

The relationship between closed-mindedness and militant extremism in a post-conflict society

Goran Knežević¹  | Ljiljana B. Lazarevic²  | Janko Međedović³  |
Boban Petrović³ | Lazar Stankov^{4,5} 

¹Department of Psychology, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

²Institute of Psychology, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

³Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade, Serbia

⁴The University of Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

⁵University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia

Correspondence

Goran Knežević, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Čika Ljubina 18-20, 11000, Belgrade, Serbia.
Email: gknezevi@f.bg.ac.rs

Funding information

Lazar Stankov's pension fund

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the role of socio-political attitudes and motivational tendencies supposed to mark closed-mindedness, as well as other relevant variables of individual differences (Disintegration, i.e., proneness to psychotic-like experiences/behaviors and Death Anxiety), in the Militant Extremist Mindset (MEM). A community sample of 600 young respondents (Serbs, Bosniaks, and Albanians, aged 18–30) was recruited within a multiethnic region of Serbia that experienced armed conflict during the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. The best-fitted SEM model, incorporating measurement and structural relationships between the variables, showed that the latent factor of Closed-mindedness predicted all three aspects of MEM as well as Neighborhood Grudge, that is, resentment toward neighboring ethnicities. The effects of Disintegration and Death Anxiety on MEM were entirely mediated by Closed-mindedness. Compared to previous findings, Closed-mindedness appears to represent the most important set of cognitive and motivational tendencies that channel protracted intergroup tensions into militant extremism.

KEYWORDS

closed-mindedness, disintegration, death anxiety, militant-extremist-mindset, need for closure, quest for personal meaning, socio-political attitudes and beliefs

1 | INTRODUCTION

Militant extremism is defined as “zealous adherence to a set of beliefs and values, with a combination of two key features: advocacy of measures beyond the norm (i.e., extremism) and intention and willingness to resort to violence (i.e., militancy)” (Saucier et al., 2009, p. 256). Our central assumption is that, under certain conditions, almost anyone is capable of developing elements of militant extremist mindset (MEM), because MEM is assumed to be rooted in certain basic human proclivities. Although we agree with statements such as “Terrorists are made, they are not born” (Moghaddam, 2006, p. 45), it seems equally apparent to us that, holding the context constant,

some individuals may be more prone than others to embrace violence to achieve political goals. Accordingly, while in a recent article we sought to understand the role of certain social and contextual factors that facilitate MEM (Stankov et al., 2020), here the focus is on further exploration of dispositional factors which, in the context of pronounced political radicalization, make some individuals more prone to adopting the three components of mind-set that characterize militant extremists: Nastiness, Grudge, and Excuse.

To investigate dispositional tendencies related to MEM we focused on an ethnically mixed region where interethnic tensions are ongoing—South and Southeast of Serbia, populated by Serbs, Bosniaks, and Albanians. One can expect a higher level of political

radicalization in the general population (especially among younger people) of that region for two main reasons: the violent and intensive interethnic armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, and the protracted incendiary rhetoric of the political elites in both the separated Republic of Kosovo, who are fighting for full international recognition, and in Serbia, who vehemently oppose it. Although the main areas of intense armed conflicts in the 1990s were in Croatia (between Serbs and Croats), Bosnia (between Bosniaks and Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, and Serbs and Croats), and Kosovo (between Albanians and Serbs), Preševu Valley in the south of Serbia did experience a short but violent armed conflict between Serbs and the Albanian minority in the immediate aftermath of the Kosovo war during the 1990s and 2000s (Jovanović & Pavlović, 2017).

1.1 | Components of militant extremist mindset

The description and operationalization of the three aspects of MEM differ slightly between the three groups of researchers (led by Stankov, Saucier, and Knežević), mainly reflecting the sources on which they relied to develop a comprehensive description of the extremist mind-set. Thus, Stankov focused mostly on the statements and written material of active militant extremist groups, utilizing a novel, linguistic approach to scale construction (Stankov et al., 2010). Saucier relied on the documentary materials of selected extremist groups that were active over the past 150 years in seven world regions (Saucier et al., 2009). Similar to Saucier, Knežević also deployed a conceptual analysis of terrorist texts, but supplemented this extensively with psychological and literary analyses of terrorists' behavior (see Stankov et al., 2018).

Because of these different approaches, the conceptualization of the Grudge by Stankov differed slightly from those of Saucier and Knežević, who defined it as Vile World. Stankov defined Grudge as anti-Western attitudes and beliefs (labeling it "West"). Recently, we became interested in a more specific type of Grudge, that is, the one oriented towards ethnic neighbors. The results of a factor analysis based on 39 items of MEM showed that Neighborhood Grudge tended to separate from the other MEM factors, that is, Pro-violence, Divine Power, Utopianism, and Grudge (items measuring both West and Vile World) (Stankov et al., 2019). Regarding the Divine Power component, Knežević's definition emphasized utopianistic and chiliastic beliefs in a great future for fallen humanity (labeling it "Utopianism"), but not divine presence and power (named "Divine Power") to the extent stressed by Saucier and Stankov. Pro-violence represents an expression of "Nastiness" (a tendency to advocate violence to achieve ideological goals). West and Vile World are an expression of "Grudge" (grievances that may be held against western countries—captured by the West subscale—or a view of the whole world as a corrupted and rotten place—Vile World subscale). Divine Power and Utopianism are an expression of "Excuse" (a rationalization of violence based on supernatural beliefs, or a motivation to build an ideal state of justice and blissful harmony). While these three simple, one-word labels of MEM components (Nastiness, Grudge, and

Excuse) reflect psychological interpretations of their contents, labels for the sub-components given by each of the authors are strictly descriptive. As these differences in MEM conceptualizations might have an impact on their correlations with the relevant variables that will be explored here, we believe that it was important to explain these differences, their origin, and—what is most important—to ensure that these conceptual differences do not limit our generalizations of the findings on the relevant MEM correlates.

