

Originalan naučni rad
UDk 32:329.055.01:323.28
Primljeno: 17.04.2015.
Odobreno: 20.05.2015.

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PROBLEMS OF DEFINING EXTREMISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCIENCE¹

Abstract

The paper deals with the distinction of the phenomena of extremism from the point of theory of politics. The author has first of all started from the multiple meanings of the term extremism in everyday life, which also provides specific implications in the field of modern science. The relation between extremism and other forms of political violence has been investigated, with special emphasis on correlation, which exists between extremism and terrorism. It has been found that equivocation, amorphousness, and not only temporal, but also spatial conditionality cause to a large degree problems in the contemporary political science when giving a definitional determination of this phenomena.

Key words: extremism, terrorism, theory of politics, political theories, political violence, political sciences.

In order to define extremism as a phenomenon that has gained *a lot of contextual meanings*, and that is followed by an idea that it is something understandable by itself, we have to see it as a *singularity*², and we ought to do it by using the already clearly defined terms. Based solely on the use of those defined terms as secondary terms, we can specify the content of an inadequate or incorrectly defined term as good as a new, still undefined term.

¹ Rad je nastao u okviru naučno-istraživačkog projekta Univerziteta u Beogradu – Fakulteta političkih nauka, *Politički identitet Srbije u regionalnom i globalnom kontekstu*, (evidencioni broj: 179076), koji finansira Ministarstvo prosvete i nauke Republike Srbije

² Alen Badiou, *Pregled metapolitike*, Institute for philosophy and social theory and P.H. »Filip Visnjic«, Belgrade, 2008, p. 24.

At the same time, it is necessary to choose fundamentally important terms by which we would determine, i.e. define the term extremism, for the term extremism should include its *essence*.

In cases such as the case of extremism, when the meaning of one phenomenon is disputable, it is always useful to begin from its *linguistic merit* as a determinant, even though it is usually inadequate for defining complex social phenomena.

As any other linguistic symbol, the word extremism, with all the semantic differences, can be explained only by a collection of other linguistic symbols.³

Already the etymological insight reveals to us the first important feature of that symbol, which is its *original equivocation*. At the same time, this word, unlike many other words, has *kept all of its original meanings*, and also, with the development of the milieu in which it existed, and especially with entering the field of politics, has *gained a new meaning*.

It is undeniable that the root of the word extremism is of Latin origin, thus comes from the Latin word *extremus*, which means the ultimate or the extreme, something that is on the mere border of sustainability, allowable and normal, something which is on the far top or the bottom of the object, in any case, its outermost border. Hence extremism as a behavior or a tendency towards extreme is usually lexically determined as an excess, top range, something that is almost unbearable or unsustainable, but also the last thing that could happen.⁴

Everything that exists has its own *boundaries*, and it stretches to its limits. However, only the awareness of the prevalence of its limits, and even an occasional need to check them by stretching towards them, by controlling and feeling up *the Other* and its borders, and it is totally different if the borders become the essence of things, and the tendency towards them and living on the mere borders become the meaning of existence. That kind of orientation towards the extremes and borders always leads towards crossing them and endangering others, since our border is always, even when it seems like there is an empty gap, the border between us and someone or something.

Crosschecking its own borders is checking its own *wholeness* that threatens no one, and that helps *creating and maintaining awareness* about its *identity*. We are what we are and *until* we are, i.e. as long as we stretch.

3 See: Markovic, Mihailo, *Filozofski osnovi nauke*, SANU, Belgrade, 1984.

4 See: *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Ed. by P. G. W. Glare, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 662

Every human being has a need to sometimes stretch as a man in its bed to its final borders, and that is seen as acceptable. But, in addition to our visible, sensory sensitive borders, there are also various different borders, among which there are also the *invisible ones*. They are some kind of logical continuation of our visible and generally measurable borders, an *extension of our extremities*. Around us extends an invisible territory that is not us, but belongs to us as a confirmation of our Self. This is most evident when someone attempts to get too close to us. At that time, we pull back and withdraw our invisible field that surrounds us, or we demand that the other keep some kind of a distance known only to ourselves. The exact limit of this field varies. Sometimes someone can get as close to us as that we are almost as glued to each other but we don't feel as if the border of our field that surrounds us is disturbed, and then again, sometimes we demand to be as physically far as possible from the person we see as abomination or a threat to us. Namely, *hatred and fear go together*. It is obvious that borders are subjective and as such they confirm that *what we are to ourselves and what is extreme to us, but is still ours, often falls into the highly subjective sensations*.

Equally, even *in politics terms end or extreme also fluctuates*, so it is often in the range of ours or acceptable as such, something that in some other circumstances would not be. The criteria remain the same – whether we consider what is crossing our border as useful or harmful to us or to others.

