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CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG SCHOLARS IN RESEARCHING EXTREMISM

Abstract

In this paper, challenges most often faced by young researchers who deal with extremism are analysed. The amorphousness of this phenomenon, temporal and spatial conditionality, as well as numerous indistinctions regarding its definition, make extremism quite interesting, albeit complex for research. The author first explained the nature of the phenomenon of extremism, and then highlighted its characteristic forms and classification criteria. The paper provides explicit guidelines on how young researchers can collect data with the help of relevant research methods. The challenges most common faced by young researchers in the beginning of their research are hereby listed, as well as advice on how to overcome these challenges. The main goal of the paper is to present a realistic overview of all difficulties that researching extremism entails, but at the same time to shed light on new scientific approaches that can be useful.

Key words: extremism, terrorism, defining extremism, research, science, scientific work.

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INTRODUCTION

The search for knowledge about extremism sometimes resembles the quest for the Holy Grail. So far, no one has been able to formulate a universally acceptable definition of extremism, and yet, everyone is still persistently searching for it. Extremism, in fact, is quite a tempting phenomenon in the eyes of young researchers, precisely due to its ambiguity, security aspect and amorphous definition. At the very beginning, a logical question arises: How can we research something that we have not defined? This is precisely where the charm of researching extremism lies, given that researchers constantly encounter its many faces and forms that denote the extremely dynamic nature of this phenomenon. This dynamism of extremism is attractive, especially to young researchers, yet one should have in mind that that attractiveness is in fact a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the dynamics by which extremism changes and adapts to the modern age makes this phenomenon interesting; on the other hand, it is precisely this continuous chain of changes that makes researching extremism laborious, requiring absolute commitment of researchers, which can be very demanding for young scientists.

Let us first deal with the elementary things regarding extremism. In order to understand a social phenomenon, one should primarily define its essential characteristics (that is, its nature). While in natural sciences researchers, for example, know for certain the content of atoms (protons, electrons, neutrons) or the Pythagoras's theorem ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$), the situation in social sciences is quite different. Contrary to natural phenomena, which are exact and precise (and thus, their forecast is simpler and more precise as well), in social sciences, nothing is quite simple and precise.¹ Even though people attempted since the ancient times to foresee occurrences of phenomena in a society based on a cycle (cyclic theories)², rectilinear movement (linear theories)³, theories of progress⁴...they often forgot one significant factor – human beings and their unpredictable actions. Given that extremism is, first of all, a social (and then political, psychological, legal...) phenomenon, it is clear that (when speaking of long-term) it is difficult to predict its development and movement.

1 For example, there isn't a formula used for precisely determining occurrence and course of a coup with clearly defined actors, goals and final results; the same is true for terrorist attack as well.

2 For example, Plato, Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee.

3 For example, Augustine of Hippo.

4 For example, Condorset Antoine Nicholas, Anne Robert, Jacques Tuirgot.

Exactly due to all of the above, young researchers must understand the nature of extremism in order to finally be able to make predictions regarding this phenomenon. Then, one should examine all the forms of manifestation of extremism, determine classification criteria, find similarities and differences (*genus proximus* and *differentia specifica*) between extremism and other similar phenomena (terrorism, radicalism, fundamentalism...). It is quite significant to take into consideration the time and space in which extremism is being examined, since what is nowadays deemed as extremism might have been once in the past a widely accepted occurrence or behaviour. The same should be said for spatial context as well – if something is perceived as extremism by, for example, the West, it might be a common norm in Afghanistan and *vice versa*.

Only when they perceive all these elements can young researchers be able to understand (or even create) the definition of extremism. Here we face a new problem, given that there isn't a universally accepted definition of extremism (the UN still haven't managed to do that for terrorism, let alone for extremism), and thus, interpretations are different and quite often coloured by ideology. Contrary to terrorism, extremism is not exclusively a political phenomenon, and thus its dispersive nature asks for a multidisciplinary approach.

As it can be noted, even in the mere beginning, that researching extremism is a difficult, complex, uncertain, albeit quite exciting and interesting process. The beauty of it all lays in the fact that, when researching extremism, the youth is knocking on the door of one new cognitive process that will give a significant contribution to the society, depicted in prevention of terrorism. Whether will some of them shyly open this door a little bit or will they enter the research world of extremism with pride depends on their persistence, dedication, hard work and a little bit of luck.