1.2 | Socio-psychological dispositional antecedents of MEM

1.2.1 | Closed-mindedness and MEM

In our previous work, we found that MEM correlated with Social Attitudes (Alphaisms and Betaisms; Saucier, 2000), Values (Power, Traditionalism, Conformity, low Self-Direction, low Universalism, and low Benevolence), and Social Cynicism (see Stankov et al., 2010). Here, we extend the list of the constructs that might constitute a nomological net which would enable better understanding of the socio-psychological dispositional antecedents of MEM, which was the major goal of this study. These constructs include general socio-political attitudes and beliefs (see Method section for further details): Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), Ethnocentrism (EtCent), Prejudice against immigrants (PreJIm), Conservatism (Conser), Religiosity (Relig), Social identity (SoCIn), and motivational constructs such as Need for closure (NfC), and Quest for Personal Meaning (QfPM). Kruglanski (2004) identified many of these constructs as being closely related to the concept of closed-mindedness. Although closed-mindedness is primarily defined as a motivated tendency, it may also reflect a dimension of individual difference, a dispositional tendency that can manifest itself in a variety of ways, according to Webster and Kruglanski (1994). Need for closure—a tendency to come to a quick closure in decisions and judgments, including an aversion toward ambiguity—represents the core desire driving individual differences in various manifestations of closed-mindedness, such as conservative ideologies (Roets & Van Hiel, 2006), RWA (Jost et al., 2003) or preferences for right-wing political parties (Kemmelmeyer, 1997). The stressful and challenging situations, such as upheaval, turmoil, and experience of rootlessness that resulted from the bloody collapse of the former Yugoslavia and the establishment of new states, might create a kind of mental chaos in many individuals, evoking a yearning for stable anchorage in fundamental beliefs and meanings, and a need to regain a personal sense of meaning and purpose. It might also evoke a heightened need for closure and facilitate the embracement of clear-cut social realities (contained in ethnic or religious identities), as well as lead to increased in-group favoritism and a rejection of and prejudice against out-group members. For these reasons, higher scores on Religiosity (Relig), Quest for Personal Meaning (QfPM), Ethnocentrism (EtCent), Social identity (SoCIn), and Prejudice against immigrants (PreJIm) should be expected, especially among closed-minded individuals. Thus, one of the goals of our study was to

investigate the what extent to which the aforesaid constructs could be considered as manifestations of such an overarching individual difference concept. Recently, Webber et al. (2018) argued that the quest for significance/personal meaning influences proneness to extremist beliefs through need for closure. While these authors—relying, apart from survey data, on some experimental evidence—suggested more precise causal specifications of the role of quest for personal significance and need for closure in extremist beliefs, we subsumed these variables under the overarching construct of close-mindedness. In other words, in our manuscript the emphasis is on the general relevance of the domain of close-mindedness and some other variables of individual differences (such as Disintegration and Death Anxiety) to MEM, not on specifying the exact ways these relationships are established.

As previously stated, one of the crucial features of the mindset of militant extremists is a single-minded dedication to a cause they regard as sacred (fanaticism), and stubborn adherence to their beliefs (dogmatism). These characteristics of MEM reflect the cognitive-motivational style of closed-minded individuals (Kruglanski, 2004). In our previous work, when searching through a variety of sources, we identified several themes characteristic of MEM (16 in Saucier et al., 2009; 20 in Stankov et al., 2018). These themes, at the same time, reflected information processing styles and motivational drives that could be ascribed to closed-minded individuals, such as Manicheism (black and white worldview; either/or attitude), puritanism, inability to decenter (difficulty in taking another group's perspective), antimodernism and antidemocratism (Stankov et al., 2018), or glorifying the past while believing that modernity is disastrous (Saucier et al., 2009). For these conceptual reasons, as well as our previous findings (Stankov et al., 2010) and the recent contributions of other research groups on the relationships between RWA and MEM components (Vukcevic-Markovic et al., 2021), we expect significant correlations between MEM and the aforementioned dispositional constructs that could be regarded as manifestations of closed-mindedness. However, given the complex and multidimensional nature of these socio-psychological dispositions, it would be somewhat naive to expect closed-mindedness to be the only mechanism responsible for the correlations between them and MEM. For example, it seems unlikely that closed-mindedness would be the only mechanism responsible for the expected correlation between Prejudice toward immigrants and the MEM factor Provivence, bearing in mind previous findings relating the former (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008) and the latter (Mededović & Knežević, 2019) to low Agreeableness and related constructs such as psychopathy and sadism.

1.2.2 | Disintegration, death anxiety, and MEM

Regarding personality, it is of interest that dispositional proneness to psychotic-like experiences/behaviors—conceptualized as a personality trait and named Disintegration (Knežević et al., 2017)—was found to be a correlate of MEM (Mededović & Knežević, 2019; Stankov et al., 2010). Low Openness (Furnham et al., 2020; Stankov

et al., 2010), low Agreeableness (Furnham et al., 2020), low Honesty (Stankov et al., 2010), Psychopathy, and Sadism (Mededović & Knežević, 2019) were found to be related to Provivence but were mostly unrelated to Grudge and Excuse. As we have already explored the role of basic personality traits (Furnham et al., 2020; Stankov et al., 2010) and dispositional constructs related to the violent aspects of militant extremism – psychopathy and sadism (Mededović & Knežević, 2019), only the novel construct of Disintegration was included in this study. The expectation that Death anxiety will contribute to closed-mindedness is based on studies which have: (a) investigated the role of mortality salience in facilitating the use of cognitive schemata to establish a sense of safety, order, stability, and predictability, that is, in enhancing the need for closure (Kruglanski, 2004) or (b) shown that persons who are particularly upset when confronted with the prospect of their own mortality have a high need for closure (Dechesne et al., 2000), or tend to be more conservative (Jost et al., 2007).

1.3 | The aims of the study

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between the prominent socio-psychological dispositional constructs and MEM and the extent to which these correlations reflect the presence of the overarching, generalized cognitive and motivational tendency that is captured by the notion of closed-mindedness. We expected to find evidence of significant correlations for the strong latent closed-mindedness factor with all three MEM factors (Nastiness, Grudge, and Excuse) plus Neighborhood Grudge. However, we also assumed that part of the relationships between some of these predictors and dependent variables are due to dispositional tendencies other than pure closed-mindedness, such as antagonism/aggressiveness in the case of prejudice against immigrants. Based on previous findings (Furnham et al., 2020; Stankov et al., 2010) we also expected to find relationships between Religiosity and Excuse and Grudge, above the correlations that can be explained by Closed-mindedness. The expectation regarding the relationship between Religiosity and Excuse is partially based on the overlap in their content, especially when it comes to Divine Power aspects of Excuse.

