BOOK REVIEW

THE EXTREME GONE MAINSTREAM: COMMERCIALIZATION AND FAR RIGHT YOUTH CULTURE IN GERMANY

Miller-Idriss, C. (2017). *The Extreme Gone Mainstream: Commercialization and Far Right Youth Culture in Germany*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 9781400888931.

Reviewed by Nadeen Makhlouf
Indiana University

Important events have caused many interested observers to reflect on the state of the world and their impact on our socio-political environment. These events include major global economic shocks, political and populist movements, political uprising, etc. In this timely book, *The Extreme Gone Mainstream: Commercialization and Far Right Youth Culture in Germany*, Cynthia Miller-Idriss alerts readers to some of the avenues that far right groups use to spread their extreme ideas and ideologies, and the impact of the large-scale commercialization of their symbols, codes, myths, fantasies, and divisive messages on the radicalization of vulnerable youth and other unwitting members of society. Miller-Idriss views radicalization as a process that results in the indoctrination of troubled and angry youth, and the redirection of their anger toward selected societal institutions and social groups. She explains that this process capitalizes on specific emotional urges that appeal to marginalized men, specifically the desire for belonging as well as overall frustration at mainstream society (Miller-Idriss, 2017a; 2017b).

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Although Miller-Idriss focused her research primarily on the far right groups and subcultures in Germany, her findings and conclusions are relevant in other settings; hence, her repeated reference throughout the book to far right and extreme groups in different societies such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Skinheads, islamophobes, neo-Nazis, neo-fascists, white supremacists, anti-Semites, nativists/ultra-nationalists (anti-immigrants), Aryan nationalists, as well as their codes, symbols, and images. To some of the disgruntled, the appeal of the far right "emanates from (its) expressions of extreme rhetoric" (Miller-Idriss, 2017a, p. 182). Such rhetoric may not be "rational or even politically motivated" (Miller-Idriss, 2017a, p. 182), but may have a strong emotional impact, Miller-Idriss argues. A core concept that the author skillfully conveys is that in today's highly mobile and connected societies, far right symbols, codes, heroic images, and historic myths travel widely, whether they are or are not, fully understood by the average person, through the broad commercialization of such things as T- Shirts and other items of clothing. Even wearing tattoos sometimes conveys coded messages. Extreme far right symbols and codes, as the author articulates, "help facilitate the construction of far-right identity by forging a connection and sense of belonging to other insiders within the scene, and by acting as a mechanism to express rage… against mainstream society" (Miller-Idriss, 2017a, p. 323).

Thus, through the large-scale commercialization of coded objects and extremist messages, the end result, at least to some degree, is "mainstreaming the extreme." The author also notes that banning some of the extremist codes by some authorities has not helped much since forbidden codes are often modified slightly to evade the ban and any penalties associated with it. A particularly receptive group to this subculture is likely to be the disenfranchised, marginalized, and rebellious youths who feel that they have been left out and are eager to gain acceptance by affiliating with some sub-cultural group outside the mainstream. Vulnerable individuals and groups, as the writer explains, often feel that they have been unsuccessful by traditional societal standards. Therefore, they look for new identities by becoming insiders in some fringe groups and subcultures.

This book tells the reader a great deal about the extreme far right sub-cultures and youth radicalization. An additional value added from this work is that it provides insight into the context and environment within which organizations operate and must adapt. Future work may consider elaborating on such points and emphasize the importance that context plays in civil society institutions. Among the key assumptions of the ecology of organizations is that they "are best understood as

embedded within communities, political systems, industries, or coordinative fields of organizations" (Feeney, 1997, p. 490). This underscores a key fact that civil society and other organizations that are increasingly called upon to serve the interests of the public are affected and influenced by the external environment (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004). Such analyses emphasize the role of the cultural space in which representations and opinions of society are formed and evolved to and construct the basis upon which politics and policies operate (Castells, 2008; Giddens, 1979). Additionally, an understanding of the times and context within which organizations are situated can help managers see and appreciate their ability to influence institutions as well as allow volunteers or funders to see the context within which they make investments whether the investments be in time, money, or political capital (Sandfort and Stone, 2008).

This suggestion, however, does not detract from the contributions of this work to our understanding of how commercialization of some symbols and codes can lead to the extreme becoming mainstream. "The Extreme Gone Mainstream" is a must read for scholars, social scientists, and political observers at this time, in which we witness a rise of populists, nationalists, racial supremacists and anti-globalists in several countries. The rise of such groups can reverse the post WWII trend toward globalization, ethnic tolerance, social harmony, and respect for diversity.

Nadeen Makhlouf is a Research Fellow at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. She holds a PhD in Public Administration from American University. Her research interests include global governance and comparative public policy and administration with a focus on North Africa and the Middle East. It also revolves around topics of organization theory and diffusion of management practices particularly among international organizations. Nadeen received her Masters degree in Public Policy from American University and Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Maryland.

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