The confirmation of subjectivity is also the fact that we *more often consider as extreme someone else's behavior than our own*, our entering into something, which is considered as endangering someone's invisible boundaries. *The measures of that vulnerability* are equally important. *Extremism is bearable as long as it is a marginal phenomenon* in one society. Even when the borders of acceptable are crossed, if it is at the level of one isolated incident with small negative effects, that kind of event won't be considered as extreme, even though it is the act of extremism. Also, the limits of permissible and acceptable are also very subjectively determined. That is why it's happening that to us, even if it is extreme, it is in the range of acceptable and to others it crosses the borders of permissible. Moreover, extremism should be seen as a phenomenon *in time*, not only in space, since what was yesterday extreme does not have to be extreme today or tomorrow, and *vice versa*.

It is the same case with extremism in the *spatial borders*. While let's assume that in the Balkans walloping women and children is still a fairly common occurrence, in Scandinavia a person that beats a woman or a child is first taken to the psychiatrist in order to check if that person is normal, and only after that is he taken to the police, while in India women, particularly brides, are still being burned alive if they

do not provide the promised dowry or do not listen to their husband. Even though in all three environments it is the case of violence against women and children as, no matter of its various emergent forms, same kind of structural, more precisely, domestic violence, it is evident that this kind of behavior does not always have in different places the status of extreme behavior, even when it has as a consequence increased degree of destruction.

It is evident that the extension of the final limits can be *acceptable* and accepted as occasional and extracted phenomena, but not as *a permanent state*. Neither individual nor a society can objectively bear that kind of overextension, and it is not strange that crucifixion of the man on a cross and his stretching on various inquisitorial utensils has always represented the forms of greatest torture and sufferings. Hence the *unwanted extremism* and the original lexical meaning by which the word *extremus* means *last thing that should happen, if it could happen*.

Since the human being is inherently *always blaming someone else* and not himself, we, always searching for the perpetrators of our troubles, not only find our culprits, but along the way we also categorize them, throughout which we define the harder offenders, whether they are real or assumed, as our enemies. As our troubles grow higher, the others quilt grows bigger. Especially during the hard times our eyes are fixated on others as potential culprits for all of our troubles. The drastic form of incrimination is when you reach the point when it is enough to be different, to be something else in order to be suspicious and guilty.⁵

The ability to stretch towards the final limits and the tendency to stay on them as two important features of extremism comes to the fore in relation to real or imaginary culprit. In the domain of political theory, many contemporary authors, and some of them even emphatically, for example *Nozick*⁶, notice that right-wing extremism considers its enemy as *evil*, even though it does not give an explanation for it.

Let's get back to the state of crisis, whether as a situation of any durable state, or as individual or collective state. It is important for this topic because *crisis and extremism* go together, which does not mean that there are not any other triggers for it, that are independent of crisis.

⁵ Read more about the mechanism of guilt in: Dragan Simeunovic, *Serbian Collective Guilt*, Nolit, Belgrade, 2007.

⁶ Према: Albert, Breton, *Political extremism and rationality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 72.

Namely, being in adversity or being a problem always means to be in a worse position than someone else, being inferior at least at the time given. *Feeling inferior generates envy* and creates a need in us to damage the ones in better position, and in at least same aspect »better« than us by taking away or annulling their advantage over us. By doing this we are at the same time punishing them for manifesting domination over us that, by our subjective judgment does not belong to them, and in this way we prove to ourselves and to them that we are not that much or not at all inferior to them.

That kind of our reaction falls within the domain of *self-affirmation* which in terms of establishing and expressing extremism occurs *in two negative aspects*. The first is expressed as a negative attitude towards »lower« (read »worse«) than us, which we need in order to strengthen our superego and to encourage showdown with the ones that are »better« than us, which is already the second negative aspect of self-affirmation, i.e. with the ones that are »higher« than us, and those are all the ones which we envy. In the end, those could be *all the members of one nation or race*. As a proof of who is better and who is worse positioned is usually taken some value structure, for example a »civilizational ladder«, and, of course, the one that is accepted as a value by our collectivity.

If that kind of a negative self-affirmation is frequent and intensive, it leads towards *the state of xenophobia* which can be, however, sometimes even partially objectively conditioned. For example, the researches of the OUN that show Greek people as one of the most xenophobic nations in the world, and definitely in Europe would also have to take into consideration the fact that there isn't any nation in the world similar to Greeks, nor a language cognate to theirs, which can most definitely cause or strengthen among Greeks not only the feeling of ethnic uniqueness, but also the feeling of isolation. Apart from Greeks, the Hungarians are also considered as highly xenophobic nation, according to some researches.⁷

Extremism is also expressed as *militant exhibitionism*. The fear of impersonality, and in the end, the fear of annulment of Our⁸ individuality that could lead towards

⁷ Greece and Hungary are, according to researches, most xenophobic countries in the EU with and xenophoby index of over 0,5, with Poland on the third place. Quoted according to: Giancarlo Valori,,»The European Union, Anti-Semitism, Racism and Xenophobia«, The Israel Journal of Forgein Affairs, Vol. one, 2007, p. 80.

