of religion and religious leaders and leave the power of making life decision to them.

According to the strict norms for women, they must fulfil their duty as wives and mothers to the maximum, because this is the only way for them to be true believers and deserve heaven. In doing so, a woman must be completely subservient to her husband and dedicated to serving him, her family and God. Furthermore, in extremist Islam, women are almost absolutely forbidden to be employed, to be active in public and even to appear in public without a real need (except in extraordinary cases, depending on the ideologist). These norms also prescribe a complete segregation of men and women except in the family circle.

Islamic extremist groups and ideologists explicitly allow women to have very limited and stereotypical female roles in their family. They are daughters, sisters, mothers, wives and housewives within the framework of the strictly prescribed norms. The woman's role as mother is especially emphasized. For example, in the post of one of the leading ideologists it is stated: "The Western society morally collapsed at the moment it took the woman out of her house and she became everything else but a mother!!!""[83] In the comment of one of

his numerous followers it is stated: "Woman is closest to Allah, that is, Allah is most pleased with her when she is hidden at the bottom of her house, so that no one can see her. We cannot issue fatwas and permits regarding these issues with our reasoning. There are reliable hadiths and ayahs saying that a woman should stay at home and go out only in the case of need." Implicitly, a woman's most important aspiration must be to be a "true believer", but she can achieve that only through the permitted roles, not separately (like men).

A wife's behaviour towards her husband is specifically regulated by the gender norms, because it is postulated as the most important relationship in her life and for her life due to the fact that it is defined that "a woman's relationship with God takes place (exclusively) through her husband". This means that all women must marry if they want to have any kind of relationship with Allah, that is, to have any chance to deserve heaven. At the same time, the image of Jannah, which is expected for women is very vague and incomplete, in contrast to its image for men.[84] The sanction for disobeying this norm is rigorous in extremists narratives – a woman who fails to marry by a certain age is "lost" and has no chance to go to heaven. Moreover, even if they get married, their chance to go to heaven depends again on whether they will be "good wives". In this respect, the gender norms are also very strict and oppressive in the case of women. They prescribe that women must be completely submissive, humble, servile, aiming at making their husbands happy and meeting their needs and demands. For example, ideologists speak about the fact that a woman "should not raise her head" or look up and, in particular, raise her voice in the presence of her husband. She only needs to raise children, look after the

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81 Website N-um, *https://www.n-um.com/ponovo-otvaramo-rubriku-pitanja-i-odgovori/,* Website Minber, *https://minber.ba/?cat=43m,* The Facebook page of Elvedin Pezlić, *https://www.facebook.com/pezicelvedin* Facebook page of Safet Kuduzović, *https://www.facebook.com/kuduzovicsafet/?locale=sr_RS*

82 The Facebook page of Elvedin Pezlić, *https://www.facebook.com/pezicelvedin/,* YouTuube channel of Safet Kuduzović, *https://www.youtube.com/@dr.safet_kuduzovic*

83 Elvedin Pezlić's Facebook page, *https://www.facebook.com/pezicelvedin/posts/2876041719378884?ref=embed_post*

84 Focus group with young people, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2018.

house and satisfy her husband. She should not meddle in men's affairs and ask her husband about them. This is presented in the narratives as a relief for women, who are asked to understand that, because their obligation is only to look after the children and the house, while the husband bears the burden of all other obligations.

In such a rigid and narrow gender role system, women have found certain ideologically acceptable niches where they can be more active and freer. So, within women's groups some of them work as taxi drivers, produce and sell food and other products, hold private lessons for children and the like, while at the same time taking into account a strict gender segregation. Women are also socially active in women's groups through gatherings, conversations, mutual assistance and advice, support in finding husbands and the like. Women's ideological activity is primarily limited to their homes where they convey all religious values to their children and raise them in such a spirit. In rare cases women's ideological activity is tolerated in an extremist community.[85] They mostly work online and sometimes hold lectures in the community, which are exclusively attended by women. Such women deny very carefully that they are not "Islamic scholars" and do not take part in ideological discussions. They only mention religious topics, read religious texts, state the rules for women and discuss women-specific issues and family issues. They have significantly less followers than male ideologists[86] and present themselves as bloggers and

the like, but not as ideologists, because this role is strictly reserved for men.

On the other hand, these roles that men can have are more diverse: husband, father, breadwinner religious scholar, warrior, ideologist, as well as numerous professional roles that are acceptable. It is also tolerated if men are not married[87] and have no children if, for example, they are warriors. They still meet ideological requirements, although these options are rarely mentioned because the narratives primarily insist on the best behavioural models, offering a few choices.

The rules for good male believers are significantly different from those for women. They include obligatory prayers, making Hajj at least once in their lifetime (it is interesting to note that moderate Islam also prescribes this duty for women which extremist Islam does not mention any more), fulfilment of the obligations towards the family and the like. Men's family obligations are not specifically prescribed and are applied with a lot of tolerance, including the possibility that their nonfulfillment will be forgiven if a man had some prior obligations or even if he did not give any explanation. According to all extremist ideologists, polygamy is compulsory and its advantages for both men and women are highlighted: "The Almighty Lord allowed polygamy to men because of the many benefits it brings if it is correctly practiced... It is strange that today's Muslims and other people on the planet do not see anything wrong in immorality, fornication and even prostitution, but abhor polygamy. What rights can a woman expect from the man

85 For example, Ammara Šabić , Facebook page, *https://www.facebook.com/AmmaraAmiraSabic/*, Ammara Šabić, YouTube Channel, *https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=ammara+%C5%A1abi%C4%87*, *https://www.facebook.com/sarasabribooks/posts/da-vam-ka%C5%BEe-va%C5%A1a-sara-sabrimasallah-ja-se-naspavala-vi-se-raspisale-valja-meni-s/852949151420483/*, Instagram profile of Sara Sabri, *https://www.instagram.com/sara_sabri_official/*

86 Like male scholars, such as Ljakić, Kuduzović and Pezlić, who have hundreds of

thousands of followers, portals their own, media. There are not so many prominent women.

