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Political Extremism in Modern Democratic Transformations

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Abstract

Modern political transformations involve free choice of ideology, ability to communicate with society and maintenance of their political preferences. Political struggle often leads to radical action and political extremism. The aim of this study involved an analysis of political extremism that occurs in modern democracies, and identification of the main factors underlying the development of political extremism. The determinants of the political stability/extremism are analysed based on the algorithm of hierarchical clustering. It is proved that 26 European countries studied in the work can be grouped into four clusters, which are characterised by the number of parties of extremist ideology in the national parliaments of European countries; Elite Quality Index (EQx); the Freedom in the World Index; Political Stability and Absence of Violence Index, which is part of The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). It is revealed that today ideological trends of authoritarian populism, conservatism and extremism are spreading in European countries. Cluster analysis has shown that the political extremism is influenced by the level of quality of national elites, the development of fundamental rights and freedoms, the political stability,

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and the absence of violence. Further research should focus on econometric simulation of factors shaping political extremism through economic development indicators.

Keywords: political activity in Europe; status; democracy; political extremism; radicalism.

El Extremismo Político en las Transformaciones Democráticas Modernas

Resumen

Las transformaciones políticas modernas implican la libre elección de ideología, la capacidad de comunicarse con la sociedad y el mantenimiento de las preferencias políticas. La lucha política a menudo conduce a una acción radical y al extremismo político. El objetivo de este estudio involucró un análisis del extremismo político que ocurre en las democracias modernas y la identificación de los principales factores subyacentes al desarrollo del extremismo. Los determinantes de la estabilidad política se analizan con base en el algoritmo de agrupamiento jerárquico. Está comprobado que 26 países europeos estudiados en el trabajo pueden agruparse en cuatro clústeres, que se caracterizan por el número de partidos de ideología extremista en los parlamentos nacionales de los países europeos; Índice de calidad de élite (EQx); el Índice de Libertad en el Mundo; Índice de Estabilidad Política y Ausencia de Violencia, que forma parte de los Indicadores de Gobernanza Mundial (WGI). Se revela que hoy en día las tendencias ideológicas de populismo autoritario, conservadurismo y extremismo se están extendiendo en los países europeos. Se concluye que, el análisis de conglomerados ha demostrado que el extremismo político está influenciado por el nivel de calidad de las élites nacionales y el desarrollo de los fundamentales.

Palabras clave: actividad política en Europa; estado; democracia; extremismo político; radicalismo.

Introduction

The dynamism of political life in the state is the result of the influence of internal and external factors on society. These multi-vector actions form certain preferences, which further determine the activities of active social groups. Forms of expression of political views, which sometimes leads to quite severe consequences, are a reaction to social stimuli, changes in the

established way of life, the realization of the political will of the majority. Political activity is often shifted from centrist currents to extreme right or left ideologies, which in essence can be based on radical views and reactions. The results of democratic transformations and approaches to the expression of citizens' will be broad support for those areas that profess radical and extremist actions in politics.

Radicalisation and extremism are a major problem for societies around the world. The consequences of radical behaviour are unauthorised actions during political speeches and demonstrations, causing physical influence on citizens, government officials and law enforcement agencies, terrorist, and cyberterrorist acts. According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), about 100,000 people died in terrorist attacks between 2014 and 2017 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018). Systemic surveys conducted in recent years have found that 5 to 10% of adults in Germany have far-right worldviews (Best *et al.*, 2016). Many rallies of hatred and violence in recent years have been linked to the adherents of far-right and right-wing ideology, including the neo-fascist movement in Italy (Gattinara *et al.*, 2018), national action in Britain (Macklin, 2018), the refugee crisis in Germany (Koehler, 2018), federalist and Christian fundamentalist ideologies in the United States (Sweeney and Perliger, 2018, Windisch *et al.*, 2018), and others.

In recent years, populists and extremists have had strong electoral positions in Europe, Asia and America, both in relatively new democracies (Latvia, the Czech Republic) and in more established ones (Germany, France). In some countries (Hungary, Poland, Venezuela), extremist parties have received significant electoral support to legally influence the government and make significant changes to laws and the constitution (Schupmann, 2020). A recent study by Western scholars based on an analysis of data from 18 Western European countries for 1985-2018 showed that growing electoral support for right-wing radical parties is forcing systemic parties to adjust their socioeconomic policies toward left-wing ideology (Krause and Giebler, 2019).