We also expected to find correlations between some of the predictors beyond the latent closed-mindedness factor. Specifically, although they are expected to converge to the latent factor of closed-mindedness, they are not simple indicators of it; rather, they are complex dispositional structures that are expected to reflect the presence of mental structures other than closed-mindedness. For example, we expected that a part of the relationship between Religiosity and Ethnocentrism reflects the cultural and contextual interrelatedness of the two—independent from closed-mindedness—in the Balkans, where religious characteristics (Bosniaks and Albanians are Muslims, while Serbs are Orthodox Christians) represent an important or even crucial aspect of one's ethnic identity (see, e.g., Ivekovic, 2002). For the reasons presented earlier, we assumed that the Disintegration trait and Death anxiety can be modeled as the

antecedents of closed-mindedness and MEM. We supposed that the impact of these two predictors on MEM is likely to be both direct and indirect, via Closed-mindedness.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Sample and procedure¹

A sample of 600 individuals, 51% female, was recruited. Respondents comprised 300 members of the dominant Serb ethnic group, of whom 200 lived outside the conflict zone and 100 lived in the conflict zone, and 300 members of minority groups, namely, Bosniaks/Muslims ($N = 200$ living outside the conflict zone and Albanians ($N = 100$), living in the conflict zone. Their average age was 23.53 ($SD = 4.58$) years, ranging from 18 to 30. We collected the data from young adults because young people are considered especially prone to radicalization (Chassman, 2016). The mean education of the participants was 11.57 years of formal education. This corresponds to the mean educational level in the general population of Serbia.

One of the major public opinion research agencies in Serbia, DEMOSTAT, was hired to collect the data. Trained interviewers went to participants' homes, explained the purpose of the study, and asked the participants to answer the questions regarding the measured variables. Participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous. All participants signed an informed consent form. The research was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Department of Psychology, the University of Belgrade, Serbia (Protocol #2018-006).

2.2 | Measures

Militant Extremist Mind-Set was measured by the MEM scale (see Stankov et al., 2010). The original MEM scale consists of 24 items: *Pro-violence* (10 items, item example: "Our enemy's children are like scorpions; they need to be squashed before they grow up"), *Vile World* (6 items, item example: "Evil has been re-incarnated in the cult of markets and the rule of multinational companies"), and *Divine Power* (7 items, item example: "All suffering in this life is small in comparison to the eternal pleasures one will receive after death"). Two more scales were added to capture the aspects of MEM resulting from the slightly different approaches of the authors described in the introduction: anti-western aspects of *Vile World–West* (8 items), and utopianistic aspects related to *Divine Power–Utopianism* (8 items).

The aforementioned constructs are supposed to be common to various extremist groups around the world. Apart from the measures of these constructs, we administered a scale of a specific type of grudge, labeled Neighbourhood Grudge. The items capture grievances towards a concrete ethnic group with which the participants conflicted. Serbs evaluated grievances towards Albanians/Muslims while the latter ethnicities evaluated antagonistic attitudes towards Serbs (item example for Albanians assessing Serbs: "Serbs have

always been characterized by untrustworthiness"). These grievances were measured by four items from the Ethos of Conflict scale (EOC: Bar-Tal et al., 2012), adapted to the context of local conflicts in the Balkans by Međedović and Petrović (2013). Altogether, 43 items were used to assess components of MEM in this study. They are all listed in Stankov et al. (2019).

Need for closure scale (NfC)—A 5-item selection from the short 15-item version of the scale (Roets & Van Hiel, 2011). The example item reads, "I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life."

Conservatism scale (Conser, Everett, 2013)—A 5-item measure of social conservatism from Everett's 12 conservatism scale was administered. These five items are Abortion (reversely coded), Patriotism, Traditional marriage, Religion, and The family unit. Participants were asked, "To what extent do you support the following social phenomena?" (1—Do not support at all; 5—Support to a high extent).

Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA, Wagner, et al., 2017)—A short measure containing three items assessing conventionality ("Well-established behavior should not be questioned"), authoritarian aggression ("We should take strong action against misfits and slackers in society"), and authoritarian submission ("We need strong leaders to live a safe life in society").

Prejudice against immigrants (PrejIm, Wagner, et al., 2017)—A short 7-item measure assessing intergroup threat (with two items, "Immigrants are threatening our freedoms and rights," and "Immigrants who are living here threaten our prosperity"), negative intergroup emotions (with three items: "I don't care about immigrants," "I feel contempt for immigrants," and "I detest immigrants"), and two items reflecting a general assessment ("How would you describe your feelings towards immigrants in general," and "How would you assess immigrants overall?").

Quest for Personal Meaning scale (QfPM, McDonald & Wong, 2012)—A short 3-item version of the Personal Meaning Profile (sample item: "I believe I can make a difference in the world").

Ethnocentrism was measured by two markers: (a) the single item commonly used for measuring Social Identification (SI_{den}, Postmes et al., 2013), slightly adjusted in the direction of ethnic identification: "Belonging to this nation is important to me"; and (b) a 5-item measure of Collective Narcissism (De Zavala & Eidelson, 2009). The word "group" in scale items was replaced by "people" (item example: "My people deserve special treatment") to capture ethnic narcissism.

Religiosity is assessed by the single item "I am a religious person."

Disintegration (Disint, Knežević et al., 2017)—A short 10-item measure of proneness to psychotic-like experiences/behaviors conceptualized as *Disintegration* (D) was administered. A sample item reads, "Sometimes I feel like someone else inside of me makes decisions instead of me."

Death Anxiety Scale (DeathA)—A short 5-item measure of death anxiety (Jost et al., 2007). A sample item reads, "I avoid thinking about death altogether."

All scales had a 5-point Likert type answering format ranging from 1—Fully disagree, to 5—Fully agree. Reliability coefficients are reported in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics and reliabilities ($N = 600$)

	M	SD	Sk	Ku	Cronbach's α
Personality					
Disintegration	2.81	3.35	0.20	0.43	.86
Death Anxiety	3.35	1.05	-0.37	-0.47	.83
Closed-mindedness					
Need for Closure	3.9	0.81	-0.40	-0.25	.73
Conservatism	4.12	0.71	-0.66	-0.02	.58
Right Wing Authoritarianism	3.00	0.68	-0.60	0.37	.68
Ethnocentrism	4.00	0.90	-0.76	0.19	.80
Quest for Personal Meaning	3.64	1.03	-0.46	-0.42	.82
Ethnic Identity	4.20	1.16	-1.40	1.01	/
Religiosity	3.58	1.3	-0.60	-0.70	/
Prejudice against Immigrants	1.92	0.80	0.68	-0.35	.79
MEM					
Providence	2.03	0.81	0.32	-0.71	.83
Vile World	3.65	0.71	-0.22	-0.10	.73
Divine Power	3.00	0.76	-0.31	0.35	.65
Utopianism	3.08	0.71	-0.29	0.20	.73
West	3.40	0.75	-0.09	-0.07	.84
Neighborhood Grudge	3.51	0.94	-0.24	-0.40	.71

Note: Scores for the domains and facets of both instruments were calculated as average values of the scale items. Range of variables is from 1 to 5.