87 Zijad Ljakić, "Zašto se neki veliki učenjaci nisu ženili", Web page of Zijad Ljakić, *https://zijadljakic.ba/zasto-se-neki-veliki-ucenjaci-nisu-zenili/*

with whom she committed fornication? None. Unlike a woman who lives in a polygamous marriage, who has all the rights that the first wife has"[88]. Proselytism is also compulsory for them. It is emphasized that it is the duty of every believer to spread his religion and teach other people about his faith. In return, they are promised an "eternal award". In addition, the image of Jannah has comprehensively been described and used as one of the main attractive features of extremist radicalization for men. It contains all kinds of the most fantastic promises, including wealth, indulgences, heavenly virgins and a lavish life. For example: "Oh, how a heavenly beauty will say only honeyed words to her loved one until she falls into his arms"[89]. A special honour and success for men in extremist narratives is to be a shahid who they become if they die in battle as soldiers.

Women's explicitly valued, praised and prescribed characteristics are: obedience to their husbands, calmness, patience, dedication to their children, family and home, giving birth to more children. Apart from emphasizing the primary female role as a mother, extremist Islam also introduces an ideological novelty with the narrative that if a woman dies giving birth, she will automatically become a shahid. This is the only option for women to become shahids and the only alternative to deserve heaven and not only through their husbands. This narrative is presented as a great honour for women, because they can become shahids only in this way. At the same time, they are encouraged to suffer and have a high-risk pregnancy in the promise of this supreme reward.

The explicitly criticized, forbidden and punishable characteristics of women are their disobedience to male authority, while even the questioning of the gender norm model is absolutely unacceptable. These narratives emphasize that one of the worst achievements of the "Western system" is that women started to work and were separated from their families, thus abandoning their primary role and duty, so that such a behaviour is especially criticized and, in particular, forbidden to women. The unforgivable mistakes made by women also include premarital sexual relations and infidelity in marriage. Moreover, even if a woman is raped, it is still held that this is her fault because she must have somehow attracted her rapist. The punishment for such offence depends on the relevant group, but the decision is usually made by the husband or the leading ideologist of the group with whom the husband will consult. Depending on the degree of ideological aggressiveness, the punishment will range from "returning the wife to her parents", divorce, expulsion from the house, taking the children away to physical punishment, but in any case it will be very rigorous. On the other hand, in the case of the infidelity of a husband, outside his union with four wives, there are the already prepared narratives stating when the wife is obliged to forgive her husband.[90] Sanctions against him are not anticipated.

As all gender roles, norms, characteristics and requirements are precisely defined and segregated for women and men, When the gender differences are not respected, the characteristics and behaviour are especially criticized, prohibited and punished. Thus, a man who carries out women's work or has such characteristics "is not a real man", while a woman who only contemplates abandoning these norms

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88 Facebook of Elvedin Pezlić, *https://www.facebook.com/pezicelvedin*

89 "Džennet — kuća vječnog užitka", Elvedin Pezlić's Facebook page, *https://www.facebook.com/pezicelvedin/* Minber, 2011*https://minber.ba/?p=7038*

90 As in the cases that he slept with a slave girl or mistook another woman as his wife and the like.

is immediately prevented from doing that and, depending on the offence, punished. In accordance with the gender value system, any same-sex orientation or expression of gender identity that deviates from the stereotypical gender base is also prohibited as is masturbation (this explicitly refers to men, while women's sexuality is not mentioned).

Despite the key importance of marriage and family in extremist Islamism, divorce is possible and is not too demanding in a procedural sense, at least according to the relevant narratives. In reality, divorce is initiated by the man, while in the case of Sharia marriages it is sufficient that he informs the woman about it. In that case, the complete property and money remain with him and he has no further obligations towards the woman. On the other hand, in extremist communities it is very important to look after a woman who remained without the husband, so that someone who will "take" her as his second, third or fourth wife is immediately found. Divorce at a woman's initiative is possible only if the husband agrees to her proposal and, practically, if she has somewhere to go and can provide for herself without him. This actually means that she will have to automatically remarry or return to her primary family. If her primary family does not share her extremist views, it will hardly agree to accept her, because she previously broke up with it because of this issue. If the family shares her views, it will encourage her to remarry as soon as possible[91].

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

According to the patriarchal extremist narratives and right-wing and Islamic ideologies, men are protectors, breadwinners and fighters, which also includes their obligation to protect "their" women from an abuser. However, violence is understood to imply sexual and physical violence. This type of protection is also a matter of special pride, honour and respect for both women and men. So, for example, a Leviathan member drove his car into the migrant reception centre in Obrenovac shouting: "I don't want my girlfriend to be attacked by migrants!" and "I don't want a Muslim state!"[92] He was supported and praised by the leader of Leviathan on Twitter: "Filip is a member of the Movement. Filip could no longer stand harassment by migrants and decided to do this. Although he did not wear the colours of the Movement and did this as a solo player, I will not distance myself from him. This is what my boys are – temperamental and correct."[93] The leader of the People's Patrols, Damnjan Knežević, issued the same statement on YouTube after meeting migrants in the centre of Belgrade: "Inform your men", "Don't touch our women… If you cause problems, you'll have a problem… We will on the streets every evening", "We are not the police, we are not the government. We are the people"[94].