Support for political parties with extremist ideologies is often seen as a protest vote against mainstream politics or the political system as a whole (Kutiyski *et al.*, 2021). The change in the economic system by right-wing radical parties was the result of the proletarianisation of their electorate, the formation of a new model of class voting in Western Europe with the involvement of voters from the working class, opponents of globalisation, and others.

Extremism is seen as an ideological phenomenon, an instrument of domination and legitimacy that serves the interests of dominant groups and blocks utopian thinking (the idea of better ways of life). Extremism is part of the modern positional struggle initiated from the camp of liberal elites. Conceptually, extremism usually gets its essence through association

with other ideas — fundamentalism, totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and terrorism, referring to the opposition of such concepts as democracy, openness, liberalism, tolerance and moderation. Extremism contains ideological and behavioural elements: substandard values; anti-democracy; anti-liberalism (hostility or indifference to rights, tolerance, choice, pluralism); utopianism and the struggle against the present; totalization; justification of illegality (El-Ojeili and Taylor, 2020).

1. Literature Review

Extreme political beliefs are often seen as a mechanism for combating feelings of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. People perceive rigid ideological beliefs because it allows them to defend simple solutions to complex social and political problems (Van Prooijen and Krouwel, 2019). Political extremists are particularly prone to distrust other competing political parties and are more likely to demonstrate a high level of Euroscepticism (Kutiyski *et al.*, 2021).

The findings of a study of voters in the Netherlands (Kutiyski *et al.*, 2021) indicate that radical voters have a common feature characterized by lower political trust than moderate centrist voters, as evidenced, for example, by a case study on Sweden (Krouwel *et al.*, 2017). The results show that political radicalism, regardless of its specific ideological orientation, is associated with a low level of trust. Similarly, the high level of Euroscepticism has also been linked to the preferences of radical parties. Radical political orientations provoke a negative attitude towards both national and European politics.

Extremists perceive and legitimise political violence, seek to restore the past, becoming anti-democratic with restrictive conceptions of human rights, having problems of coexistence with democracy (Bötticher, 2017). Ideology is a major driver of extremist threats and terrorism (Ackerman and Burnham, 2019). More generally, ideology is seen as a worldview with a set of ideas that provide a person with a collective context, meaning and belonging (Campion, 2019).

Popular support for political extremism in democracies gives these parties and movements the visibility of democratic legitimacy they need to legitimately make illiberal and anti-democratic changes to legislation. They seek to transform a liberal-democratic state into an illiberal and anti-democratic one (Schupmann, 2020).

The vectors that best understand extremism are world economic and class structures, posthegemonic geopolitics, and geocultural features. It can be assumed on the basis of (Davies, 2017) that liberalism, in general,

has gone through three phases since the 1970's: the period of militant neoliberalism (early 1970's — late 1980's); victorious neoliberalism (late 1980's — 1990's); and post-hegemonic liberalism, which began in the late 1990's. This last period was marked by the crisis of intellectual and moral leadership and the fragmentation of the liberal project into three tendencies: punitive neoliberalism, fear liberalism, and neo-Keynesianism. Acceleration of extremist action is a symptom of this period of posthegemonic liberalism (El-Ojeili and Taylor, 2020).

Variables such as unemployment, lack of education, self-doubt, loneliness, stress are defined as encouraging aversion to society and a tendency to extremism. Since the late 1990's, the extremism industry has begun to increase its presence caused by the anti-systemic dynamics of the alternative globalisation movement and the rise of right-wing nationalism, accelerating even more after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. "Extremism" stands next to a number of other phenomena: protectionism, populism, utopianism, ideology, irrationality, bigotry (El-Ojeili and Taylor, 2020).

At the broadest level, political extremism is defined as a significant deviation in attitude and behaviour from basic legal and political norms and values within a social system (society or state) that seek to abolish and replace them (Beelmann *et al.*, 2017). The development-oriented model of radicalisation begins with the definition of extremism in the following ways: a significant deviation in attitudes and actions from specific fundamental, political, legal and humanitarian systems of norms and values. In addition, the main issue of definition is the values and goals that underlie views and actions, not the means, such as violence, used to achieve them (Beelmann, 2020).