⁸ »Our» is not posed here in order to represent the individual only, but also everything which the individual is identifying with – from the group to which it believes it belongs to the adopted values.

the act of Our physical annulment, forces us toward a militant form of expressing and affirming as Oneself, which does not allow to overflow and annul the Other, i.e. Foreign. If the other is more *unknown* it provokes resistance and fear in us. Everything else that we cannot conceive if not as good, then at least as not endangering to us, causes in us anxiety and willingness to respect, but also readiness to defend (and didn't a human being conceive that the attack is the best defense) against that unknown up until the movement of its intellection, i.e. cognition. The moment of cognition is actually decisive for forming our attitude towards someone or something. That is at the same time the moment of transforming something or someone that was to us known as non-Being into being. At that time, the fear of nothing does not have to disappear, but can be substituted by the fear of something if we establish that the known is dangerous for us. If we would measure the *fear of nothing* and of something, the fear of nothing would be stronger, as everything irrational that overwhelms us would be. Nothingness has always frightened and will frighten the man a lot more than anything other cognized. From that emerges the fear of death seen as a path to nothingness, the fear of infinity of the universe, but also their thematic attraction. If we do not achieve intimacy with the unknown, the fear of it remains in us, and when there is fear there is also dread that, if it continues, it becomes hatred. As a rule, we always dislike ones or what we fear.

All cultures know of extremism, just like they have their own systems of protection from the *unknown*. *The belief that the best prevention of danger that the unknown can bring along is its destruction* is not rare. Those beliefs are the expression of not having solutions and answers to the question whether it is unknown and dangerous. Illiteracy and ignorance of the ones that decide on what they are supposed to, whether it is about them, us or someone else, regardless of whether they want to decide, always lead towards exclusive decisions detrimental to someone. In this way we reach to the *exclusiveness as an important feature* of extremism based on the impossibility of cognition. That impossibility can be of not only subjective, but also objective nature. For example, prevention of new and positive cognition about someone we considered as enemy can often be inhibited by *prejudices* that hinder us to change our opinion based on cognition. Hence every type of extremism includes not only the existence of prejudices, but also their duration. Besides, the ideas of general elimination of prejudices as a simple way of eradicating extremism in that way, is not that easy enforceable for the reasons that are well noted by *Hans-Georg Gadamer*, which show that the big problem of prejudices is that they can be even correct.

The enemy should be rendered harmless, and that could be done either by their destruction or by transforming them into us. Hence planned religious and ethnic assimilations are not only that that easy enforceable for the reasons that are well noted by *Hans-Georg Gadamer*, which show that the big problem of prejudices is that they can be even correct.

The enemy should be rendered harmless, and that could be done either by their destruction or by transforming them into us. Hence planned religious and ethnic assimilations are not only that often but also successfully used in order to remove the danger of others. Today, when in modern times, it is not that easy anymore not only talking about the extermination of opponents, but also enforcing it, we have a new trend. Reshaping the actual, potential or assumed political opponents as others and as »enemies« is being done by forcing them to accept certain policies and their values as their own. Forcing them to become us not only collapses their identity, but also removes danger from us. In that way the extremist relation towards them weakens, since they are now us, we know who they are. Besides that, when they are a part of us we control them, and their responsibility as a new part of us is far greater from the responsibility of older members. Since we are the best, they are honored to become us and they should show their respect by enhanced engagement towards everything that represents us, firstly by the relationship to its values and goals. That explains such treatment as »a convert is worse than a born believer«, i.e. the phenomena of catholicized Serbs that proceed in genocidal acts in order to prove themselves as a part of the new us, and by that fully confirmed their *new identity*. Only fully confirmed identity is accepted as such, and by this every doubt in loyalty of the New one is removed. New becomes old, and Unknown becomes known. The »Us« does not trust words but trusts actions, and the most valuable of all is self-immolation as the greatest proof of devotion. Hence self-immolation should not be understood as physical, but as spiritual. Renunciation of the old values is the real renunciation of the former identity and it is more valuable than renouncing life, since someone can even die and remain enemy. If such has spiritual products that endanger us, our confrontation with him lasts even after his death, therefore even when he is physically harmless and idle.

Since every extremism is *formally defensive*, whether founded or unfounded, and as a rule, the highest values and well-being of the members in whose name the extremists act are being defended, in the range from spiritual to dear life, by which we become entitled to uncompromising struggle for those values, and that struggle can very fast and easy become *the right to be bigoted*, i.e. the right to be intolerant.