NATURE OF EXTREMISM

In order to determine basic characteristics of the phenomenon of extremism, one should first of all perceive its essence, that is, its nature. We wouldn't be wrong if we said that this is one of the most uncatchable social phenomena.⁵ There are several reasons why it is hard to research the phenomenon of extremism:

⁵ Andrew Heywood stated in his works that ideology is one of the most uncatchable phenomena, but this can rightfully be said for extremism as well. See more about the phenomenon of ideology in: Heywood, Andrew. 2020. *Political ideologies: an introduction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

1. Extremism is differently interpreted depending on temporal and spatial context. Let us firstly deal with temporal context, using the example of inquisition. During several centuries of existence of inquisition, torture of the accused was legalized by passing a papal bull entitled *Ad extirpanda*.⁶ In contemporary times, this would represent use of extreme means and methods, and it is known, for example, that torture in prisons is forbidden by the *European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*⁷, as well as by numerous other international and domestic legal documents. Regarding spatial context, suffice it to say that stoning to death is still a legal punishment method in some countries while, for example, in the majority of countries of the contemporary world, this is perceived as extreme.⁸

2. Extremism is often identified with related phenomena (especially with terrorism). However, for example, while terrorism represents exclusively a political phenomenon, we cannot say the same for extremism. We have previously stressed its dispersive nature, and thus, extremism can be found in sports as well (for example, football hooliganism or extreme sports⁹), arts¹⁰, religion and finally, in politics. The next main difference between terrorism and extremism lays in the fact that every terrorism is at the same time also extremism, while *vice versa* does not apply. Namely, it is not necessarily that every extremism should grow into terrorism. In order to understand the relation of extremism and its related manifestations, we will provide an illustration that points to the fact that extremism intertwines and, in many cases, comes into

6 This bull was passed by Pope Innocent IV in 1252. See more in: Wood Barry. 2020. *Invented History, Fabricated Power: The Narrative Shaping of Civilization and Culture*. London: Anthem Press, p. 229.

7 Council of Europe [CE], H (87) 4 (1987), European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987), Adopted by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, on 7 July 1987.

8 The Iranian judiciary, for example, imposed a moratorium on stoning only in 2022; in Afghanistan, the Taliban continue to implement this method of punishment; in Sudan, individuals were sentenced to stoning in 2022; Brunei recently passed a new law stipulating that the act of homosexuality should be punished by stoning to death, etc. It is believed that a dozen of countries world-wide are still practicing this form of punishment.

9 Mountain biking, paragliding, bungee jumping, scuba diving with sharks...

10 Let us take the example of the Nazi idea of the so-called *degenerative art* which mocked creations of certain artists (expressionists) and exiled them from the country, while other ("eligible") artists were used for glorification of the Third Reich. See more in: Wasensteiner Lucy. 2021. *Twentieth Century German Art Exhibition: answering degenerate art in 1930s London*. Oxford: Routledge.

contact with terms such as radicalism, fanaticism, fundamentalism, populism, etc., but these are not identical phenomena. These circles that are mutually intertwining (but are not identical) in the illustration, represent a relation between extremism and its related terms.

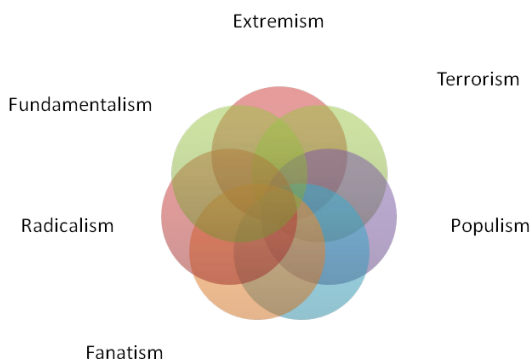


Illustration no. 1: Djoric Marija. 2021. *Ekstremizam i nova realnost: svet u doba koronavirusa*. Beograd: Institut za političke studije, p. 51.