91 Interview by the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

92 "Član Levijatana automobilom upao u migrantski prihvatni centar u Obrenovcu", Mašina, 2020, *https://www.masina.rs/clan-levijatana-automobilom-upao-u-migrantski-prihvatni-centar-u-obrenovcu/*

93 "Član Levijatana automobilom upao u migrantski prihvatni centar u Obrenovcu", Mašina, 2020, *https://www.masina.rs/clan-levijatana-automobilom-upao-u-migrantski-prihvatni-centar-u-obrenovcu/*

94 Marija Vučić: "Mržnja, laži i patrole: Srpska antimigrantska brigada se igra vatrom", 2021, *https://birn.rs/mrznja-lazi-i-patrole-srpskaantimigrantska-brigada-se-igra-vatrom/*

Male members of extremist groups who protect women in this way are heroes, strong and "real men", which brings respect to them and pride and a sense of value and security to women whose partners they are. Thus, the girlfriend of the Leviathan member who broke into the migrant camp in Obrenovac says: "I had problems with migrants, they followed me, bandied to me and bullied me on the bus, and Filip probably couldn't stand this. He is a great fighter for justice, he loves animals very much and many in the city know him"[95].

It is also important to note that this protection of women from the violence of other groups is actually the protection of an object, a property. It is confined to the individual protection of an individual woman who is primarily protected by her partner and then by other members of the group. There is no question of a systemic solution to the problem of sexual and gender-based violence. On the contrary. As a rule, extremist groups oppose the laws that would improve the position of women. The magnitude of threat and the danger of sexual violence by "others" are especially emphasized, exaggerated and used as the key arguments for the radicalization of both women and men. For example, Pavle Bihali, the leader of Leviathan, said on Twitter: "Migrants think that this is their pasture and that they are free to do what they want. If the rape of our young daughters and sisters is not stopped by legal means, it will turn into something else. Personally, I can't look at them anymore, zero tolerance"[96]. Even the false claims about rapes[97]

committed by migrants are mentioned in the radicalizing narratives such as, for example, the one about the attack on a teenage girl in Belgrade. This was mentioned several times[98] and attracted hundreds of thousands of views and comments of Facebook users like: "The police and the media keep silent because they are ordered to do so! Shame on all of you for giving preference to rapists and terrorists over us and our girls!"[99].

Women are defended only if the violence is caused by external groups. For example: "We live in a time of the weakness and humiliation of the Islamic Ummah whose members have fallen prey to various bullies and thugs who have desecrated the honour of many Muslim women."[100] According to one of the prominent ideologists of Islamic extremism, the violence of external groups against their own group is also exaggerated. So, for example, the Newspanel portal has announced, while the group "Stop the Settlement of Migrants" spreads the news that a migrant raped a female dog in a migrant camp[101] and exaggerates, like in Facebook posts: "European women survivors of

95 "Pripadnik Levijatana hteo da gazi migrante! Njegova devojka za Kurir otkriva šta su joj azilanti dobacivali pre upada!", Kurir, 2020, *https://www.kurir.rs/crna-hronika/3460215/pripadnik-levijatana-hteo-da-gazi-migrantenjegova-devojka-za-kurir-otkriva-sta-su-jojazilanti-dobacivali-pre-upada*

96 Twitter account of the Leviathan Movement, *https://twitter.com/pokretlevijatan*

97 Facebook page Raskrinkavanja, 2021, *https://www.facebook.com/raskrikavanje/posts/902020153736053/?locale=ms_MY*, Milica Ljubičić, "Napadaju i siluju" –

novi talas vesti protiv migranata", Raskrinkavanje, 2020, *https://www.raskri-kavanje.rs/page.php?id=579*

98 Katarina Subašić, "Povratak netačne tvrdnje iz 2018 da su migranti u Beogradu silovali sedamnaestogodišnjakinju", AFP Belgrade, 2020, *https://cinjenice.afp.com/povratak-netacne-tvrdnje-iz-2018-da-su-migranti-u-beogradu-silovali-sedamnaestogodisnjakinju*

99 Facebook post, *https://perma.cc/ 63LN-CE92?type=image*

100 Zijad Ljakić, "Pobačaj ploda začetog silovanjem", Zijad Ljakić's Facebook page" *https://zijadljakic.ba/pobacaj-ploda-zacetog-silovanjem/*

101 Kosović, S., "Antimigranti u Srbiji dele lažne i bajate neonacističke vesti o silovanju životinja", VOICE, 2020, *https://voice.org.rs/antimigranti-u-srbiji-dele-lazne-i-bajate-neonacisticke-vesti-o-silovanju-zivotinja/*

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migrant attacks. Many of them are not alive. Forty thousand criminal attacks by them in Germany only in 2019"[102].

On the other hand, intragroup violence is not talked about. Due to the way these groups' function and the nature of their ideologies, this phenomenon has not been explored in Serbia. Here we will give only the illustration of a climate of violence in far-right groups from research by Saeida Rouass:[103] "All men have been violent", said one woman. But all women have been insecure and sought something, so that, in her opinion, we have simply accepted this fact in a way, because all men are like that. Women are told that they are the most precious thing, that they are the mothers of the white race, that they will be respected and, in this way, they are put on a pedestal. But, at the same time, if you say something wrong and are backhanded and you know that there is a lot of abuse, especially by one's intimate partner, but it is not always just this…"[104]

One can observe the increasing presence of incel culture and the penetration of such narratives into right-wing ideologies in Serbia. This brings about an increasing number of apologists of rape, even if it is committed by members of a group. In the most extreme cases and in closed groups, all kinds of violence against women, including rape, are promoted[105].

Women's economic dependence on their partners is considered a part of the natural or divine order, which is accepted by members as one of the key components of the model governing the relations between women and men, and not as violence. There is no awareness of other forms of gender-based violence, nor are they mentioned.