That kind of »right« is based on the fact that the New, Extraneous and Foreign are dangerous per se to such a large degree that only the chosen ones that recognize them and that are *the guardians of the group and its well-being* can oppose to it and are the only ones that can lead the group in combat against that kind of evil. The importance of guarded invigorates among the guardians the fantastic core that exists in every personality, and gives it *the sense of enhanced responsibility*, and by that the sense of uniqueness in comparison to other members of the group. That is why *fanaticism* appears as a feature of extremism.

The vigilant dimension of extremism is hence not limited only to conservation of the old values in order to preserve the well-being of the group, but also to a right to choose new values and the path into future in general. At this point we are reaching another feature of extremism, which is that every form of extremism includes open or disguised *request for the leadership in the group* that it tends to represent.

If the New, Foreign and Unknown is that much strong, then it really cannot be perceived, and by all means cannot be accepted, so it is only logical that it is experienced as a non-being and nothingness. There is just one step from that towards the assurance that, as any other non-being, it contains bigger strength than we do. The awareness of the strength of something that is potentially dangerous for us impels us *to unite*. Hence the extremists rarely are not united into groups. By that they at the same time send a message to its collectivity that the salvation from other lays in concordance and togetherness that cannot be easily accomplished as values by themselves, but more represent an alluring slogan by which it is easy to win over many others that neither carry that much hatred towards Other in themselves, nor developed awareness of solidarity and a sense of social responsibility for its society, which can range from caring for the family to what is colloquially politically called patriotism.

The fact that there are *more extremists among men* is largely based on the guardian position as a traditionally male role, but also on a fact that narcissism is stronger among men than women. Therefore, willingness to reject something that is not me or us is far more expressed among men. Especially the fear that someone else could be more dominant, more respected and more of an example to others and by that hierarchically better positioned in comparison to us leads towards bigotry not only towards an individual, but also towards its entire race, nation, or religious or a group of some other type. He is not us, he belongs to them, and since they are not better than us, and we are the best in every way, his value cannot be greater than mine. In this way the group narcissism occurs as a therapeutic medium for the treatment of truncated individuality.

Exhibitionism occurs in this case as a preventive behavior, if not of the scared but of the ones worried for themselves, their relatives and their own kind, their religion or race. Hence extremists see themselves as the saviors of their wider social groups to which they, of course, have to belong by definition.

However, extremism as a form of *militant exhibitionism* is based on the need to be noticed and confirmed by others by our appearance and behavior. The clothes that stand out from others, the slogans that rip ears and the behavior that is outside the framework of socially and legally acceptable are a visual, not the sole nor sufficient proof of extremism. Even in the wildlife there are always specimens that tend to attract attention of the other members of the group or to overrule the enemy by its belligerent or pretentious posture. Such attitude should at the same time represent the individual as extremely sure of himself and as capable of overcoming the danger, which are also the characteristics that lead towards experiencing some individual as a real or potential *leader*. The extremists, whether they emphasize it formally or not, in fact always tend to take over management of their group, i.e. the group on whose behalf they act. But, from that also evolves some kind of natural resistance against them. As a free spirit, a man does not want to be lead not even when it is really necessary, or at least he does not want to see that he is being lead. His narcissism is not letting him to be lead. Hence the illusion of freedom is more common of a phenomenon than the freedom itself.

Right there lays the cause of *severity* with which extremists act in politics. The urge for destruction contains also a desire for destruction as its subspecies. With extremism the need for protecting ourselves from the dangerous Unknown and the overemphasized dangerous Other represents, from the position of the non-formalized or formalized leadership, *a demand* from others *to reorganize the protection system* of its own group into a more efficient, but not also more human *attack system*, and in such an extent that it includes reorganization of the entire order of the group or the society, which today represents the social order, into a militant as a most effective form of organizing in the case of danger. Whether the danger is really that great or not can hardly be observed in the eyes of an individual. The illusion which is the essence and the superior political skill plays a big role even in this case. Our experience of something turns into an averment of reality. *Extremism spreads and increases our fear* as the fear of others that is not equal to theirs, since in fear the eyes are big.

The violence of one's group and especially constant readiness to violence is justified by the necessity of prevention that is useful to all the members of one's group, but it is also an apparent sign of readiness to greater sacrifices and self-explanato-

ry reaction which is usually expressed by others and the leader. Extremism usually counts on the human need *to be protected even when we are not threatened* or when we don't even deserve it. Hence, in all societies is present the constant and not small capacity of understanding and tolerance towards extremism and at least partial self-identification with the extremist that is not followed by the readiness of the same amount of people to join them.⁹ The awareness of the fact that they are »doing it for us« is a common basis for justification of the extremist's actions in every environment.