Researchers (Doosje *et al.*, 2016) identified three phases of radicalisation. In phase 1, individual feelings may be influenced by the search for significance, uncertainty, and social factors such as globalisation. In phase 2, a person joins a radical group and accepts its ideology. Finally, in phase 3, the person commits violence against other groups. Another theory emphasises the motivational underpinnings of radicalisation, such as personal revenge or social discontent, arguing that they play an important role in explaining why people are involved in the process of radicalisation (Kruglanski *et al.*, 2019).

The main assumption from the point of view of development is that radicalisation and extremism can be described as the result of a number of (social, individual) determinants and transactional (interdependent) processes of ontogenetic development (Lerner, 2018). Interconnected but different processes of social development are central to radicalisation and extremism: problems of identity, prejudice, political or religious ideologies, antisocial attitudes and behaviour. These processes are caused by real social

or individual conflicts (such as the economic crisis) and are marked by constant intergroup processes (Beelmann, 2020). In addition, a significant role is played by the lack of proper and well-established communication between public authorities and radical representatives of ideological trends.

Based on the features most often mentioned in the existing definitions of right-wing extremism/radicalism, it can be noted that authoritarianism, anti-democracy and nationalism determine the properties of extremism/radicalism. In contrast, xenophobia, racism and populism are concomitant characteristics of the concept. Right-wing extremism/radicalism is an ideology that embraces authoritarianism, anti-democracy and nationalism (Carter, 2018).

Europe's left-wing movements have succeeded in addressing those most affected by austerity, with significant growth in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. The rise of right-wing parties correlated with the propaganda of populist Euroscepticism, combined with constant anti-immigration comments and opposition to multicultural integration. The terrorist attacks in Europe in 2015-2016 directly contributed to the development of support for these parties, in some cases advocating fascist rhetoric. The British Independence Party was one of the driving forces behind Britain's decision to leave the European Union, openly described as a right-wing populist party (Corbet and Larkin, 2019).

Given the significant relevance of this topic, the purpose of this study is to analyse political extremism as a phenomenon in modern democratic transformations and identify the main factors shaping the development of political extremism. The research provided for the following main objectives: identify key sources of political extremism; study the factors influencing the formation and development of political extremism; identify the main clusters of division of European countries on the basis of the formation of political stability/extremism; analyse the clusters identified in the study; suggest approaches that can curb the development of political extremism.

2. Methods

The research methodology involves determining the criteria by which countries will be grouped, the choice of research methods, the use of software. The analysis of the countries in the obtained clusters was conducted. To model the level of political stability of individual countries, it is proposed to choose criteria that allow a detailed analysis of the determinants of the formation of political stability/extremism: the number of extremist parties in the national parliaments of European countries; Elite Quality Index (EQx); the Freedom in the World Index; Political Stability and Absence of Violence Index, which is part of The Worldwide Governance Indicators (The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)).

It should be noted that the data on extremist parties used in the study were based on information from the Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index (TAP) (2021), which provides an analysis of election data to improve knowledge and understanding of change among politicians, the media and the general public. The Elite Quality Index (EQx) provided a unique interpretation of national political economies and their medium- and long-term perspectives. EQx uses elite quality as an analytical framework designed to promote sustainable and comprehensive value creation and the transformation of the elite business model. Elites shape human and economic development, the fate of societies, the wealth of nations, as well as their rise and fall.

To maintain their position, elites use business models that accumulate wealth. Quality elites use value creation business models that give society more than they accept. Low-quality elites do the opposite and work with value models (Casas Klett and Cozzi, 2021). The Freedom in the World Report consists of numerical rankings that analyse the electoral process, political pluralism, government functioning, freedom of expression, association and organisation rights, the rule of law, personal autonomy and individual rights. Countries are assessed by 10 indicators of political rights and 15 indicators of civil liberties. Accordingly, a score of 0 means the lowest degree of freedom and 4 — the highest degree of freedom. Another indicator used is the World Governance Indicators (WGI) sub-indicator - political stability and the absence of violence/terrorism, which measures perceptions of the likelihood of political instability or politically motivated violence (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2010; World Bank, 2021).

