



Habilitation Thesis Reviewer's Report

Masaryk University	
Faculty	Faculty of Social Studies
Procedure field	Politology
Applicant	PhDr. Věra Stojarová, Ph.D.
Applicant's home unit, institution	Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University
Habilitation thesis	The Far Right in the Balkans
Reviewer	Prof. Dr. Florian Bieber
Reviewer's home unit, institution	Centre for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz

The habilitation is based on the book "The Far Right in the Balkans", published with Manchester University Press, one of the leading British university press. It is the first monograph on far right wing parties in the Balkans. It offers a systematic and comprehensive analysis of far right wing parties in Southeastern Europe. It includes a literature review of the relevant debates on far-right political parties and related parties, such as populist, radical right and other parties in a global and European perspective. This chapter is based on the state of the art current literature and includes all the key authors of the field.

Next, the book offers a brief historical background to the evolution of political parties in Balkans, noting particularly nationalist and far right parties in the different countries. Subsequently the book discusses the core ideological themes of the far right parties identified in the Balkans. All the parties have nationalism and xenophobia at their core, but they differ on their EU-NATO orientation and on other policies such as economic program.

The next chapter turns to the support basis for such parties in the region, followed by the exploration of the reasons for the lack of success in others. Overall, most countries, including Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia, but also Croatia do not have larger far right parties, whereas there are some in Romania and Bulgaria, as well as Serbia. What emerges is that there is no singular pattern that can explain the success or failure of far-right politics across the region.

The next two chapters examine first the voters for the parties and then the organisational aspects of the parties' success or failure. While some patterns emerge, parties tend to have centralized structures and party discipline, they don't all have a charismatic leader.

The conclusion contextualizes the comparative study of the Far Rights in the Balkans with the wide European phenomena.

While the book argues that there is a similar ideological basis as far right parties in Western Europe, the book does acknowledge that cooperation among far right parties in the Balkans is unlikely. This is in fact different from the far right in Western Europe, where more extensive cooperation has emerged. This is a larger degree due to an aspect less discussed in the book, namely the shift towards anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic policies which differ from the anti-minority and anti-neighbor policies and territorial claims. This is thus a striking difference between the Far Right in the Balkans and Western Europe. Connected is the shift from anti-Semitism to now a strategic positive view of Israel and Jews as fellow fighters against Islam. It would have been good to explore to which degree this is a feature in the Balkans.

Overall this is a concise and competent book that is clearly structured and well executed. It is systematic in its analysis and offers some important insights into European and especially Balkans far right parties.

There are few flaws, I would have liked to see a more extensive discussion of the role of ethnic nationalism, anti-minority policies and claims to territorial revision as a key feature of some parties and distinguishing marker between the Balkans and Western Europe. In addition, the book could have also offered more insight into the difference in success between these parties in the Balkans and the rest of Europe. This seems particularly relevant as the success of such parties are strong in some neighboring countries, such as Austria (FPÖ), Hungary (Jobbik), Italy (Lega), thus the question arises why the parties have overall had only modest success in the Balkans and to which degree in fact the nationalism of main stream parties, such as SNS, HDZ, BSP, VMRO-DPMNE has contributed to the relative failure of these parties.

These questions do not deflect on the contribution of the book, as it is well-researched, theoretically well structured and rich in detail. It thus clearly fulfills the criteria of a habilitation.

Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence

- How would you position the SNS in Serbia today and Vetevendosje Kosovo as parties?
- How important is the nationalism of mainstream parties (SNSD, HDZ, etc.) in explaining the relative weakness of far right parties in the Balkans?
- How much do you observe the shift from traditional ethnonationalist parties on the far right to more "modern" far right parties that are less revisionist, but focused on migrants, other minorities (LGBT rights), and seek to distance themselves from anti-Semitic positions?
- How do you see parties in the Balkans more generally and how do some structural difference of parties matter for the far right (i.e. weakness of ideological differentiation, strong role of patronage, not mass based parties)?

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled "The Far Right in the Balkans" by Věra Stojarová *fulfils* requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Politology.

In Graz on 17 May 2018

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