Every situation that is dangerous to its own collectivity demands increased usage of *strength and wisdom*. Wisdom is the one that determines in which case the strength is preventive and timely shown in order to remove danger. The mistake of extremists is usually in the fact that they do not respect it as a duty, and they replace the combination of strength and wisdom as a formula of salutary section with the combination of *strength and emotion*. The lack of knowledge in order to recognize true danger is being compensated by the instinctive or generally empirical identification of the enemy. Because of that when addressing the masses they neither talk to reason nor try to cause a reasonable reaction. Goebbels used to say: »A leader talks to the heart«. Their goal is provoking the emotions, since emotional reaction contributes to the social turbulence that every form of extremism includes.

Expressing strength is something as inevitable as previously mentioned stretching to the limits of the organism, and hence all the efforts of the authorities to convince extremists to stay only within the limits of verbal popping out of the political normality and within the frameworks of convection are in vain.

Simply, *extremism is first of all an attitude that could also be followed by a behavior*, and everything else is far lesser. It doesn't need an extreme idea in order to be extreme, since it can convert every idea into an unacceptable one to others by means of realization, therefore by behavior. It is more of a question of the attitude towards an idea and the way it is conducted. For example, Adolf Hitler strived towards socialism, but only for his people and at the expense of the destruction and subdual of other people, hence his impression and the idea of socialism as a super-national project could not be accepted neither among the true socialists, nor to anyone who was not a pro-German national extremist, whereas the idea of socialism has always been at least formally followed by the idea of equality of people.

⁹ In FR of Germany there is, according to research conducted in the last twenty years (1984-2005), almost a constant number of habitants that feel hostility towards foreigners (about 30%), and also the ones that qualify themselves as supporters of extremism (about 15%).

Extremism demands *monolithic identity*, never mind if religious, racial or national.

The fact that primordial form of empowering the weak Myself in order to survive and the need of every type of protection demands *strengthening the identity through identification with another group* that we represent as much strong as possible and in total of a greater quality in order to have its members feeling better and more safe. However, that identification cannot become a goal by itself

For extremists, *there is no quality mixed identity*, because by complicating the answer to a question »Who am I?«, it does not allow clear consciousness of itself. Hence the mixed identity is »profane«, and hence the condemnation of mixed marriages, hence the member of a group does not have rights to cross into a different identity, and hence so much hatred toward real or apparent traitors - regardless of whether it is converting to another religion, nation, political opinion, or simply to a different cheering camp.

The hatred towards defectors, as their reciprocal hatred is in the extremist environments and extreme situations truly instinctively structured, and is the most terrifying of all types of hatred. It is the case of double hatred. Firstly, as a fear of weakening one's collectivity by draining their members, and secondly, as a fear of strengthening »their« collectivity as hostile, therefore as a fear of double damage, and hence possible punishment doubled in terms of hatred, condemnation and the desired level of violence against the »traitor«. By this we can also explain a larger amount of strikes by hand or a knife (in the USA the average is 22 strikes) than usual during the attacks of right-wing extremists against the homosexuals, since they have »betrayed« the mankind. Behind it lays the sense of inferiority and lower values. »We« therefore are not good enough so that that person would be with us, and even the very act of crossing to »their« side means to the unsure ones among »us« that »they« are better, and their mere acceptance of him means that he is also better than us. Enough reasons »him« and »them« to be punished, i.e. to inflict harm that would reduce their advantage in comparison to us. At the political level, especially above many others, *the myth of betraying* others is appearing as a reason of one's failure and frustration.

The safest elimination of all advantages of the opponent is, in the opinion of extremists, achieved by eliminating the very enemies, which also includes their physical elimination. Rising from the individual as the micro-social to the level of collective as the macro-social relationship, results in *mass political homicide, and even genocide*.

If an entire nation, or all the members of one racial or religious group, can be seen as irreconcilable enemy, then their extinction, a solution offered by extremists is the only one that can be understood as an attempt of »the guardians« to promptly finish their job of guarding and then only lead unhindered. Hence the death camps and mass purges of people who are guilty of belonging to »others« exist. The world is, like its history, full of examples of attempted extermination of some collectivities. The problem is that the most famous ones, and often the harshest examples are too often mentioned so that they seem to be the only ones. For example, at least among us everyone knows of the Jasenovac concentration camp during the Ustashe revolutionary movement in which Serbs, Jews and Romani were killed, but not many people know of, for example, the Jadovno concentration camp, even though during a period of 132 days 42.246 people were killed in it, among whom were mostly Serbs and Jews, and of which more than a thousand were younger than 14 years old.¹⁰ Hundreds of pits, so called »abysses« testify of attempts to cure the complex of inferiority transformed into envy, hatred and political extremism by killing the innocent. Nowhere like in politics is explicitly confirmed the rule, which Vladeta Jerotic emphasizes very skillfully, that every envy, if persists, becomes a crime.