In Islamist extremist groups, the strict gender norms prescribe that a woman must not refuse any sexual initiative of her husband because, according to the extremist narratives, "the angels in heaven will curse them at that moment". This means that a woman thereby diminishing her chance to go to heaven. As one ideologist says: "Clear Sharia texts have come down and they point out that a wife must not refuse sex with her husband when he calls her to bed. "

There is no disagreement on this topic among scholars. "[106] It is not considered as a kind of violence, but as a woman's duty and even her chance to improve her "relationship with Allah". Some extremist ideologists even explicitly state that the husband has the right to hit his wife with an open hand, which is also not considered as violence, but as a way that a husband makes his wife be a better believer. Others put this in the context of the husband's education of his wife: "The husband has the right to educate his wife if she disobeys him as is required by Sharia law. For example, if she refuses to sleep in the marital bed for no reason, leaves the house without his permission,

102 Smiljana Milinkov, Stefan Janjić, Natalija Jakovljević, "Izveštavanje o migrantima između manipulacije i etike", NDNV, 2021, *https://ndnv.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Izve%C5%A1tavanje-o-migrantima-Izme%C4%91u-manipulacije-i-etike.pdf*

103 Saeida Rouass, an author, researcher and practitioner focused on countering violent extremism.

104 Nejra Veljan, "Ekstremno polaganje prava: kako krajnja desnica koristi mizoginiju i antifeminizam za regrutovanje novih pristalica?", BIRN, 2022, *https://balkaninsight.com/sr/2022/05/10/ekstremno-polaganje-prava-kako-krajnja-desnica-koristi-mizoginiju-i-antifeminizam-za-regrutovanje-novih-pristalica/*

105 Interview by the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

106 Zijad Ljakić "Žena me odbija u krevetu", Zijad Ljakić's Facebook page, *https://zijadljakic.ba/zena-me-odbija-u-krevetu/*

does not look after the cleanliness of her body, spends money without his permission or squanders her husband's property and the like."[107]. Due to their joint belief that a women's relationship with Allah goes through the husband, women bear violence without considering, as such. As the gender norms completely normalize violence in the eyes of both men and women in extremist communities, it has been included in the model of married life as a functional element. In addition, specific norms also explicitly prescribe that a woman must put up with her husband "no matter what he is like".

In addition, the entire ideological system of extremists with its regression towards patriarchal norms and practices is presented as the "protection" of women from excessive work, the need to earn money and the violence of external groups. In reality, this system represents a functional model of structural gender oppression and exploitation, which does not give women any option to avoid violence. Thus, such an extreme version of patriarchy in extremist groups represents a form of structural discrimination, because it is deeply rooted in the ideological, cultural and organizational aspects and practices of those groups. These patriarchal structures and practices oppress women in extremist groups and often serve as the basis for the discrimination of women and violence against women outside groups. Through these structures, the extreme version of patriarchy becomes a means for maintaining power and control, thus confirming and deepening structural discrimination against women.

Extremist groups, which promote patriarchal ideas, react strongly to any challenge to the patriarchal status quo. This can include certain forms of punishment against women who question or disobey patriarchal norms, such as isolation, marginalization, exclusion and criticism, as well as attacks against those who advocate women's rights, especially against feminists[108].

Gender-based violence is a broad category that includes any harmful action against an individual or individuals, depending on their gender identity. This usually includes violence against women due to their role in society, but can also refer to violence against some men and LGBT+ people due to their gender nonconforming identities or roles. Aggressive homophobic views are particularly characteristic of both types of extremism and represent one of the most significant items of their proclaimed programmes.[109]

The anti-feminist narratives of right-wingers merge with homophobic ones in the extremists' fight against so-called "gender ideologies" as one of the most important enemies. The right-wingers' narratives on this topic are particularly intense and elaborate. Their importance is reflected in the fact that they are present in the mainstream where they find allies and thus pose a threat to women's and human rights of the LGBT+ population. For example, by doing this they have successfully changed the content of some school textbooks in the part dealing with the need for tolerance and the inclusion of the LGBT+ population.[110] Over the years, they have blocked the adoption of the Law on

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107 Dr. Šukri Ramić, "Da li je po šerijatu dozvoljeno mužu udariti ženu?", Svjetlo Islama web page, *https://svjetlo-islama.net/da-li-je-po-serijatu-dozvoljeno-muzu-udariti-zenu/*

108 Interviews by the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

109 Interviews by the Helsinki Committee, 2023.

110 Jovana Georgievski, "Srbija i obrazovanje: Šta (ne)će biti u novim udžbenicima iz biologije i da li će 'nastavnica' postati zabranjena reč", BBC, 2022,

Same-Sex Unions and[111] prevented the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality[112]. They have also demanded the rejection of gender-sensitive language[113]; they also launch anti-abortion initiatives [114] and the like.

THE EXIT OF WOMEN FROM EXTREMIST GROUPS

The exit of women from extremist groups in Serbia, be it right-wing or Islamic group, can be a challenging and complex process. Specific conditions and opportunities can vary to a significant extent, depending on the specific group, woman and context.

As already mentioned, women and girls most often become members of right-wing groups, through their male partners, which puts them in an dependent position. When the relationship with that partner ends, their affiliation with the group tends to weaken or cease altogether, because the organizational structure of these groups usually does not anticipate a significant role or authority for women except in the context of their relationship with male members (with the exception of

political parties). This means that, as a woman's status in the group is based on her personal relationship with a man who has his own status, breaking this relationship usually results in her marginalization or exclusion from the group. Similar dynamic can be observed when a woman, who is the friend of a male member of a right-wing group, ends this relationship. She often distances herself from the group or leaves it. As it has been observed, even if they were ideologically active during their participation in the group, after leaving it women usually stop doing this. Social isolation represents one of the key obstacles faced by women faced after leaving a right-wing group, because they lose this social network, support and protection to which, while following the patriarchal norms of their partners in their ideological choices and social circles, were dedicated during a certain period.[115]

It is very rare that women voluntarily leave Islamic extremist groups, which is in line with the gender norms prescribing that women must respect the ideology and decisions of their husbands (or their father or brother until they are married). They are very rigorous, but women's prospects to go to heaven are conditioned by them. When women leave these groups it is usually not only due to their ideological disagreement, but also due to the complex questioning of personal relationships and identity, as well as security and existence.