Abbreviations: M, means; Ku, Kurtosis; SD, standard deviation; SK, Skewness.

2.3 | Analytic strategy

First, bivariate correlations among all variables are calculated. An SEM model incorporating the main hypotheses on the relationships between predictors and MEM is constructed. This model is based on the following assumptions: (a) predictors that are supposed to reflect closed-mindedness (socio-political attitudes and motivational tendencies) will have significant loadings on the latent factor of Closed-mindedness; (b) paths from this latent factor to all three MEM factors, as well as Neighborhood Grudge, are expected to be substantial; (c) paths from antecedent variables, that is, Disintegration and Death Anxiety, to the latent Closed-mindedness factor will be significant. We also allow for direct paths from Disintegration and Death Anxiety to MEMs; (d) there will be correlations between the socio-political attitudes and MEM beyond those explained by the latent factor of Closed-mindedness. These correlations will be modeled as error covariances between the pairs of variables.

Several goodness-of-fit (GoF) indices evaluating misspecification in the structural model (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual, SRMR) and the measurement model (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, RMSEA, and Comparative Fit Index, CFI) were examined. Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested that CFI should be greater than 0.95 (values from 0.90 to 0.95 might be acceptable if other GoFs are satisfactory; Marsh et al., 2010), RMSEA should be less than 0.06, and SRMR should be less than 0.08.

Mplus version 7 software was used for SEM analysis (Muthen & Muthen, 2010). All other analyses were performed in SPSS Version 21.0.0.1 software.

3 | RESULTS

Descriptive statistics are given in Table 1. The highest scores were obtained on Ethnic Identity, Ethnocentrism, and Conservatism. The lowest endorsed items were those assessing prejudice against immigrants. As expected, MEM indices were visibly present in this population, especially Vile World. Even though the scales were comparatively short, their reliability estimates were mostly satisfactory.

Correlations among the variables are presented in Table 2. Most of the correlations between predictors and MEM are of medium magnitude. However, Death anxiety turned out to be mostly unrelated to MEM. Except for the Providence component of MEM, Prejudice against immigrants was also unrelated to the components of MEM. Because there were medium magnitude intercorrelations within the predictor set, we hoped to obtain the most adequate understanding of the structural relationships between predictors and MEM by testing the aforementioned SEM model.

The postulated model of the relationships between predictors and MEM had the following GoFs: ($\chi^2_{(90)} = 339.08$; $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.77$; $RMSEA_{(90\% \text{ C.I.})} = 0.068_{(0.060-0.076)}$; $CFI = 0.884$; $SRMR = 0.053$). The model is not acceptable according to the criteria of Hu and Bentler (1999).

Allowing for the additional two correlations (a) between Ethnic Identity (Siden) and Religiosity (Relig) (expected, but not precise in terms of which of the two aspects of Ethnocentrism—Ethnic Identity (Siden) or Ethnic Narcissism (EtCent)—would correlate with Religiosity) and (b) Need for Closure (NfClos) and Conservatism (Conser) (bearing in mind the theoretical and empirical closeness of these two constructs, e.g., Kossowska & van Hiel, 2003), the GoFs became acceptable according to Hu and Bentler's criteria ($\chi^2_{(90)} = 260.25$; $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.87$; $RMSEA_{(90\% \text{ C.I.})} = 0.056_{(0.048-0.064)}$; $CFI = 0.921$; $SRMR = 0.048$). This slightly modified model (Figure 1) was treated as a final representation of the relationships between personality predictors, variables reflecting Closed-mindedness, and MEM.

The effects² of Disintegration on Grudge and Neighborhood Grudge MEM components were entirely mediated via Closed-mindedness (indirect effects were 0.14, 0.22, respectively, $p < .001$, direct effects were nonsignificant). In the case of Providence and Excuse, indirect effects were stronger (0.14 and 0.19, $p < .001$,

TABLE 2 Pearson's product-moment correlations between the variables

	DeathA	NfClos	Conser	RWA	EtCent	QfPM	Siden	Relig	PrejIm	Provio	VileW	DivPow	Utopi	West	Neigh-Gru
Disint	0.24**	0.12**	0.14**	0.26**	0.29**	0.25**	0.10*	0.09*	0.18**	0.26**	0.14**	0.16**	0.28**	0.18**	0.30**
DeathA		0.26**	0.07	0.16**	0.15**	0.16**	0.14**	0.04	0.10*	0.05	0.04	-0.04	0.09*	0.05	0.17**
NfClos			0.45**	0.24**	0.37**	0.36**	0.28**	0.17**	0.20**	0.18**	0.15**	0.09*	0.25**	0.11**	0.25**
Conser				0.24**	0.35**	0.36**	0.38**	0.21**	0.16**	0.17**	0.16**	0.23**	0.26**	0.22**	0.23**
RWA					0.36**	0.18**	0.29**	0.36**	0.18**	0.23**	0.24**	0.23**	0.33**	0.29**	0.36**
EtCent						0.34**	0.43**	0.25**	0.27**	0.36**	0.19**	0.19**	0.40**	0.30**	0.51**
QfPM							0.23**	0.20**	0.18**	0.24**	0.15**	0.10*	0.25**	0.19**	0.23**
Siden								0.46**	0.16**	0.14**	0.17**	0.21**	0.28**	0.24**	0.38**
Relig									0.08*	0.16**	0.29**	0.34**	0.34**	0.35**	0.20**
PrejIm										0.52**	-0.08	0.06	0.12**	0.00	0.18**
Provio											0.07	0.18**	0.30**	0.14**	0.30**
VileW												0.23**	0.32**	0.66**	0.27**
DivPow													0.60**	0.34**	0.19**
Utopi														0.49**	0.31**
West															0.32**

Abbreviations: Conser, Conservatism; DeathA, Death Anxiety; Disint, Disintegration; DivPow, Divine Power; EtCent, Ethnocentrism; NeighGru, Neighboring Grudge; NfClos, Need for Closure; PrejIm, Prejudice against Immigrants; Provio, Provocence; RWA, Right Wing Authoritarianism; QfPM, Quest for Personal Meaning; Relig, Religiosity; Siden, Social (ethnic) Identity; Utopi, Utopianism; VileW, Vile World; West, West.

