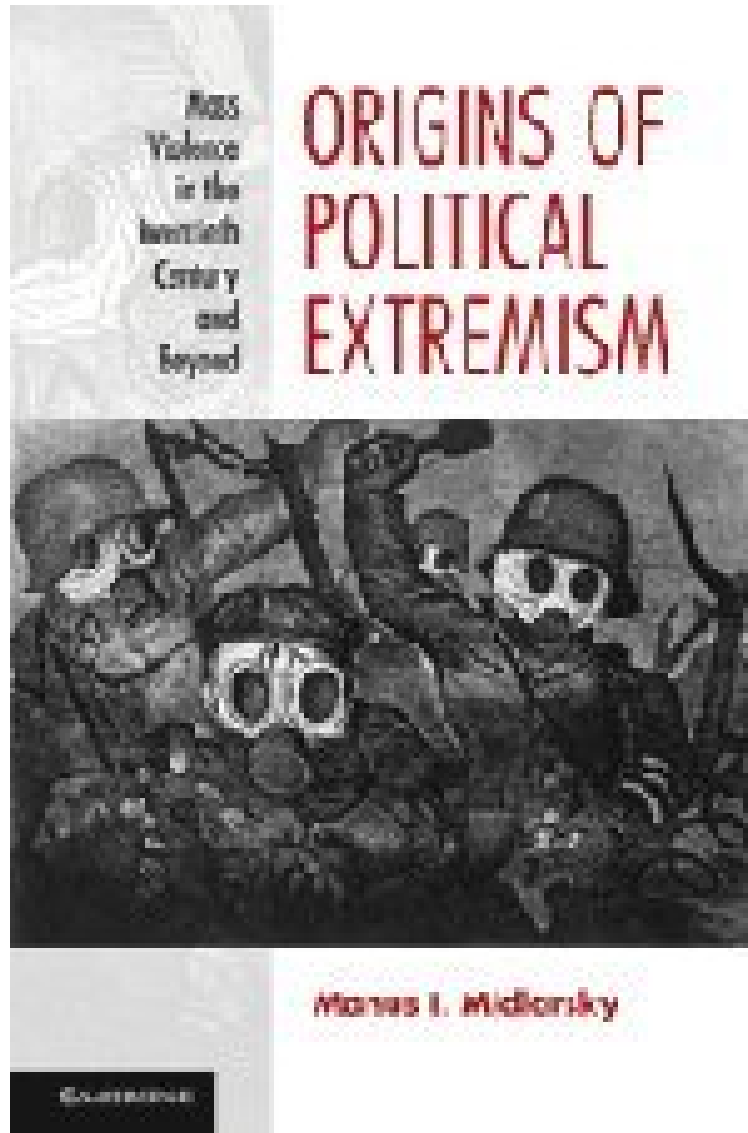


Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond

Manus I. Midlarsky

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#8698390 in Books Cambridge University Press 2011-04-29 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.98 x .87 x 5.981, 1.80 #File Name: 0521877083442 pages | File size: 18.Mb

Manus I. Midlarsky : Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. very good comparative analysis, but not the only place to start By David LastMidlarsky's book, The Killing Trap (2005) is a comparative analysis of genocides, but in it he points to the

problem of incommensurability - comparing large and small cases that are not really comparable. In the *Origins of Political Extremism*, he gets beyond this problem by focusing on the comparative analysis of the factors that lead individuals towards political extremism in thought and action. His explanation centres on ephemeral gains (once we were great, now were not) and mortality salience (lots of us died, and our dead are more important than their dead). He identifies several different forms of political extremism: fascism, communism, radical islam, extreme nationalism and militarism, and uses a wide range of historical cases in some detail: Nazism and Stalinism feature heavily, with anti-semitism and anti-Jewish violence a major contributor to his thinking, particularly in the final section on ethics and morality. Poland in the 1920s, the Balkans in the 1990s, and militaryism in Japan, Pakistan, and Indonesia make cameo appearances. In the final chapter, his prescription for avoiding political extremism in the face of ephemeral gains by democracies is simply to minimize perception of the loss. Those who study genocide don't rate this as highly as Harff and Gurr, or several classic comparative studies of genocidal violence: Kuper, Leo. *Genocide: Its political use in the twentieth century*. Yale University Press, 1982; Fein, Helen. *Genocide: A sociological perspective*. London: Sage, 1993.

Political extremism is one of the most pernicious, destructive and nihilistic forms of human expression. During the 20th century, in excess of 100 million people had their lives taken from them as the result of extremist violence. In this wide-ranging book *Manus I*, Midlarsky suggests that ephemeral gains, together with mortality salience, form basic explanations for the origins of political extremism and constitute a theoretical framework that also explains later mass violence. Midlarsky applies his framework to multiple forms of political extremism including the rise of Italian, Hungarian and Romanian fascism, Nazism, radical Islamism, and Soviet, Chinese and Cambodian communism. Other applications include a rampaging military (Japan, Pakistan, Indonesia) and extreme nationalism in Serbia, Croatia, the Ottoman Empire and Rwanda. Polish anti-Semitism after World War II and the rise of separatist violence in Sri Lanka are also examined.

"Midlarsky elegantly weaves insights from modern social psychology with macro-historical analysis to produce an original theory of the emergence of violent extremist movements. With its innovative theoretical framework and its command of an impressive range of historical evidence, this fascinating book will make a lasting impact on the literature on extremism and political violence." - Giovanni Capoccia, Professor of Comparative Politics, University of Oxford
"From Fascism to Communism to Radical Islam, from South Asia to the Balkans, and with insights from social psychology, history, philosophy, and more, this book is staggering in its breadth. Midlarsky makes a compelling case on how territorial loss can produce political extremism and mass killing. This is a book not just about the past, but what we might behold in the future." - Paul F. Diehl, Henning Larsen Professor of Political Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
"Rarely does the timing of a book's publication coincide so well with the relevance of its subject matter in the real world. In this age of extremes, Midlarsky's masterful volume carefully guides us through what motivates and drives people to political violence; highlighting - as only an experienced scholar can - the key unifying elements in otherwise disparate-seeming cases across time and space." - Monica Duffy Toft, Associate Professor of Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
About the Author
Manus I. Midlarsky is the Moses and Annuta Back Professor of International Peace and Conflict Resolution at Rutgers University. He is the author of *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).