On the other hand, the Ustashe movement led towards creation of reinforcement of already existing extremism among Serbs, which result was, among everything else, not only politically but also culturally impermissible generalization that all Croatian are a part of Ustashe movement, or that all Croatians are genocidal. In that way extremism, which is by itself based on prejudices, creates more prejudices on the opposite side, by which the evil is only multiplying, and not being eliminated at all.

It seems that *the human need for security and the need to be respected are closely related* and that they should always be observed as a whole with two faces. What else can a need to be reputable be but a need to be respected and confirmed by others as »someone«, and by that *to be secured from attack* from that side. »Nothing« and »no one« are not appreciated, and they are everyone's target. Because of that, people instinctively feel threatened if they are not appreciated. Therefore, acquiring and holding on identity is being done in order to at least partially achieve personal safety. Even though that kind of protection is not absolute, even as a partial protection it definitely means a lot to our (every) insecure Me. Hence that much effort to be recognized by others, but also that much troubles, since being recognized means being in advantage over the unappreciated ones, which is a challenge to the intolerants to annul that advantage if the individual being appreciated is

10 See: Djuro Zatezalo, *Jadovno, kompleks ustaških logora 1941*, Belgrade, 2008.

not on »their« side. In that way the desire for recognition emerges as a cause of not only struggle but also progress, both personal and social. For the real social order in terms of tolerance cannot exist if people do not respect each other, and in order to achieve that, in order to have someone respected by others, he must be respected by himself. Therefore, extremism can be annulled by *tolerance* if it is treated as a process that includes both self-evaluation and working on uplifting oneself that leads towards establishing respect of others. If we are not worthy of respect of others who we respect, it could be seen as a sign of our own weakness.

*In the basis of our disregarding someone is often the fear of empowering by it someone who is not ours and who might as soon as tomorrow become our enemy. For example, when we favor »our« religion, by that we also express fear of dominance of »them«, and by that the fear of our becoming, like any other minority, weaker and potentially more threatened. Isn't it often not only allowed, but also preferable at any sports competition to express support of »mine« and »ours«, and not the beautiful and exciting form of that sport that makes it so attractive! Doesn't it sadden or delight us when our or their team lose, and not the fact whether the game was good or bad! It is obvious that we are *prisoners of the primordial collectivistic consciousness far more than we are aware of it*, and that we will stay its prisoners for much longer time.*

It is not odd that that big of an effort of the international society is being made in order to protect minorities. Throughout history, all of the minorities were always endangered, apart from one – the minority that consisted of the ruling and the rich, and which are more or less always boiled down to the same. And then, with the French revolution of 1789 this kind of exception was put to an end. Since then, no one was ever safe again, and least of all the ones that turf others.

Extremism is in every society usually unwanted aspect of the political thought and action since it, as a sort of a *social stress*, *destabilizes* the society. Every kind of political extremism is characterized by *aggressive approach* followed by the lack an even total *absence of tolerance*, and a common feature of it is *fanaticism of acting in the name of sublime goals*. Extremists always see themselves as the only true *guardians of their collectivity from something »dreadful«*, to be exact from some great danger to their racial, national or religious collectivity. Every kind of extremism is *too efficient in finding the culprits and enemies* of the ones whose interests they are trying to represent. We could say that one of its main roles, in which it is, after all, sometimes even drained, *provoking the non-extremists to violence* by raising the level of their aggression and directing it to the marked »culprit«.

By their ferocity and their irrationality, they are always bringing anxiety to their environment so that someone can be, from their point of view, marked as enemy, and since everyone that acts and thinks as much different from them as possible, gets closer to becoming »enemy of the people, faith or race«, the environment in which the extremists are acting tends not to appear as such to them. The more pliable and timid people even join extremists, so extremists actually *mediate their influence by force*. Their influence and favorable circuit can mass them up to the verges of becoming the majority of the ones society's political scene, and then, by taking the state into their hands, they stop being extremists in their societies, being from that moment more and more extreme for their international environment.

Group identity is an important feature of every type of extremism. An individual fits into its chosen collectivity and serves it whether it is a nation, religious group or a race, and even football, or any other sport, i.e. cheering group. Such identity can be marked as a source of fanaticism, increased readiness to violence against others and themselves, intolerance and xenophobia as homicidal¹¹, even though in this case it is a typical tribal and therefore archaic identity – one but still very important feature is required. It can be pure national origin, deep religiousness, belonging to a race or even a profession.