*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

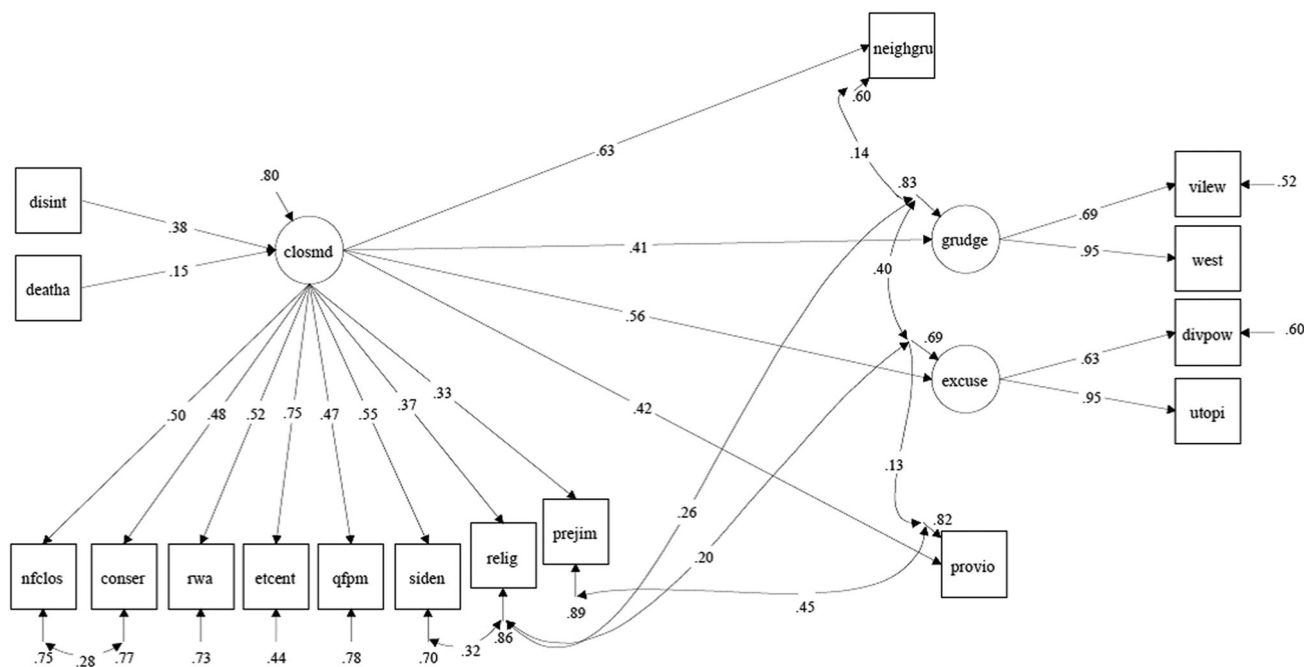


FIGURE 1 The best-fitting model of the relationships between indices of Closed-mindedness, Disintegration, Death Anxiety, and components of MEM (right-hand side). Conser, Conservatism; DeathA, Death anxiety; Disint, Disintegration; DivPow, Divine Power MEM; EtCent, Ethnic Narcissism; Neighgru, Neighborhood Grudge; NfClos, Need for Closure; PrejIm, Prejudice against immigrants; Provio, Provioence MEM; QfPM, Quest for Personal Meaning; Relig, Religiosity; RWA, Right-Wing Authoritarianism; Siden, Ethnic identity; Utopi, Utopiansim MEM; VileW, Vile World MEM; All presented paths are significant

respectively), but direct effects (0.11 and 0.10) were also significant at $p < .01$ and $p < .05$, respectively. Fixing the direct paths from Disintegration to Provioence and Excuse produced only a slight improvement of the model fit ($\chi^2_{(88)} = 252.83$; $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.87$; $RMSEA_{(90\% \text{ C.I.})} = 0.056_{(0.048-0.064)}$; $CFI = 0.923$; $SRMR = 0.047$), which did not satisfy the recommended criteria for rejecting a more parsimonious model in favor of a more complex one (Chen, 2007).

4 | DISCUSSION

Several personal, attitudinal, and motivational antecedents of militant extremist mindset were investigated in the multiethnic regions in the south of Serbia which have been radicalized due to nationalistic movements, culminating in recent violent armed conflict, post-conflict economic decline, and chronic regional political instability. Predictor variables measuring various socio-political attitudes and motivational dispositions showed a tendency to converge to a higher-order factor, identified as Closed-mindedness. This factor was found to be strongly related to all three aspects of MEM (Nastiness, Grudge, and Excuse) as well as grudge directed to neighboring ethnicities (Neighborhood Grudge).

Kruglanski described the variables that represent the individual difference approach to Closed-mindedness. An excessive quest for clarity and a tendency to perceive the world in unambiguous “black-white” terms are primarily reflected in constructs such as authoritarianism, conservatism, dogmatism, low openness to experience,

intolerance of ambiguity, and uncertainty avoidance. Accordingly, we found RWA, Conservatism, and Need for closure to have large loadings on the latent structure we labeled Close-mindedness, and smaller loadings (as expected) on Religiosity and Prejudice against immigrants. Interestingly, Ethnic Narcissism and Ethnic Identification were found to have the largest loadings on this factor, thus giving it a flavor of ethnocentric, in-group bias. As Need for Closure was found to induce in-group-favoritism (Kruglanski, 2004), the slight deflection of our factor toward ethnocentrism did not call its labeling as Closed-mindedness into question.

Closed-mindedness was previously noted to have “... a plethora of significant social implications” (Kruglanski, 2004), such as sticking to prior impressions or preconceived notions when thinking about others (an ingrained capacity for prejudice and stereotyping in our social judgments), or potential to jump to conclusions about others (forming impressions about others based on limited and incomplete evidence). Our findings add a new domain of significant social implications of Closed-mindedness—proneness to militant extremism.