For women, the process of leaving these groups is specific and highly dependent on the actual situation, that is, on their education, employment status, life in an urban area and support availability. Paradoxically, if a woman wants to go to a more extreme environment than her current one or to her family, it is easier for her to do that in

https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-63658998

111 Đjordje Bjelanović, "LGBT prava po meri biračkog tela: Zašto Zakon o istopolnim zajednicama stoji u fioci već tri godine", NIN, 2024, *https://www.nin.rs/drustvo/vesti/45307/zasto-zakon-o-istopolnim-zajednicama-stoji-u-fioci-vec-tri-godine*

112 Obradović: "Zakon o rodnoj ravnopravnosti donet nasilno i bez ozbiljne rasprave", Danas, 2023, *https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/obradovic-zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti-donet-nasilno-i-bez-ozbiljne-rasprave/*

113 "Ženski monah ili monahinja: Patrijarh i Matica Srpska opet protiv rodno osetljivog jezika", Vreme, 2024, *https://vreme.com/razno/zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti/*

114 "Poverenica i potpredsednica Vlade: Opasna inicijativa za zabranu abortusa u Srbiji", Voice of America, 2022, *https://www.glasamerike.net/a/srbija-abortus-inicijativa-zabrana-poverenica-ministarka/6435459.html*

115 Interview by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, 2023.

comparison with trying to join a more moderate environment. This is due to the fact that extremist groups offer husband/ matching and logistical, financial and social support to women who express the desire to join them. The same thing happens when married women want to remarry and thus join more extreme communities or groups.

Women's attempts to deradicalize themselves or go to a more moderate environment are significantly more challenging and rarer and occur when they are disappointed with what they got in an extremist group in comparison with what they were promised. If a woman is married to an extremist, the possibility of her leaving the group depends on whether she knows where to go and someone who will accept her and support her. Namely, if she has respected the prescribed gender norms, she has no property, job or money, so that her only realistic option is either to return to her primary family, or to remarry. For educated women there is a chance to get a job and become independent, but they need at least initial support from their family or institutions until they manage to live independently. Leaving is most difficult for girls who live in their primary radicalized families and want to find a more moderate environment. In that case, the only realistic option them is to marry someone with moderate views, as there is no chance that their family will allow them to work and become independent.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTREMIST NARRATIVES ABOUT WOMEN

All extremist narratives are inherently misogynistic in various ways, ranging from suppressing women's rights and freedoms in order to preserve the patriarchal power structures, portraying women as inferior, dependent or incapable of certain roles or rights, through the control of women's reproductive rights, use of women's reproductiveness as the key element for the preservation of the purity of the race, nation and religious group, to the dehumanization and objectivization of women, thus reducing them to the means for achieving higher goals, for example, for their reproductive function and so on. None of them offer women the real improvement of their position, rights and equality. Misogynistic narratives are one of the primary attractive reasons used in the recruitment and further radicalization of misogynistic men. On the other hand, the attraction of all ideologies for women remains an open problem for right-wingers who are still struggling to find a way to sufficiently appeal to women. Islamic ideologists of extremism attract women through the focus on religious benefits. The oppression and exploitation of women remain, inter alia, as one of the foundations of the retrograde projections of the future offered by extremist ideologists.

Misogyny in extremism is not only observed in the domain of individual or collective hatred or contempt for women. It is a complex and socially constructed phenomenon that is used to maintain power relations, preserve patriarchal gender norms and achieve political goals. The suppression of women and their rights perpetuates the dominance of some men, frequently those who hold a leadership position in extremist movements. Misogyny is also the means for achieving

political goals where women's bodies and rights become "battlefields" on which ideological battles, such as the issues of abortion, access to contraception and dress standards, are fought. In extremism, the concept of "hegemonic masculinity"[116] has becomes the basis of misogyny where men are portrayed as protectors and bearers of traditional values that must be obeyed by women.

In addition, misogyny is not only one of the cornerstones of extremism, but is also a special form of extremism that is violent in various ways.[117] Due to the fact that many nonviolent variants of extremism advocate economic, psychological and systemic violence against women, they qualify as specific forms of violent extremism[118]. Misogynistic economic violence creates economic systems that keep women in a subordinate position through the denial of their right to work, unequal pay for equal work and limited access to the resources and education. Psychological violence through socialization, propaganda, education and other indoctrination methods affects women's self-confidence and leads to internalized violence. Systemic misogynistic violence is reflected in the laws and policies that limit women's rights and freedoms such as, for example, reproductive rights through the prohi-

bition of abortion and the rights to education and political representation. Sexual violence is also reflected in the fact that women's bodies are hypersexualized, but are not sexual. Female sexuality is forbidden and declared immoral. Women are institutionalized and confined to objects, to the bodies that can and should give birth and attract and satisfy men, and which are also the battlefields on which their men fight with "others". Perceived in such a way, this way, misogyny requires a specific response and intervention as a separate ideology of extreme views.

Misogyny is omnipresent, primarily in the mainstream[119]. It is fully normalized and deeply rooted in culture and tradition. A continuous stream of misogynistic incidents comes from the Serbian Assembly[120] and the Serban Orthodox Church[121] as the prominent mainstream

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116 The theorists like Raewyn Connell discuss the notion of a particular form of masculinity that is currently dominant and sets the standard for other forms of masculinity.

