

Although formally abolished in 1925, the diverse Masonic influences in Italian society would not disappear and would later continue to intertwine with fascist ideology, too. Their leaders, such as sculptor Ettore Ferrari (1845–1929), or former Mayor of Rome Ernest Nathan (1845–1921), were Republicans and prominent figures of public and cultural life in Italy; some others, like Minister Salvatore Barzilai, had helped with their antipacifism the rise of fascism. Attacked from the right and left, the Masons lost the influence on shaping the principles of Italian foreign policy, but they contributed, as the author concludes in the final reviews, to further secularization and democratization of the Italian society.

**Konstantin Dragaš**

doi: 10.19090/i.2019.30.314-316

© Faculty of Philosophy, Novi Sad, 2019

ISTRAŽIVANJA – JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL  
RESEARCHES 30, 314–316

---

Relja Željčki, *Politics in the Shadow of Violence, Political Violence in the North Caucasus*, Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2018, 347 pages.  
(Relja Željčki, *Politika u senci nasilja, Političko nasilje na Severnom Kavkazu*, Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2018, 347. str.)

---

The readers in Serbia very rarely have an opportunity to read an interdisciplinary monograph in which history, political science, sociology and security analysis are intertwined. Relja Željčki, the author of the book, a historian by vocation, who continued his professional development in the field of information security research, has obtained his doctoral degree while studying the events happening from 1994 until 2009 in the North Caucasus. The monograph *Political violence in the North Caucasus* has emerged as a result of his doctoral dissertation and represents, for now, a unique work in the field of both Serbian and international historiography. Namely, neither in Serbian nor in post-Yugoslavian historiography exist a single work which seriously deals with the analysis of the post-Soviet space while taking into account politics, conflicts, escalation of violence or regional wars. Speaking about world historio-

graphy, there exist several published works, even analytical studies, which in part deal with individual questions or aspects of the Chechen wars, but none has yet encompassed the whole geopolitical space of the North Caucasus nor the 1994–2009 time period. The most similar analysis is the one made by Matthew Evangelist, who tried in 2002 to indicate (wrongly), through his work *The Chechen Wars*, that Russia walks the path of the SSSR's dissolution.

The first chapter 'Defining the term political violence' (p. 43–110) is outlined as the first segment of the whole journey of the inductive process of creating a synthesis of the events in the North Caucasus. Namely, it is very interesting that the author has chosen this path – from the individual towards the general conclusion, but the fact is that each analyzed detail is identified with the general conclusion as the whole of this synthesis. Therefore, defining the notion itself or the definition of 'political violence' is the starting point of a further systemic analysis since the events at the Caucasus rely more or less on the elaboration of the term 'political violence'. The author had to explain at the very beginning how political violence affected the geopolitical processes in the North Caucasus. The next task in the second part of the first chapter was to elaborate the sources, cause and the motive for the escalation of political violence in the Caucasus, wherein Relja Željčki, as a historian, superbly noticed political processes, economic differences, reciprocal moments of violence in the past, at the relation state – people, as well as reactive consequences as a result of the many decades of turbulent events in the region which comprises of 2% of the entire territory and where 10% of the total Russian population lives in. As the final word of this chapter, the author lists forms and types of political violence in great detail, while processing and explaining the essence of more than 20 qualifications. What undoubtedly stands out is the qualification of political violence according to the content, where he clearly highlights the existence of psychological and physical political violence that is mostly reflected by the use or threat of force.

The second chapter "'The emerging forms of political violence in the North Caucasus' (p. 111–

292) represents the central part of this book and at the same time it is the most comprehensive chapter with the research problem presented in detail. The beginning of the chapter describes the historical overview of the appearance of political violence in the North Caucasus in the period between the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD and the first settlements, followed by the process of Islamisation until the end of the Second Chechen War in 2009. In this chronological context special attention is directed to the period of the Soviet and post-Soviet era. As the main historical cause for the appearance of political violence, the author distinguishes the conflict of the tribal organization of the society and the Stalinist repressions which were cruelly carried out from the 1930s until the 1950s with short interruptions. The author believes Islam was the initial reason for the escalation of violence, which penetrated into almost all of the pores of the traditional Caucasus society until mid 1980s. Rapid Islamisation with increasing attempts of enforcement of the Sharia law was not typical for just the post-Soviet territory. Namely, this phenomenon can be observed in the post-Yugoslav territory affected by war as well, especially in Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo. These were territories where religion was making political and societal reconsolidation, which was mostly reflected in the aspiration of partial or complete ethnic or confessional cleansing of a certain territory. The second part of the same chapter deals with the definition of the basic forms of political violence, where the threat of force, coercion and pressure, psycho-physical abuse – torture, political murder and assassination, and lastly diversion, are singled out. All the previously mentioned forms were often combined with each other with the aim of permanent intimidation, that is, of pressuring towards a self-exodus from the North Caucasus. Moreover, the author shows once more his way of inductive presentation, transitioning to complex forms of political violence: protests, rebellions, terrorism, subversion, repression, terror, guerrilla, uprising, military intervention, and ultimately – war. On almost 70 pages the author has terminologically processed all the mentioned complex forms of political violence and very thoroughly presented their appearance and interpretation both