Through analysis of extensive empirical material, including numerous statements and proclamations of militant and terrorist groups, we identified and described key themes characterizing MEM. In our previous work, we sought to transform these themes into a narrative, which would go like this: “We have a glorious past, but modernity has been disastrous, bringing on a great catastrophe in which we are tragically obstructed from reaching our rightful place, obstructed by an enemy so evil that it does not even deserve to be called human... Extreme measures are required; indeed, any means

will be justified for realizing our sacred end... It is a duty to kill the perpetrators of evil, and we cannot be blamed for carrying out this violence. Those who sacrifice themselves in our cause will attain glory, and supernatural powers should come to our aid in this struggle. In the end, we will bring our people to a new world that is a paradise." (Saucier et al., 2009, p. 265). It has been observed that "our great rituals, dramas, and religions—our most profound narratives and proto-narratives—are erected upon the (meta)story of paradise, encounter with chaos, fall, and redemption" (Peterson, 2008, p. 541), which implies that such a narrative has universal meaning and significance. The universal appeal of such stories further suggests the existence of an ingrained sensitivity of our cognitive-affective-motivational system to these narratives, implying that, under certain (un)favorable conditions, most of us would succumb to them. However, there are individual differences in this proneness: although some could find these stories to be full of deep meaning, others might see them as silly, banal, dangerous, and repulsive simplifications. It appears that, to a substantial extent, the dimension of closed-open mindedness drives our deepest emotional and motivational reactions to all three themes of such seductive narratives—chaos/fall, redemption, and paradise. As Closed-mindedness in our study is somewhat deflected toward ethnocentrism, it is not surprising that its correlation with Neighborhood Grudge is slightly higher than the correlations with other MEM factors.

Nevertheless, some variables representing the domain of Closed-mindedness are, as expected, conceptually closer to Grudge, some to Excuse (Religiosity), and others to Pro-violence (Prejudice against immigrants). This is demonstrated by their correlations with MEM after the variance of Closed-mindedness was taken into account. For example, Excuse and Religiosity share more than what is captured by closed-mindedness. This additional covariance was expected, based on the large correlations regularly obtained whenever Religiosity is related to MEM (Furnham et al., 2020; Stankov et al., 2010). This is not due to the influence of Excuse on Religiosity or vice versa, but to their overlapping psychological content. This is why the decision to model these additional relationships (above the correlation due to closed-mindedness) as error covariances instead of specifying causal paths between the predictors and MEM appears to be more appropriate.

We also expected Proviolence and Prejudice against immigrants to correlate not only because of Closed-mindedness. Here, we assumed that antagonistic, aggressive, and dishonest tendencies are responsible for these additional relationships. Again, as these two variables were postulated to be influenced by a third variable (likely low Agreeableness or low Honesty), there was no reason to specify the causal arrow between them, that is, error covariance seems to be a more adequate option. Previous findings led us to expect that the relationship between the two was due not only to Closed-mindedness but also to aggressive/antagonistic/destructive tendencies. Međedović and Knežević (2019) demonstrated the strong correlations between Proviolence on one hand and psychopathy and sadism on the other, while Stankov et al. (2010) showed the role of low Honesty in Proviolence. The relationships between prejudice and

low Agreeableness and low Honesty were demonstrated by Sibley and Duckitt (2008), and Knezevic and Keller (2021), respectively.

Even purely conceptual considerations would suggest a relationship between Closed-mindedness and the personality trait Openness (low). Empirical evidence on this relationship appears to be overwhelming (e.g., Onraet et al., 2011). However, it seems that low dispositional Openness—the absence of curiosity, "breadth, depth, and permeability of consciousness" (McCrae & Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 2), and rejection of new information—is not enough to achieve a substantial correlation with MEM. Specifically, correlations between low Openness and MEM seem to be low (with Proviolence) or non-existent (Grudge and Excuse) (Furnham et al., 2020; Stankov et al., 2010). We demonstrated the link of closed-mindedness with the dispositional tendency to disintegrative/psychotic-like experiences/behaviors. In terms of the basic personality traits (e.g., HEXACO complemented by Disintegration or a similar construct measuring psychotic-like experiences/behaviors, Ashton & Lee, 2020), the factor of Closed-mindedness obtained in our study appears to be more than just the opposite of Openness. We believe that it is best described as a combination of primarily low Openness with Disintegration. It seems that disintegrative tendencies constitute an important part of what Rokeach described as "irrelevant internal pressures that interfere with the realistic reception of information". Such a disposition limits the extent to which "the person can receive, evaluate, and act on relevant information received from the outside on its own intrinsic merits, unencumbered by irrelevant factors...arising from within the person" (Rokeach, 1960, pp. 57–58), and would likely facilitate a more closed-belief system. Our findings suggest that these "irrelevant internal pressures" of importance have a very specific signature—disintegrative, that is, psychotic-like. Thus, studies relating personality traits with constructs such as MEM or ethnic prejudice and RWA failed to detect the role of Neuroticism as another possible source of "irrelevant internal pressures" (e.g., Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Stankov et al., 2010), unlike Disintegration (e.g., Knezevic & Keller, 2021; Međedović & Knežević, 2019; Stankov et al., 2010). It seems that many manifestations of Closed-mindedness and MEM are related to the use of a cognitive style that seeks to establish a sense of order, meaning, stability, and predictability but which is likely to be continuously shaken by a dispositional tendency to see, cognize, and feel connections among factually unrelated phenomena, leading to inadequate reality testing and a broad spectrum of related psychotic-like/disintegrative experiences/behaviors. The important insight from the present study is that a significant part of the previously detected relationships between Disintegration and MEM components (Međedović & Knežević, 2019) is mediated by Closed-mindedness; in other words, better understanding how Disintegration may shape MEM would be achieved by studying the relationships between Disintegration and Closed-mindedness.

Closed-mindedness was also found to be related to death anxiety, although this relationship is considerably weaker than that with Disintegration. It appears that death anxiety can further facilitate the same cognitive style of desperately searching for stability, meaning,

and predictability, manifesting itself in heightened closed-mindedness, as indicated by Kruglanski (2004). Nevertheless, death anxiety was mostly unrelated to the MEM beliefs in the present data. Therefore, we cannot state that Closed-mindedness mediates the link between death anxiety and MEM: the association between death anxiety and MEM is an indirect one, which can only be established via Closed-mindedness. This finding contradicts previous theory and findings suggesting that death anxiety should be part of the motivational structure behind militant extremism (e.g., McBride, 2011). Faced with death anxiety and other existential threats, individuals are more prone to adopt social identities and to acquire the values of their social groups via the quest for personal meaning (Kruglanski & Orehek, 2011). Extremist groups provide a salient social identity and a sense of purpose in changing the world and, thus, can be more alluring to individuals who are challenged by existential dread. However, the empirical data showed that the awareness of own mortality can induce both antisocial and destructive motives and prosocial and altruistic ones (Burke et al., 2010). Besides, previous research mostly examined death anxiety by inducing the feeling of own mortality (the mortality salience paradigm, which is the main methodology applied to test Terror Management Theory: Greenberg et al., 1986). Inducing mortality salience represents a stronger stimulus, which can produce a higher effect size in the link between death anxiety and extremist beliefs than self-report death anxiety scales.