The European countries on the ground of political stability/extremism will be grouped using a hierarchical clustering algorithm. The generated indicators, which have different dimensions and units of measurement, are reduced to a standardised form using the software environment STATISTICA, Version 10. The sample of countries provides for the inclusion on the ground of at least one extremist party. We identified 26 European countries on this ground. Standardisation is performed in accordance with the formula:

$$Z_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij} - x_i}{\sigma_i} \quad (1)$$

where x_{ij} — the value of the i^{th} feature for the j^{th} population;

x_i — the average level of the i^{th} feature;

σ_i — the standard deviation of the i^{th} feature.

The classification of European countries is carried out by a hierarchical method of clustering using Euclidean distance. Euclidean distance is calculated by the formula:

$$d_E(x, y) = \sqrt{\sum_i (x_i - y_i)^2} \quad (2)$$

where $x = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_i)$, $y = (y_1, y_2, \dots, y_i)$ – vectors of the features of two observations.

3. Results

The data were used according to the methodology ss indicators that can characterise the factors of political extremism in European countries (Table 1).

Table 1. Initial data describing the factors of political extremism

Country	Number of extremist parties	EQx	Freedom in the World	WGI
Belgium	5	56.08	96	61.90
Bulgaria	4	51.60	78	66.19
Cyprus	1	56.26	94	63.33
Czech Republic	4	59.17	91	80.48
Denmark	5	63.43	97	83.81
Spain	10	57.30	90	59.05
Estonia	1	62.91	94	68.10
Finland	7	62.58	100	79.05
France	4	58.33	90	58.57
Germany	4	62.44	94	66.67
Greece	16	51.80	87	57.14
Hungary	3	55.61	69	71.43
Ireland	3	60.77	97	82.38
Italy	12	54.25	90	60.95
Latvia	2	54.17	89	60.00

Lithuania	2	57.85	90	75.24
Netherlands	6	64.54	98	75.71
Norway	6	63.50	100	92.38
Poland	1	55.15	82	64.29
Portugal	8	57.25	96	90.95
Romania	3	51.70	83	65.24
Serbia	5	48.20	64	45.24
Slovak Republic	2	53.41	90	72.38
Slovenia	2	57.18	95	73.81
Sweden	3	63.67	100	86.67
Switzerland	3	67.64	96	94.76

Source: Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index (2021), Casas Klett and Cozzi (2021), World Bank (2021).

As Table 2 shows, some parties that profess extremist ideology have considerable public support and have won seats in national parliaments (for example, in Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Spain, Hungary, etc.). Besides, the countries analysed in the study have different levels of indicators that describe the quality of national elites, the level of freedom, political stability and the absence of violence.

Table 2. European extremist parties represented in national parliaments, 2015-2021

Country	Party name and abbreviation	Ideological direction	% in elections, year
Belgium	Partij van de Arbeid van België (PVDA)	Communism, left-wing extremism	8.6%, 2019
Bulgaria	Ataka (ATAKA)	Nationalism, right-wing extremism	0.5%, 2021
Cyprus	Ethniko Laiko Metopo (ELAM)	Ethno-nationalism, right-wing extremism	6.8%, 2021
Czech Republic	Komunistická Strana Čech a Moravy (KSCM)	Communism, left-wing extremism	7.8%, 2017
	Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti (DSSS)	Neo-nazism, right-wing extremism	0.2%, 2017

Denmark	Stram Kurs	Nationalism, right-wing extremism	8.7% 2019
Spain	Izquierda Unida (IU)	socialism, communism, left-wing extremism	12.8% 2019
	Partido Comunista de los Pueblos de España (PCPE)	Communism, left-wing extremism	0.1%, 2019
Estonia	Eesti Iseseisvuspartei (EIP)	Nationalism, right-wing extremism	0.2%, 2015
Finland	Finlands kommunistiska parti (SKP)	Communism, left-wing extremism	0.1%, 2019
France	Parti Communiste Français (PCF)	Communism, left-wing extremism	2.7%, 2017
Germany	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD)	neo-nazism, nationalism, right-wing extremism	0.4%, 2017
Greece	Chrysi Avgui (XA)	Nationalism, right-wing extremism	2.9% 2019
	Antikapitalistiki Aristeri Synergasia gia tin Anatropi (ANTARSYA)	Communism, left-wing extremism	0.9%, 2019
Hungary	Jobbik Magyarorszáért Moszgalom (JOBBIK)	Nationalism, right-wing extremism	19.1%, 2018
	Magyar Munkáspárt (MM)	Communism, left-wing extremism	0.3%, 2018
Ireland	Workers Party of Ireland (WP)	Communism, left-wing extremism	0.2%, 2016
Italy	CasaPound (CPI)	Neo-fascism, anti-semitism, right-wing extremism	0.9%, 2018
Norway	Rødt (R)	Communism, left-wing extremism	2.4%, 2017
Portugal	Partido Comunista Português (PCP)	Communism, left-wing extremism	6.3%, 2019
	Partido Nacional Renovador (PNR)	Right-wing extremism, ethno-nationalism, right-wing extremism	0.3%, 2019
Romania	Partidul România Mare (PRM)	Nationalism, right-wing extremism	0.6%, 2020