117 Nejra Veljan and Maida Ćehajić Čampara, "Rodne ideologije: kako ekstremisti iskorištavaju borbe za ženska prava i pokreću recipročnu radikalizaciju", Atlantic Initiative, 2021, *https://atlantskainicijativa.org/rodne-ideologije-kako-ekstremisti-iskoristavaju-borbe-za-zenska-prava-i-pokrecu-reciprocnu-radikalizaciju/*

118 Nejra Veljan and Maida Ćehajić Čampara, "Rodne ideologije: kako ekstremisti iskorištavaju borbe za ženska prava i pokreću recipročnu radikalizaciju", Atlantic Initiative, 2021, *https://atlantskainicijativa.org/rodne-ideologije-kako-ekstremisti-iskoristavaju-borbe-za-zenska-prava-i-pokrecu-reciprocnu-radikalizaciju/*

119 "Bogavac: Mizoginija i dalje postoji u svim sferama društva", N1info, 2019, *https://n1info.rs/vesti/a493151-bogavac-mizoginija-i-dalje-postoji-u-svim-sferama-drustva/*

120 "Uvrede, seksizam i mizoginija postali redovna pojava u Narodnoj skupštini", Open Parliament, 2023, *https://"/otvoreniparlament.rs/aktuelno/513*, Radmila Živković, "Mizoginija u Skupštinskim klupama", Serbian Movement Dveri, 2022, *https://dveri.rs/autorski-tekstovi/radmila-zivkovic-mizoginija-u-skupstinskim-klupama*, "Prijava protiv Bakareca zbog mizoginije i vređanja Milivojevića u Skupštini", 021, 2023, *https://www.021.rs/story/Info/Srbija/331217/Prijava-protiv-Bakareca-zbog-mizoginije-i-vredjanja-Milivojevica-u-Skupstini.html*, "Otvoreni parlament: Nedopustivo ponašanje poslanika kojim se podstiče seksizam, diskriminacija, i nasilno ponašanje prema ženama", Danas, 2022, *https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/otvoreni-parlament-nedopustivo-ponasanje-poslanika-kojim-se-podstice-seksizam-diskriminacija-i-nasilno-ponasanje-prema-zenama/*, "LSV: Sandra Božić da se izvini svim ženama u Srbiji zbog mizoginih i vulgarnih izjava", Nedeljnik, 2022, *https://www.nedeljnik.rs/lsv-sandra-bozic-da-se-izvini-svim-zenama-u-srbiji-zbog-mizoginih-i-vulgarnih-izjava/*, Filip Švarm, "Naprednjačko ponižavanje žena: Buka, bes i prostaštvo", Vreme, 2022, *https://direktno.rs/vesti/drustvo-i-ekonomija/440729/sns-skupstina-srbije-mizogenija-vredjanje.html*, i mnogi drugi.

121 Milenko Perović, "Mizoginija, vaistinu mizoginija!", Autonomija, 2023, *htt-*

institutional actors. Thus, it is not surprising that extremist groups only build on such narratives and use them as the key factors in recruiting misogynous men.

Misogyny in extremist ideologies, both right-wing and Islamic ones, is not only a consequence of prejudice against women. It is also a strategic method used to preserve the patriarchal power, control the population and oppose progressive ideas about gender equality. Therefore, extremists usually consider feminism as a threat to their patriarchal and conservative attitudes, while misogyny is used as a tool to discredit and attack feminist ideas and movements. This fight against all aspects of modernism, the advancement of women's human rights and the equality of men and women in society, as well as feminism itself has taken up particularly large proportions and significance within the far right. Transnational transversal thematic coalitions are created in the fight for the reduction of women's rights. The strategies for discrediting and demonizing all efforts to improve women's position are also carried out in order to nullify their achievements and undermine their influence in society. One such example is the Pro-Life Worldwide Summit that was held in Belgrade last May. [122] It has been announced by stating that in these dramatic times, it is useful and important to have a global congress, get to know each other better, exchange experiences, learn new methods of action and gain new strength and motivation for new struggles and victories of unborn children." It is also stated that Serbia was selected as the host of the First Summit because it is among the first countries in the world according to abortion incidence per 1000 women, while the demographic statistics are dramatically unfavourable.". One of

the goals of the Summit was to "increase the motivation for new fights and victories for unborn children."[123], as stated by the Alliance for Life, a regional anti-feminist organization for Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a member of the Pro-Life Worldwide and maintains relations with Russian organizations that promote conservative values[124]. In this connection, women's human rights activists[125] have warned that these organizations are part of anti-gender movements, whose influence is gaining momentum and that they promote very dangerous agenda. The serious violation of women's rights in Croatia and Poland, for example, is just the result of the activities of such organizations which, at first, seemed naive but, in cooperation with right-wing governments, succeeded in worsening the political framework for women's human rights. It is also important to note that the pro-life sector of anti-gender movement not only advocates (almost) a total ban on abortion, but also on contraception and divorce, which is certainly against feminism and, naturally, in favour of marriage as an exclusive union between man and woman. In their activities they use untruths, distorted scientific findings, manipulation and seductive rhetoric such as, for example, that marriage is the safest option for women and that there is the least violence in marriages, thus putting the importance of marriage above women's safety. In responding to the reactions in support of women's human rights, the IFAM published an article

ps://autonomija.info/milenko-perovic-mizoginija-vaistinu-mizoginija/

122 "Pro-Life Worldwide Summit Belgrade — May 11-14th 2023", Zvanična veb-stranica Pro-life Worldwide, 2023, *https://prolifeworldwide.net/*

123 "Medjunarodni samit Za život u Beogradu, 11-13. maj", "Savez za život", 2023, *.https://zazivot.org/medjunarodni-samit-za-zivot-u-beogradu-11-13-maj/*

124 The official site of the Alliance for Life, *https://zazivot.org/*

125 "Pro-life samit u Beogradu nosi opasne ideje, pokušavaju da proguraju fašizam", N1info, 2023, *https://n1info.rs/vesti/pro-life-samit-u-beogradu-nosi-opasne-ideje-pokusavaju-da-proguraju-fasizam/*

titled "Who's yelling over there? The feminist abortion hysteria" [126], which contains all the above mentioned arguments.

Various women's rights movements have become one of the most useful "enemies" of the far right[127], which they use to maintain control, strengthen their base of supporters and fuel their fears and interest.