As expected, we found MEM indices to be increased in the post-conflict Serbian region. The mean values in Table 1 on Proviolence, Vile World, and Divine Power are larger than the means obtained on the sample of students from Serbia reported in Stankov et al. (2010). However, the values on Divine Power and Proviolence are not dissimilar to the mean values based on the student samples of eight nations from the same study. The notable outlier is Vile World, which is found to be approximately 1 SD larger in this population compared to the average score of the eight nations. Post-conflict society in this region appears to be characterized by a high level of Grudge, resentment, and bitterness. Some contextual and social mechanisms that facilitate such political radicalization have been detected and discussed in our previous work (Stankov et al., 2020). This facilitation, as our present findings show, is especially likely in those individuals (and certain social groups, such as football supporters and various right-wing oriented groups, Međedović et al., 2020) prone to develop a closed system of beliefs.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

The relationships between basic trait-like tendencies (Disintegration and Death Anxiety), Closed-mindedness, and components of Militant Extremist Mindset (MEM) were investigated in a large community sample from the south and southwest of Serbia, a multiethnic area that has been radicalized by recent interethnic armed conflict and prolonged political instability. Grudge, bitterness, and resentment (indicated by Vile World scale, capturing one of the

three major aspects of MEM) predominantly define the forms of political radicalization in this turbulent region. Although not a disposition itself, MEM is related to certain dispositions, of which Closed-mindedness is one of the most important. Closed-mindedness seems to facilitate all three aspects of MEM (Proviolence, Grudge, and Excuse) but especially a specific kind of Grudge - resentment toward neighboring nations. Proneness to psychotic-like experiences/behaviors (Disintegration) seems to influence MEM mostly through increased Closed-mindedness. Although predominantly reflecting Closed-mindedness, some of our socio-political attitudes and motivational tendencies correlating with MEM appear to indicate the role of other dispositional tendencies— independent from closed-mindedness—such as Prejudice against immigrants, reflecting Antagonism/Hostility.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was sponsored by a donation from Lazar Stankov's pension fund to the Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade, Serbia.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interests.

ETHICS STATEMENT

All materials, data, and code are available at <https://osf.io/nea73/>. Data were collected following the Declaration of Helsinki. The study was approved by the IRB of the Department of psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia, Protocol #2020-70. Data were collected following the Declaration of Helsinki. The study was approved by the IRB of the Department of psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia, Protocol #2020-70.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All materials, data, and code are available at <https://osf.io/nea73/>.

ORCID

Goran Knežević  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8951-3774>

Ljiljana B. Lazarević  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1629-3699>

Janko Međedović  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6022-7934>

Lazar Stankov  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8823-2540>

ENDNOTES

¹The same sample was used in two publications: Stankov et al. (2019) and Stankov et al. (2020). This study explores a different research question and the present analyses have not been reported before. Details about the collection of the quota sample are provided in Stankov et al. (2019).

²In this article the word "effect" is predominantly used in statistical rather than causal sense.

REFERENCES

Ashton, M. C., & Lee, K. (2020). Recovering the HEXACO personality factors—And psychoticism—From variable sets assessing normal and