Serbia	Srpska Radikalna Stranka (SRS)	Nationalism, right-wing extremism	2.1%, 2020
	Srpska stranka Zavetnici (SSZ)	Right-wing extremism	1.4% 2020
Slovakia	Ludová Strana Naše Slovensko (LSNS)	Nationalism, neo-fascism, neo-nazism, right-wing extremism	8.0%, 2020
Slovenia	Naprej Slovenija (NPS)	Nationalism, right-wing extremism	0.2%, 2018
Sweden	Alternativ för Sverige (AFS)	Etno-nationalism, right-wing extremism	0.3%, 2018
Switzerland	Partei der Arbeit der Schweiz (PdA)	Communism, left-wing extremism	1%, 2019

Source: Nordsieck (2020), Parties and Elections in Europe (2019), Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index (2021).

One of the most effective methods has been chosen for clustering countries was the Ward's method, which minimises the sum of squares for any two clusters that can be formed at each step. A horizontal dendrogram was constructed to visualise the results of cluster analysis (Figure 1).

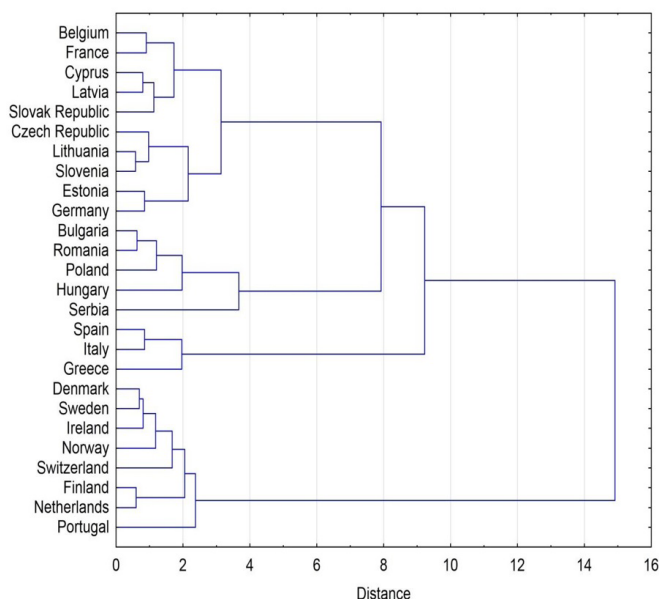


Figure 1: Dendrogram of clustering of European countries on the ground of political stability/extremism

Four groups of countries were obtained according to the results of cluster analysis (Table 3), which have certain similarities and differences.

Table 3. Groups of countries depending on the level of achievement of individual indicators

Clusters	Countries
1	Belgium, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia
2	Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia
3	Greece, Italy, Spain
4	Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland

Regarding the specifics of certain clusters, it should be noted that Cluster 1 included countries that have average among the surveyed countries indicators of the index of freedom and the index of political stability and absence of violence. Cluster 2 consists of countries with low indicators of the freedom index and average values for other studied indicators. Cluster 3 includes the countries with the largest number of extremist parties and characterised by low and below average indicators in terms of the freedom index, the index of political stability and the absence of violence, and the quality index of national elites. Cluster 4 contains countries that have high indicators of the index of freedom, the index of political stability and absence of violence and the quality index of national elites, while having a higher average among the surveyed countries number of extremist parties.