In their fight against the advancement of women's rights and position, extremists use various methods in order to reduce its influence in society and discourage women from identifying themselves with it.

The first discrediting method is the abuse of terms and their misinterpretation. So, right wingers use the term "gender ideologies" hiding that these understandings are based on scientific findings, not politics and ideologies. By misusing the concepts from gender studies and sociology, which refer to the social and cultural gender aspects and not to the biological sex, in the discourse against "gender ideologies", this concept is often misinterpreted or presented as an attempt to deny the biological differences between men and women. In addition, the term "gender ideology" is used in a pejorative sense in order to stigmatize and discredit these ideas, policies and practices. The term itself is used to describe a wide range of ideas, policies and practices which promote gender equality, the recognition of different gender identities and the rights of LGBT+ people, but without a clear definition and consistent

use. It is sometimes also claimed that it will legalize pedophilia and/or incest.

The discourse against "gender ideology" also often includes the misinterpretation of feminism and LGBT+ rights. For example, feminism is often presented as a movement that wants to subjugate men, while the rights of trans persons are presented as a threat to women's rights. The attribution of extremist views is also used as a discrediting method by which extremists exaggerate or take the views of minority or radical feminist groups out of context in order to create a distorted image of the entire movement. They also present the concepts such as gender fluidity and gender identity as radical or extreme, although they are actually part of the widely accepted and valid theoretical frameworks in sociology and psychology.

The frequently used methods also include association with negative labels (when, for example, feminism is labelled as a "Western invention", Western imposition of "gender ideology", "anti-family", "amoral" or even "devilish"), attribution of social problems to feminism (when, for example, the problems such as divorce, "family breakup" or even the moral decay of society are falsely attributed to the influence of feminism), denial of the existence of gender inequality (when it is claimed that women's rights have already been achieved or that gender inequality does not exist, thus trying to deny the need for feminist activities), manipulation of religious texts (in the cases when religious texts are interpreted or abused in order to criticize feminism and promote patriarchal inequalities), promotion of alternative femininity models (when traditional gender roles are glorified and presented as more superior by frequently using sentimental and nostalgic pictures of "good old times") and the like.

126 Marija Stajić, "Ko to tamo urla? Feministička histerija oko abortusa", 2022, https://ifamnews.com/sr/ko-to-tamo-urla-feministicka-histerija-oko-abortusa

127 Islamist extremists also single out "modernism" and "the Western model" as an external "enemy", but these discourses and strategies are not nearly as developed and influential as right-wing extremism. For example, in a review and criticism of "Nemoj nas više braniti – knjiga 'Islam kao alternativa' od Murada Hofmana", Zijad Ljakić's web page, https://zijadljakic.ba/nemoj-nas-vise-braniti-knjiga-islam-kao-alternativa-od-murada-hofmana/

We can already see the abundance of the above-mentioned characteristics from just two of the many examples. So, in the 2023 Easter Epistle of the Serbian Orthodox Church it is stated: "We appeal for the standardization of the use of the Cyrillic alphabet in public space, as well as the cessation of violence against the Serbian language and the abolition of the legal provisions that impose this violence, especially under the unconstitutional law that imposes the so-called gender sensitive language, which hides the fight against marriage and family as the sanctities established by God and natural forms of man's personal and congregational life."[128] Vladimir Dimitrijević, a well-known right-/wing ideologist, writes: "There appeared a new wave of feminism, which was backed by radical feminists, many of whom are lesbians and activists of the lesbian rights movement. Their basic idea is that biological sex is unimportant and that "gender" is important (our feminists interpreted this word as "rod", although this word has a completely different meaning in the Serbian language and is the nucleus from which many key words originate, from "porodica" /family/ to "rodoljublje" /patriotism/).. "Gender" is a socially constructed sex. We are originally neither male nor female. We are constructed as such... in many kindergartens in Western countries three-year boys are forced to wear girls' dresses and play with dolls and vice versa, and thereafter children are given an opportunity to change their sex already at the age of 15, with which Tsipras has recently surprised Greeks and caused an uproar in the Greek Church and on Mount Athos. In Serbia, a country in which, after the 2002 census, the population dropped by 400,000 and in which each year deaths outnumber births by 34,000 and in which there are more than one million unemployed people and an uncertain number of people who are likely to lose their jobs, the family, as the basic cell of society, needs special attention and protection. Therefore, let us stand up and defend the family and family values with all our strength."[129]

The existing threat from an organized extremist fight to violate human rights of women and the LGBT population is not small and requires a serious response in order to prevent the further violation of human rights, undermining of gender equality progress in gender equality and the spread of discrimination and hatred.

CONCLUSION

Gender is the key component of the social structure that shapes identities, interactions and institutional practices, and extremist ideologies often use and abuse gender norms in order to articulate their attitudes and recruit supporters. They also use gender-specific strategies for the mobilization of their supporters. Therefore, the consideration of the gender-related aspects of extremism in Serbia is crucial, because these issues directly shape the goals and strategies of extremist groups, including the imposition of repressive gender norms, attacks on women's rights and the normalization of misogynous violence. The understanding of this type of dynamics enables a better understanding of a broader social harm that extremism can cause. In addition, the understanding of the differences in radicalization between men and women enables targeted interventions in the prevention of extremism and fight against it, taking into account the gender aspects

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128 The Easter Epistle of the Serbian Orthodox Church, SOC, 2023, *https://spc.rs/vaskrsnja-poslanica-srpske-pravoslavne-crkve/*

129 Vladimir Dimitrijević, "U odbranu prirodne porodice", 2018, Vladimir Dimitrijević's Web page, *https://vladimirdimitrijevic.com/sr-rs/tekstovi/202-u-odbranu-prirodne-porodice.html*

of the phenomenon. This also includes the shaping of policies and strategies for the prevention and treatment that are specific for men and women.

