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BOOK REVIEWS

Social Mobilization Beyond Ethnicity: Civic Activism and Grassroots Movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, by Chiara Milan, London, Routledge, 2020, 176 pp., $160 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0815387022.

Chiara Milan's *Social Mobilization Beyond Ethnicity: Civic Activism and Grassroots Movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina* is an important contribution to understanding contentious politics in divided societies. It offers an empirically rich and historically well-informed account of how citizens can come together in post-conflict environments, what sociopolitical difference can they make, and where their actions and initiatives face obstacles and limitations. Read carefully, this book shows the intricate dynamics between (1) the potential that grassroots movements have in bridging ethnocultural lines and (2) the resilience of institutional structures in divided societies.

Beyond the introduction and the conclusion, the book – based on Milan's doctoral dissertation – contains five chapters, structured in a way that clearly provides the reader with a progression from conceptual, through historical, to empirical. The introduction already reveals Milan's knowledge of the sociopolitical milieu of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as her familiarity with scholarly work on social mobilization and protest movements. It also promises a methodologically rigorous and sound study, based on extensive fieldwork, which included participant observation and interviews with academics, activists, NGO practitioners, international experts, as well as protesters themselves.

Chapter 2 departs from a conceptual discussion of the notion of ethnicity and the mechanisms through which mobilization beyond it could take place. It roots the research puzzle in a review of scholarly work on ethnicity, ethnic identities, and social movements and proceeds to unpack the conceptual toolbox that Milan applies in the rest of the book. A separate section on why protests that were conceived under similar structural and socioeconomic conditions diverged across space, time, and sector offers a crucial contrivance for understanding the mechanics of mobilization in ethnically fractured societies.

Chapter 3 offers a historical snapshot of civic activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, starting from the initiative that existed in the socialist republic in the 1980s, through the Bosnian and pan-Yugoslav peace demonstrations that preceded the war, to the revival of contentious politics in the post-conflict years. In this chapter, Milan offers an insightful account of how different forms of civic activism have been sustained: initially supported by external political and economic actors, various practices of civic engagement have evolved into proper participatory activism grounded in the needs of local community.

The three chapters that follow are case studies, which Milan bases on the conceptual framework developed in chapter 2. First, in chapter 4, she unpacks the dynamics of "The Park Is Ours" mobilization in Banja Luka – a grassroots protest against the sale of a green area of the city to a businessman close to the entity's ruling political elites. Milan locates the dynamics of the protest within the broader cultural and political environment of the Republika Srpska to explain "why the demonstrators received wider support in Banja Luka, without succeeding, however, to shift the movement past the local level and to broaden its support base" (p. 60). Then, in chapter 5, she zooms into the well-known case of the 2013 "Baby Revolution," a country-wide protest demanding that all children receive identification numbers. Through an abundance of empirical materials collected during fieldwork, Milan examines how mobilization around civic rights simultaneously represented a societal cry against the ruling elites and an expression of frustration regarding the inability of politicians to reform the country (p. 83). She notes, however, that this particular moment of contentious politics took place in urban middle-class centers, and that it failed to generate a

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pervasive momentum that would articulate "popular concerns regarding social and systemic change" (p. 102). Her final case study, presented in chapter 6, is the analysis of the 2014 Social Uprising, which started as a manifestation against unemployment and corruption in the industrial city of Tuzla but then spread throughout the entire country. She looked at the conditions that enabled this protest to spread across the country and – unlike the other two cases – cut across social classes.

In the conclusion to the book (chapter 7), Milan engages in a comparison of the three cases, decoupling structures, actors, networks and frames that influence the strategies of protesters and that eventually have an impact on the diffusion of social movements across physical and social spaces. Adding to the understanding of sociologists and political scientists, she highlights the significance of networks among protest leaders, the transcendence of ethnic lines in the substance of protests, and political opportunity structures for contentious politics.

The contributions to the field are, without question, empirically rich and methodologically sound. One aspect of the book that could potentially have been stronger is that which deals with the role of political (especially ethnic) elites as drivers or inhibitors of these movements. While Milan offers an excellent "view from the bottom," even methodologically, complementing this with a "view from the top" could have strengthened her overall argument. Perhaps for this reason, at some moments the book reads as passionate and optimistic about the potential of grassroots movements to create social change. Although one should indeed not underestimate the strength of social mobilization, the examples of protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina indicate how difficult it is to move "beyond ethnic" in a society bearing deep post-conflict scars – a society whose tissue is torn by ethnic divisions, which in turn are engrained in its dysfunctional and weak institutions.

Even so, *Social Mobilization Beyond Ethnicity* offers a refreshing and insightful perspective on society and politics in Europe's most complex state. As such, it will certainly find a place on the bookshelves of political scientists, sociologists, and anyone interested in the intricate engagements between institutions and people in the Western Balkans.

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Religion and Nationalism in Global Perspective (Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics), by J. Christopher Soper and Joel S. Fetzer, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, 267 pp., $105 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1107189430, $29.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1316639122.

The dominant theories of nationalism have been humanistic – that is, oriented to a philosophically informed historical sociology. This holds even for theories influenced by poststructuralism or postcolonialism, which claim to take leave of "Western humanism." Soper and Fetzer offer instead a quantitative paradigm for the study of religion and nationalism that yields significant comparative insight and seems to avoid many of the impasses haunting the standoff of modernists, ethnosymbolists, and postmodernists.

Their model consists of a typology of three distinct patterns for relating religion and nationalism and a limited range of contingent variables that will predict what type of nationalism will emerge at origin and under what circumstances and in what direction given types are liable to change. The conceptual framework is quite spartan, laid out in a single chapter and followed by three pairs of thickly detailed case studies examining one stable and one unstable instance of each type. The