Group narcissism which is the basis of every kind of extremism *excludes any alteration* by extremist attitudes. The picture of the world is black and white. There are only »them« and »us«. »We« are always good, smart, righteous and the victims of conspiracies, and »they« are evil, insidious, fraudulently and unrighteous. Even Konrad Lorenz noticed the function of »the black sheep« in the animalistic world on which the rest of the group builds its homogeneity on the fact that the black sheep is guilty of everything, and that everyone has rights to, with or without a cause, vent their anger on it in every moment. In that way even the ones who extremist see as enemies actually become »black sheep« on which the piled aggression in the collectivity is being released on, by which it is provided that the group members do not conflict among themselves that much or do not conflict at all. Hatred is more than welcome, but only towards the enemy and traitor. Attitudes are built only under the influence of emotion and based on the authority's guidelines and stereotypes. In return, the individual is »protected« from wandering around politics. He is offered a dogma which is believed to be the only trustful principle. Only devotion and determination in acting while realizing extremist goals are demanded from the individual. Extremists' motto is »who is not with us is against us«, which often more attracts supporters, since that excludes every freedom of action and thought.

11 See: Amin Maalouf., *Ubilački identiteti*, Paideia, Belgrade, 2003.

Every different opinion is not tolerated, and the opposing views are uncritically rejected. Competition is not allowed. The rest have to believe that extremists are right, even if they are forced to believe so. The one who wants to change by force will be destroyed by force.

Political extremism is an extremely political phenomenon. It always arises from the political intents and always exists in the field of politics. If the political motivation, i.e. the political goal is non-existent, we cannot talk about political extremism. Political extremism always represents a struggle against some and someone's politics, i.e. political authority and the attempt of establishing its own authority, or even the struggle to keep some regime in power. Politics always deals with it very intensively because of its maleficence. Also, the consequences of extremism are always also of political character.

Extremism, as a behavior that crosses the limits of allowed and acceptable, or which is borderline allowed and acceptable, *is today expressed in politics in two aspects: as advocating the extremely formed political goals by normal methods* (modern example – an attempt of Haider's Nazis to come to power in Austria through parliamentary elections), *or as advocating or attempt of realization of socially acceptable as normal political goals by using drastic and socially unacceptable measures*¹² (e.g. when trying to gather all the members of one nation in the same country through war and aggressive actions).

Even though we thought that *the third version of extremism in which extremely formed political goal tends to be realized by drastic measures and socially unacceptable methods* belongs to the past, the appearing of some new forms of extremism, among which *neo-Nazism* and *jihadism* as Islamic radicalism and clerical neo-fascism are reassuring us that the potential of the social reiteration of the right-wing extremism is still very large, and that it shows tendencies towards not only renewing itself in the same environments, but also to appear in totally new environment, as, for example, in Islamic states. The case of Israel, where the first group of neo-Nazis in the history of Israel was arrested September 9th 2007, shows that there is no nation immune to neo-Nazism. Young Jews, members of that organization are, like their supporters from other states or nations perform violent acts over foreign employees, homosexuals and other usual targets of neo-Nazis.

¹² An historical example of this phenomenon is the fact that in the times of Hitler, reducing the number of the mentally and physically retarded in the German society was being done by their mass murders.

Still, it is common that political extremism as a phenomenon is searched for and found in certain environments and nations. *Vladimir Dvornikovic* even concluded that, because of the ease of initiating conflict among the majority of Yugoslavian nations, »Yugoslavian man, due to his *mental dispositions*, is a political extremist «.

When talking about *the grounds of extremism*, it could be found everywhere, but it is still most common in the environments in which the power is being held by *the authoritative regimes* for a long time, and also *the environments witnessing turbulent changes*, in which the important historical processes, like modernization or political integration hasn't finished yet. Also, extremism is more often in *the revanchist-oriented environments, and also in the culturally retarded layers of a society*. All these factors can, but do not have to be connected. For example, the appearance of Nazism and fascism in Germany and Italy as countries that cannot, and could not at that time be subdued under culturally retarded environments are related to lower and middle classes of those countries as the ones that are inferior to the classes that give those countries the glow of culturally sublime environments. Today the phenomenon of extremism in Germany is not connected to the grounds of the former West Germany as a culturally developed, but to the territory of former East Germany as culturally retarded environment. Most of the extremists come from lower class of society, and by its hatred towards »the inferior race« or »the wrong religion«, they strive towards over-compensating their own social status or origin, and by that towards equalizing with their higher classes, and even towards raising above them in terms of possessing an excess of patriotism or an excess of formal religiousness in comparison to the rich or the intelligent members of their nation, race or religious group.