Right-wing extremism in Serbia encompasses a significant number of actors and wide spectrum of individuals, political parties, organizations that often display violence toward minorities and human rights defenders. All in all, various far-right extremists have tens of thousands of members, fans and followers with different status, whose number and influence in society are increasing. Islamic extremism is not significantly present in Serbia. There is currently one Salafi community consisting of 20–30 families in Sandžak. They advocate the extremist variants of Islam and their supporters and fans are mostly on-line and small informal groups. These phenomena of Islamist extremism are not accepted by the local mainstream Muslim community or the institutions or the public. They exist on the margins of the local community.

The strengthening of far-right organizations and their entry into the mainstream political space, as the result of special strategies, poses a serious problem in Serbia, which leads to the contamination of the mainstream with extremist contents. This process is reflected through their increasing influence on the ruling structures, institutions and media. The very absence of the activities dealing with the prevention of right-wing extremism points to the incorporation of extremist ideas into the public policies and legislative framework. The contamination of the mainstream with extremist contents through popular culture, educational materials and public appearances of public figures lays the foundation for changes in the collective consciousness of society. The lack of counter-narratives and critical thinking leads to the

perception of extremism as a normal part of everyday life, especially among the members of the young generations. From a gender perspective, the mainstream contamination with extremist contents can have particularly harmful consequences for women's rights and freedoms. The normalization and normativization of patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes in society create a hostile environment for gender equality, leading to the erosion of women's rights and freedoms, increase of gender-based violence and institutionalization of discrimination against women through laws and policies.

The key difference between the mainstream and extremism lies in the core values on which the social structure rests. Although the number of supporters of certain ideas may increase, this is not the main criterion for distinguishing the mainstream from extremism. The essence of the ideology and its attitude towards democratic values are crucial. The preservation and affirmation of the basic values of democratic society, such as the rule of law and human rights, are of vital importance in dealing with the process of the mainstream contamination with extremist contents. Therefore, it is necessary to consistently use the term "extremist" groups and ideologies, despite their efforts to avoid such a labelling in order to blur the boundary with the mainstream as a part of their mainstream penetration strategy characteristics including, exclusiveness,

Despite the essential differences in the ideological foundation and specificities within various groups, the far right and Islamic extremism share the essential characteristics such as exclusiveness, radicalism, authoritarianism and oppressiveness. Despite the significant cultural and historical differences, their common characteristics are the feeling of the superiority of their group over universal human rights,

clericalization instead secularism, authoritarianism instead of democracy, and retraditionalization and repatriarchalization instead of social development and advancement of (women's) human rights.

In right-wing extremist groups in Serbia, women are rarely present? and are usually the partners of male members, which poses a serious problem for massification, branding and legitimization of these groups. In Islamic extremist groups, the representation of women is equal to that of men, because the basic gender norm stipulates that everyone must start a family in accordance with Sharia law. However, the visibility of these women in the public sphere is minimal and there is a strict gender segregation outside the family.

Women usually join right-wing extremist groups in Serbia through the relationship with a certain man, her partner or family member, which reflects the patriarchal norms that impose the role of supporter or follower on them. In Islamist extremist groups, women join them pursuant to the decision of male members of their families or through their online recruitment to marry extremists. As a rule, this radicalization stems from the observance of the patriarchal norms and religious expectations, which is contrary to a woman's freedom to make a choice.

Patriarchal gender norms are central in extremist ideologies. In these ideologies, women are generally assigned the traditional roles of mothers and wives, while the strictness of such norms varies and depends on the specific ideological framework of the relevant group. Women are encouraged to devote themselves to their family and housework, while male dominance and female submission are glorified as part of the "natural" order. Women are often exposed to gender

segregation and submission to men's authority. Men are decision makers, while women are only allowed to make decisions within their household, which is considered their privilege. As for the position of women within extremist groups, their possibilities are limited and subordinated to men. Leadership positions are not accessible to them, while their activities and engagement often include supporting and auxiliary roles.

In extremist ideologies, men are women's protectors, but this protection often implies only sexual and physical violence. Such protection focuses on individual, "their" women", viewed mostly as "a property" or an object and not as persons with rights. The systemic solution to the problem of violence against women is not the topic for extremist groups, which often oppose the laws that would improve their status. In addition, the gender norms of these groups support and perpetuate structural oppression, exploitation, discrimination and violence against women. At the same time, extremist narratives usually exaggerate the danger of violence by "others", while intragroup violence is not mentioned..

The dynamics of the exit from right-wing and Islamic groups is significantly different. While women often leave a right-wing group after the breakup with their male member through whom they had joined the group, leaving an Islamic group often requires a deeper examination of their identity, relationships and existence. In both cases, the process of leaving an extremist group is complex and often difficult for women. For women who are married for extremists or live in radicalized families, the exit from such a group can pose a special challenge. Various factors, such as social isolation, dependence on male members of the group and strict gender norms contribute to the aggravating

circumstances. While the support of a woman's family, friends or institutions can be crucial for her successful exit from an extremist group, the assets such as education, employment and financial independence can also facilitate this process. Understanding the factors that influence the process of women leaving extremist groups is crucial for the development of efficient prevention and deradicalization strategies regardless of the complexity of this process.

Extremist narratives about women are deeply rooted in misogyny, which serves as a basis for maintaining patriarchal structures and achieving political goals. They advocate a direct repression of women's rights and freedoms, portraying women as inferior or dependent on men. Women are reduced to the role of a reproductive object or guardian of tradition, thus maintaining the traditional division of gender roles. In addition, extremist movements actively oppose feminist ideas, presenting them as a threat to the traditional values and the family, and use various discrediting methods in order to reduce their influence. In this effort, extremist movements form transnational alliances and coalitions against the advancement of women's rights and gender equality, which requires a serious strategic response from society in order to ensure the respect for women's human rights and prevent the further spread of discrimination and hatred.