4. Discussion

Modern society is often seen as degenerate, constantly in crisis, while conservative concepts are seen as idealised and desirable. This continues in structural discourses that portray modern political and economic systems as dysfunctional and depressing (Campion, 2019). The actions of political extremists create a hidden tension between democratic and liberal constitutional commitments. The reality of the democratic legal revolutions of extremists in liberal democracies today forces us to seek an answer as to the priority of democratic or liberal choice. In such circumstances, limited democracy provides a wider range of mechanisms to deter the threat of extremism to the constitution without undermining basic constitutional obligations (Schupmann, 2020).

If we focus on the methodological approaches used in the study, it should be noted that the use of only European countries as a basis for signs of political stability/extremism narrowed the representativeness of the analysis. At the same time, the use of 26 European countries has proved to be sufficient to demonstrate the heterogeneous range of extremist parties in parliaments. The results of the study showed that the low institutional development of indicators that characterise political stability, lack of violence, development of democratic freedoms and the quality of national elites leads to a significant increase in political extremism and its electoral supporters. The average values of the level of these indicators are formed by the moderate spread of political extremism. The results shown by the group of countries that are included in Cluster 4 and have high values of indicators of the development of freedom, political stability and quality of elites are interesting. At the same time, the countries included in this cluster have the above-average number of extremist parties.

The results of the study showed that the low institutional development of indicators that characterise of political stability, lack of violence, development of democratic freedoms and the quality of national elites leads to a significant increase in political extremism and its electoral supporters. The average values of the level of these indicators are formed by the moderate spread of political extremism. The results shown by the group of countries that are included in Cluster 4 and have high values of indicators of the development of freedom, political stability and quality of elites are interesting. At the same time, the countries included in this cluster have the above-average number of extremist parties. This result rather indicates the shortcomings of modern democratic approaches to freedom of expression. Various political directions (including extremist ideas) have the opportunity to freely express their own political preferences, which may counter the centrist orientation, gender approaches, European integration, and others. Democracy requires not only the restriction of the rights of the majority by minority rights, but also modern democracy protects individual freedom and provides effective guarantees of civil liberties against state power (Sartori, 2016). In addition, there is a claim that the historical experience of authoritarianism helps to explain the difference in the reactions of democracies to extremism (Moroska-Bonkiewicz and Bourne, 2020).

This data set, which relates to the political sphere, did not give a complete picture of the factors that may influence the formation of political extremism. A slowdown in economic growth causes a shift in political preferences to the right, while an increase in economic growth causes a shift in political preferences to the left. Brückner and Grüner (2020) proved that economic growth is an important determinant of right-wing extremism. Low GDP growth per capita increases support for far-right parties. Thus, the growth of right-wing extremism can occur even with a high level of material well-being. Empirical analysis shows a significant negative impact of economic

growth on the support of right-wing extremism, but no significant effect on the support of far-left parties. A possible explanation is that, unlike far-right parties, the main goal of far-left parties is to redistribute income from rich to poor.

It is important to strengthen the empirical framework to expand the list of countries used in the analysis provided the availability of data in open sources. After all, the involvement of countries with different economic development and political freedoms will have a more objective picture of the influence of certain democratic and economic factors on the political extremism.

These scientific approaches can be used to counter extremism by addressing issues such as the impact of democracy on extremist political parties; profiles of the use of the Internet as a means of detecting membership in extremist groups (Hale, 2012); simulating attitudes toward potential violent extremists (Kebbell and Porter, 2012).

Regarding the analysis of the study, it should be recognised that in recent years of crisis and austerity in Europe there has been a significant rise in extremist and nationalist parties that won the election and caused significant changes in the rules of the political game (Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2017). Although the distribution of votes for different ideologies in 1998 and 2018 (Figure 2) demonstrates a gradual decline in the ideas of political extremism, in fact popular dissatisfaction with elites, immigration and supranationalism fuels radical sentiment (Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index, 2021).

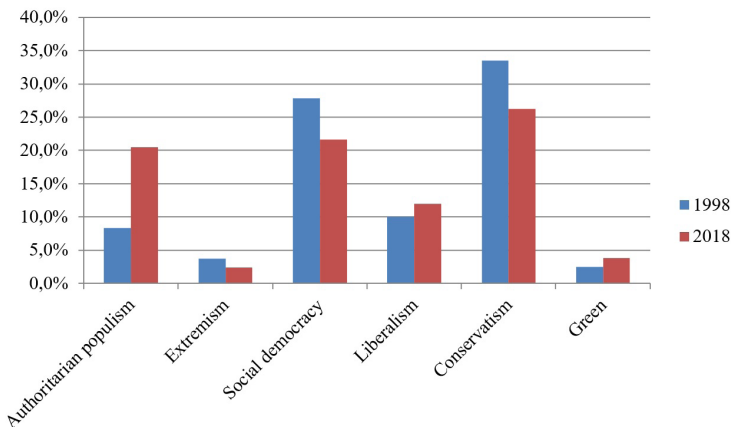


Figure 2. *Percentage of votes for different ideologies in 1998 and 2018 (Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index, 2021)*