in Russian and international media, as well as in literature. Existing inaccuracies are emphasized and their correct interpretation and usage are pointed out. When it comes to the question of defining the term of subversion, it is especially interesting to stress the author's approach which analyses the work of foreign intelligence services, as well as all other foreign influences striving for absolute reduction of the Russian influence and control over the Caucasus territory, as well as a definitive secession of the Chechen territory. The reader's attention is especially drawn to the part where the author very aptly represents all the 'forms', i.e. terms, used in the Russian scientific literature when it comes to the 1994-2009 events in Chechnya. Thus, he states, for example, the following: 'war', 'interethnic conflict', 'aggression', 'commercial war', etc. Željki very clearly and concisely explains and states the reasons why the mentioned terms are legally and politically inapplicable, that is, inadequate for naming or describing the mentioned conflict. Besides that, he offers the alternatives: 'civil war', 'local war', or 'limited war'. In the concluding part of the second chapter the author describes extensively the events which are primarily related to the political moves of the Kremlin and Dudayev in the First Chechen War. From all mentioned, it could be said that the author agrees with the Russian and West European intellectuals, therefore considers that the incompetence and lack of leadership of the Russian president Boris Yeltsin, who led this 'antiterrorist operation' rather indifferently, caused to a great extent the initial losses of the Russian army and at the same time the supremacy of the Chechens' secession guerrilla. It is interesting to mention that the author's desire for extremely accurate data regarding the number of the dead, injured, mobilized or rebelled soldiers and civilians is evident. The second chapter of the book ends with the Second Chechen War, but not the conflicts in the North Caucasus. Even though the Anti-Terrorism Committee of the Russian Federation proclaimed the end of the operation and actions against the rebels on 16 April 2009, armed conflicts continued. Permanent fear from fundamentalist attacks is still present, with a special trepidation expressed before the preparations for

the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. Dokka Umarov has self-proclaimed a Caucasus emirate in October 2007, which no one recognized. In the meantime, according to the information coming from the Caucasus Centre, Umarov passed away on 7 September 2013 as the result of poisoning, for which the Islamists blame Ramsan Kadyrov.

The third and final chapter 'Confronting political violence in the North Caucasus' (p. 293–318) represents an epilogue and at the same time the main conclusion of Relja Željki's whole research. It is in this part that the role of the author's profession and his outlook on all of the segments in the process of studying Chechen wars are especially evident. He analyzed the actors and methods in a way that is not characteristic for historical science, but is typical of the military and security analysts. The entire process resembles a complex chess game, where the given circumstances and situations are not avoided, while all the factors, elements, conditions and the methods of avoiding violence as the solution for the geopolitical problem are at the same time analyzed. Željki states that the victory of the central federal forces did not represent the final destruction of the enemy, i.e. its subjugation, but 'only created conditions in which their (the rebels') political goals become unattainable'. This sentence is very important in the final statement since it says that the goal of Russian central authorities was desolation and devastation of the whole region but a moderate pacification and establishment of social and economic stability, so that the aforementioned territory would be returned to the federal economic, social and tax system as quickly as possible and human relations could become normalized. However, it is a fact that around 50,000 people died in the last conflict alone and more than 200,000 inhabitants were displaced. An estimated 80% of the total infrastructure was destroyed. From the cessation of the terrorist action until the arrest of fourteen armed members of Al Takfirwal – Hijra on 26 November 2013 in Moscow several assassinations, armed attacks and threats to the security of citizens happened. All of these circumstances and events indicate that the North Caucasus will remain a permanently unstable territory in the Russian Federation. The solution of the problem is

not yet on the horizon, especially taking into account the difficult economic situation in which Russia has found itself amidst the imposed economic sanctions by the members of the NATO pact and the European Union.

The monograph *Politics in the shadow of violence* undoubtedly represents an important textbook for studying history and politics of the post-Soviet space. Besides that, it is very useful for a terminological introduction to terms that are more or less correlated with the phenomenon of 'political violence'. Even though it is difficult to be 'the pioneer' in studying topics or research areas previously not dealt with, Relja Željki has shown originality when choosing the thematic fields for his research, excellence in the knowledge of the matter and the language, a systemic approach to studying the problem, exquisite analyticity in data processing, the ability of comparison of information, a skillful synthesis of previous research results with his own accomplishments, and finally the readiness to express his own opinions and conclusions.

**Aleksandar M. Gajić**

doi: 10.19090/i.2019.30.316-318

© Faculty of Philosophy, Novi Sad, 2019  
ISTRAŽIVANJA – JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL  
RESEARCHES 30, 316–318