A tendency towards tradition and history in some environments is also interpreted as feature of extremism. Though, it is one thing to love history, and totally different to abuse it for political purposes. That is why *Klaus von Beyme* considers that the ones who want to make right-wing extremism acceptable based on the historical ideas are wrong as much as ones who are dealing with this problem by labeling the right-wing political parties as unacceptable.¹³

Regarding *the definition* of extremism, political theory hasn't yet given too big of a contribution and has limited itself to commenting on extremism or describing its manifestations, goals and executors. At all, in the flood of texts on the topic of extremism, surprisingly, not many definitions can be found. The main reason of avoiding defining extremism is the difficulty of that task. As Stephen Atkins

¹³ Elisabeth Carter, *The extreme right in Western Europe: success or failure?*, Manchester, Manchester Univ. Press, 2005, p. 14.

notices, “there are not many things that are so difficult to be defined as it is difficult to define extremism”.¹⁴ As much as it might be difficult to define terrorism, it is still a much easier task than defining extremism. Terrorism, as Atkins remarks, “begins with a conspiracy, and ends with a concrete destructive act”,¹⁵ while extremism lives behind the political scene but can still produce far more serious consequences than a terrorist act can. Many things that are extreme still linger on the border of allowed, even though barely not crossing it, and because of that many extremists lead totally normal lives that do not differ in any way from the lives of peaceful people. No one touches them nor can touch them, simply because we cannot penetrate into the minds of people, nor would it be democratic to perform a preventive control of their thoughts. Extremism is simply something that is more living out of our heads than an action. Only if the conditions are met, the attitude we have grows into action, but it is not easy to estimate how many people have some extremist opinion simply because they do not want to honestly express themselves due to the fear of consequences. Those additional difficulties, of course, only contribute to the reflectance of the task of defining extremism.

Many definitions of extremism are also too simplified or are emphasizing just one or two features of extremism as a phenomenon. Some of them simply criminalize extremism, like, for example, *Thomas Coffey*'s definition which states that “political extremist is someone who uses violence and criminal activities in order to realize its political goal”.¹⁶

From the spectrum of ideas of the contemporary theoreticians on extremism, we can single out as exemplary usable just some of them in order to define this term. For example, according to *Nozick*, the primary characteristic of extremism, apart from seeing its enemy as evil, is causing stress and not accepting compromises. On the other hand, there are even more stereotypical points of view are still of some value for the further exploration of extremism. For example, even though we cannot take as too original the idea that, according to *Laqueur*, people with authoritarian character usually join extreme right-wing groups, we still cannot dispute its usage when defining the term extremism.¹⁷

Based on the presented attitudes and others' observations on extremism, we believe that it is possible, and it would even be useful from the point of political theory,

14 Stephen Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Modern Worldwide Extremists and Extremist Groups*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut. London, 2004, p. xxv

15 Same

16 Thomas Coffey, *A better democratic model*, Victoria, B.C., Trafford, 2003, p. 150.

17 Laqueur, Walter, *Fascism*, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996, p. 9.

to give one personal definition of extremism as a contemporary phenomenon. It could say:

Extremism is a complex social occurrence based on overemphasized biological need to self-protect and the xenophobic variable of the identity mechanism that are used to form and justify barely allowable attitudes and aggressive behavior, by which are, as hostile, endangered some racial, religious, ethnic and other groups. Extremism is characterized by vigilant formally-protective attitude towards one's own group that includes excessive zeal in finding enemies and „the right“ to bigotry, hatred and aggressiveness towards the real or presumed enemy, and the tendency towards overtaking the leadership in one's own group or agglomerate for the sake of mobilizing it in order to systematically cross the borders of socially allowed behavior, and all that in name of keeping the values, identity and perspective of one's group.

According to many of its manifestations and consequences, and most of all, according to the possible level of destructiveness and destabilizing some political society, extremism is, to a large degree, yet not always, connected to politics. As a modern phenomenon, political extremism is usually determined as an attitude and behavior of the political far-left or far-right wing, or some radical religious group.

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PROBLEMI DEFINISANJA EKSTREMIZMA U SAVREMENOJ POLITIČKOJ NAUCI

Apstrakt

Rad se bavi određenjem fenomena ekstremizma iz ulga teorije politike. Autor je najpre krenuo od mnogoznačnosti pojma ekstremizma u svakodnevnom životu, što daje određene implikacije i u sveri savremene nauke. Ispitivana je veza između ekstremizma i ostalih oblika političkog nasilja, sa posebnim osvrtom na korelaciju koja postoji između ekstremizma i terorizma. Utvrđeno je da mnogoznačnost, amorfnost, vremenska, kao i prostorna uslovljenost ekstremizma u velikoj meri stvaraju probleme u savremenoj političkoj nauci prilikom definicionog određenja ovog fenomena.

Ključne reči: ekstremizam, terorizam, teorija politike, politička teorija, političko nasilje, političke nauke.