The rise of hatred and violence requires a better understanding of the causes of political extremism and its subjects, which attracts the attention of researchers in various fields. Research on the propensity for political extremism is based on surveys and ethnographic research. The survey is conducted on both random and target samples to determine those whose responses fall on the extreme limits of the liberal-conservative spectrum (Kruglanski *et al.*, 2012, Van Prooijen *et al.*, 2015). The presented research allows us to look more broadly at the ground for the development of political extremism in terms of the maturity of individual institutions of a democratic society.

The study of political extremism and its consequences is closely related to the issues of state security and cybersecurity (Kruhlov *et al.*, 2019). The European approach to radicalisation, which seeks to legislate and soften broader societal processes of expression between communities and link them to the problem of security from violent extremism, requires huge volumes of security resources in the areas of monitoring and intervention. The experience of combating extremism and terrorism in the modern era is that such a policy is fraught with complications and controversy when it is perceived as the creation of “suspicious communities” and the separation of local communities under national ideas. Extremely authoritarian measures can significantly increase the long-term risk of lack of trust between certain communities in the state, making authoritarianism even more destructive of the basic principles of democracy and freedom (Richards, 2017).

The representative closeness between extremism, violence and terror increases the importance of such topics as security, deterrence, prejudice, protection of democratic institutions; political proposals aimed at re-education, deradicalisation; relevance of diagnosis of social and psychological factors in extremism (El-Ojeili and Taylor, 2020). As a rule, liberal democracies take various measures in response to political extremism. They range from extremely repressive measures, such as banning associations and parties, or criminalising offensive language; cooperation between the main parties to exclude extremists from the government; to more liberal, adaptive, and persuasive strategies (Downs, 2012).

In general, finding a rational balance between the implementation of democratic approaches to the development of ideologies, political activity and containment of destructive actions of certain ideological directions remains a rather difficult task for the state. But, given the research, it is possible to emphasise the importance of public policy aimed at ensuring balanced approaches to the development of democratic values, political pluralism, the formation of ideological trends that focus on various social and ideological groups, expanding communication through social and political dialogue, while strengthening certain aspects of security and law enforcement.

Conclusion

The study of the causes of political extremism is a very topical issue, as evidenced by literature review and conducted analysis. Significant consequences of political extremism for society and states include non-acceptance of democratic ideas, restriction of civil liberties, intensification of radical actions, increased number of terrorist acts. Democratic transformations, the development of pluralism, openness, tolerance, and moderation contributed to a wide range of public choices of close political ideologies. However, disagreement with certain areas of public policy, lack of sufficient communication, a separate view of the country's development has intensified the emergence of radical approaches to the political will of citizens. Ideological directions that profess authoritarian populism, conservatism and extremism are becoming widespread.

The analysis proves that the formation of political extremism is influenced by the level of quality of national elites, the development of fundamental rights and freedoms, the political stability and the absence of violence. The classification of European countries by the hierarchical clustering method divided the countries into 4 clusters according to the available indicators. It is determined that low indicators of political stability, lack of violence, development of democratic freedoms and quality of national elites increase the level of political extremism, which leads to increased support for it in national parliaments. The moderate level of political extremism corresponds to the average values of the level of the indicators used in the study. High indicators of the development of freedom, political stability and the quality of elites can produce a significant level of political extremism. This indicates the possibility of democratic expression of will, pluralism and tolerance of radical/extremist ideas, which differ significantly from democratic political views, environmental trends, tolerant gender approaches, European integration, and others. This result was based on a study of countries with a high level of economic development and democratic institutions. It will be appropriate to strengthen further analysis by including certain economic indicators that will demonstrate economic stability, income levels, attracting foreign investment. Further research may involve econometric models of the dependence of the level of political extremism on individual social and economic indicators of countries with different levels of development.

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