- abnormal personality. *Journal of Individual Differences*, 41(2), 68–77. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1614-0001/a000305>
- Bar-Tal, D., Sharvit, K., Halperin, E., & Zafraan, A. (2012). Ethos of conflict: The concept and its measurement. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 18, 40–61. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026860>
- Burke, B. L., Martens, A., & Faucher, E. H. (2010). Two decades of terror management theory: A meta-analysis of mortality salience research. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(2), 155–195. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868309352321>
- Chassman, A. (2016). Islamic State, identity, and the global jihadist movement: How is Islamic State successful at recruiting “ordinary” people? *Journal for Deradicalization*, 9, 205–259.
- Chen, F. F. (2007). Sensitivity of goodness of fit indexes to lack of measurement invariance. *Structural Equation Modeling*, 14, 464–504. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705510701301834>
- Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). *NEO personality inventory-revised: Professional manual*. Psychological Assessment Resources Inc.
- Dechesne, M., Janssen, J., & Van Knippenberg, A. (2000). Derogation and distancing as terror management strategies: The moderating role of need for closure and permeability of group boundaries. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(6), 923–932. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.6.923>
- De Zavala, A. G., & Eidelson, R. (2009). Collective narcissism and its social consequences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(6), 1074–1096. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016904>
- Everett, J. A. C. (2013). The 12 Item Social and Economic Conservatism Scale (SECS). *PLOS One*, 8(12), e82131. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0082131>
- Furnham, A., Horne, G., & Grover, S. (2020). Correlates of the militant extremist mindset. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 2250. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02250>
- Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Solomon, S. (1986). The causes and consequences of a need for self-esteem: A terror management theory. In R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), *Public self and private self* (pp. 189–212). Springer-Verlag.
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indices in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 6, 1–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118>
- Ivekovic, I. (2002). Nationalism and the political use and abuse of religion: The Politicization of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam in Yugoslav Successor States. *Social Compass*, 49(4), 523–536. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768602049004004>
- Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Kruglanski, A. W., & Sulloway, F. J. (2003). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(3), 339–375. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.3.339>
- Jost, J. T., Napier, J. L., Thorisdottir, H., Gosling, S. D., Palfai, T. P., & Ostafin, B. (2007). Are needs to manage uncertainty and threat associated with political conservatism or ideological extremity? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33, 989–1007. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167207301028>
- Jovanović, O., & Pavlović, M. (2017). Is it always us or them: How do young Serbs and Bosniaks perceive intergroup borders? In F. Pratto, I. Žeželj, E. Maloku, V. Turjačanin, & M. Branković (Eds.), *Shaping social identities after violent conflict* (pp. 89–112). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kemmelmeier, M. (1997). Need for closure and political orientation among German university students. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 137, 787–789. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224549709595501>
- Knezevic, G. & Keller, J. (2021). Proneness to psychotic-like experiences: A neglected personality correlate of right-wing authoritarianism and prejudice. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Knežević, G., Savic, D., Kutlesic, V., & Opacic, G. (2017). Disintegration: A reconceptualization of psychosis proneness as a personality trait separate from the Big Five. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 70, 187–201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2017.06.001>
- Kossowska, M., & van Hiel, A. (2003). The relationship between need for closure and conservative beliefs in Western and Eastern Europe. *Political Psychology*, 24, 501–518. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00338>
- Kruglanski, A. W. (2004). *The psychology of closed-mindedness (essays in social psychology)*. Psychology Press.
- Kruglanski, A. W., & Orehek, E. (2011). The role of quest for significance in motivating terrorism. In J. Forgas, A. Kruglanski, & K. Williams (Eds.), *Social conflict and aggression* (pp. 153–164). Psychology Press.
- Marsh, H. W., Lüdtke, O., Muthén, B., Asparouhov, T., Morin, A. J. S., Trautwein, U., & Nagengast, B. (2010). A new look at the big five factor structure through exploratory structural equation modeling. *Psychological Assessment*, 22, 471–491. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019227>
- McBride, M. K. (2011). The logic of terrorism: Existential anxiety, the search for meaning, and terrorist ideologies. *Terrorism and political violence*, 23(4), 560–581. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2011.575486>
- Mcdonald, M., & Wong, P. T. P. (2012). Meaning-in-life measures and development of a brief version of the personal meaning profile. In P. T. P. Wong (Ed.), *The human quest for meaning: theories, research, and applications* (Vol. 2, pp. 357–382). Routledge.
- Mededović, J., & Knežević, G. (2019). Dark and peculiar: The key features of militant extremist thinking pattern? *Journal of Individual Differences*, 40(2), 92–103. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1614-0001/a000280>
- Mededović, J., Kovačević, U., & Knežević, G. (2020). Militant extremist mind-set in Serbian football supporters: Relations with the adherence to extremist social movements. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 4, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2020.1859583>
- Mededović, J., & Petrović, B. D. (2013). Predictors of party evaluation in post-conflict society: The case of Serbia. *Psihologija*, 46, 27–43. <https://doi.org/10.2298/PSI1301027M>
- Moghaddam, F. (2006). *From the terrorists' point of view: What they experience and why they come to destroy*. Praeger Security International.
- Muthen, L. K., & Muthen, B. O. (2010). *Mplus User's Guide* (6th ed.). Muthen & Muthen.
- Onraet, E., van Hiel, A., Roets, A., & Cornelis, I. (2011). The closed mind: ‘Experience’ and ‘Cognition’ aspects of openness to experience and need for closure as psychological bases for right-wing attitudes. *European Journal of Personality*, 25(3), 184–197. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.775>
- Peterson, J. B. (2008). Neuropsychology and mythology of motivation for terror and atrocity. In L. Kurtz (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of violence, peace and conflict (2nd ed.)*. Academic Press.
- Postmes, T., Haslam, S. A., & Jans, L. (2013). A single-item measure of social identification: Reliability, validity, and utility. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(4), 597–617. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12006>
- Roets, A., & Van Hiel, A. (2006). Need for closure relations with authoritarianism, conservative beliefs and racism: The impact of urgency and permanence tendencies. *Psychologica Belgica*, 46, 235–252. <https://doi.org/10.5334/pb-46-3-235>
- Roets, A., & Van Hiel, A. (2011). Item selection and validation of a brief, 15-item version of the Need for Closure Scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 50, 90–94.
- Rokeach, M. (1960). *The open and closed mind*. Basic Books.
- Saucier, G. (2000). Isms and the structure of social attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 366–385. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.2.366>

- Saucier, G., Akers, L. G., Shen-Miller, S., Stankov, L., & Knežević, G. (2009). Patterns of thinking in militant extremism. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4, 256–271. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6924.2009.01123.x>
- Sibley, C. G., & Duckitt, J. (2008). Personality and prejudice: A meta-analysis and theoretical review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 12, 248–279. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868308319226>
- Stankov, L., Higgins, D., Saucier, G., & Knežević, G. (2010). Contemporary militant extremism: A linguistic approach to scale development. *Psychological Assessment*, 22, 246–258. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017372>
- Stankov, L., Knežević, G., Petrović, B., Mededović, J., & Lazarević, L. B. (2019). Militant extremist mindset in post-conflict regions of the Balkans. *Journal for Deradicalization*, 19, 185–218.
- Stankov, L., Knežević, G., Saucier, G., Radović, B., & Milovanović, B. (2018). Militant extremist mindset and the assessment of radicalization in general population. *Journal of Individual Differences*, 39(2), 88–98. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1614-0001/a000253>
- Stankov, L., Mededović, J., Lazarević, L. B., Petrović, B., & Knežević, G. (2020). Sociopsychological correlates of militant extremist beliefs in a postconflict society: The importance of ethnocentrism and quality of interethnic contacts. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 23(8), 1249–1266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430220920717>
- Stankov, L., Saucier, G., & Knežević, G. (2010). Militant extremist mind-set: proviolence, vile world, and divine power. *Psychological Assessment*, 22, 70–86. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016925>
- Vukcevic-Markovic, M., Nicovic, A., & Zivanovic, M. (2021). Contextual and psychological predictors of militant extremist mindset in youth. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.622571>
- Wagner, U., Schmidt, P., & Kauff, M. (2017). Attitudes towards ethnic minority groups. In: *GESIS panel study descriptions* (pp. 119–125). GESIS Panel. <https://www.gesis.org/en/gesis-panel/documentation/>
- Webber, D., Babush, M., Schori-Eyal, N., Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis, A., Hettiarachchi, M., Bélanger, J. J., Moyano, M., Trujillo Mendoza, H. M., Gunaratna, R., Kruglanski, A. W., & Gelfand, M. (2018). The road to extremism: Field and experimental evidence that significance loss-induced need for closure fosters radicalization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 114, 270–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000111>
- Webster, D. M., & Kruglanski, A. W. (1994). Individual differences in need for cognitive closure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 1049–1062.

How to cite this article: Knežević, G., Lazarevic, L. B., Mededović, J., Petrović, B., & Stankov, L. (2022). The relationship between closed-mindedness and militant extremism in a post-conflict society. *Aggressive Behavior*, 48, 253–263. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.22017>