3. There is no single universally accepted definition of extremism. Even though it was definitely present among people as a social phenomenon for a long period of time, extremism was established within the scientific system only in the eighties of the 20th century, primarily thanks to researchers (Uwe Bakes and Erkhart Jesse).¹¹ The fact that it was just recently established within the scientific discourse does not mean that extremism did not exist before. As far back as in Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics' do we find an analysis of extremism, albeit not under that name, but as *akrai* (extreme), opposite to moderate action (*mesotes*), which was most desirable for the life within the political community (Aristotle 2020). Besides that, it should be stressed that short definitions of extremism¹² are not productive and lead to its simplified perception. During my many years of professional research, I encountered numerous definitions of extremism, but I believe that it can be best

¹¹ See more in: Backes, Uwe. 2006. *Politische Extreme: eine Wort- und Begriffsgeschichte von der Antike bis in die Gegenwart*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; or Backes Uwe, Jesse Eckhard. 2006. *Gefährdungen der Freiheit: extremistische Ideologien im Vergleich*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

¹² Short definitions are inherent to natural sciences, while social sciences demand for wider and more comprehensive definitions in order to provide as detailed as possible description of characteristics of social phenomena. Moreover, one should have in mind that definitions of social phenomena are prone to change, given that we are speaking of quite dynamic phenomena.

understood when compared with the phenomenon of love:¹³

Every individual perceives love differently, in their own personal way, and despite the fact that we cannot find the right words to define love, every each of us knows how to recognize it. It is similar in the case of the phenomenon of extremism.

Even though the previous statement cannot be qualified as a scientific definition, it depicts the nature of extremism in the best way possible. Still, when we dive into professional analysis of definition of (political) extremism, it can be said that extremism represents “behaviour and opinion in the field of politics that is borderline permissible, with a tendency of crossing the line, and which is contrary to legal, customary and cultural norms of a society. As such, political extremism is always an unwanted occurrence due to the fact that it does not correspond with the modern democracy value system (such as tolerance, parliamentarism, compromise, dialogue, given that it directly undermines the legal state and rule of law. Its crucial characteristic is the use of violence, that is, propensity to violence (that does not always have to be realized)” (Đorić 2014, 37).

4. There isn't a unique psychological profile of a terrorist. Many international organizations, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and even states themselves¹⁴ have spent vast amounts of funds in order to profile a violent extremist/terrorist. Mostly all these attempts failed due to a simple reason – every radicalization process is individual, and thus factors that motivate an individual towards extremism differ from one to another. However, professor Kruglanski and his associates managed to identify several drivers of violent extremism. Their significance quest theory identifies “3 general drivers of violent extremism: need, narrative, and network”.¹⁵ Apart from pull and push factors, there

13 This paraphrasing is motivated by the definition of power provided by Joseph Nye: “Power is also like love, easier to experience than to define or measure, but no less real for that”. See more in: Nye S. Joseph Nye Jr. 2004. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs.

14 For example, France spent around 2.5 million EUR for a deradicalization program conducted outside prisons, organized in 2016 in Château de Pontourny. This was a pilot program of this sort (lasting for ten months) in France, employing 27 individuals, among whom were psychologists, social workers and special educators. It was planned that another 13 centers of that sort were to be open. Attendance was supposed to be voluntary, primarily for youth aged 18 to 30, obsessed with extremist ideas. In spite of big financial investment and efforts made by the educators, the program was unsuccessful. See more in: Fillion, Stéphanie. 2017. “What we can learn from France’s failed deradicalization center”. *La Stampa*. September 02, 2017. <https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/la-stampa-in-english/2017/09/02/news/what-we-can-learn-from-france-s-failed-deradicalization-center-1.34412986/>

15 Kruglanski Arie, Jasko Katarzyna, Webber David. 2018. “The Making of Violent Extremists”,

are also individual factors that drive an individual to extremism (psychological characteristics, emotional problems...). What we can conclude is the following: every radicalization process is individual, albeit this is true for deradicalization process as well.

In order to grasp better the nature of extremism, we must research its form. Here a characteristic problem emerges because young researchers often, with no relevant criteria, conduct classification of extremism, singling out the following: violent, right-wing, left-wing, individual... etc. Such approach is wrong because it is not systematic. There are different classifications of extremism, but for each of them, the most important thing is that there is a **criterion** based on which it will be conducted. For example, Uwe Backes used two criteria for classification of forms of extremism: according to the dimensions of civil equality and civil liberty: anti-democracy and anti-constitutionalism (Backes 2007, 251). The most common criteria based on which classification of extremism is being conducted are the following: violence (violent/non-violent extremism), program-goal orientation (ideological, ethno-separatism, religious extremism), number of actors (individual/*lone-wolf*/group), relation towards political sphere (political/non-political extremism)...¹⁶

HOW TO RESEARCH EXTREMISM?

Even the ancient Greeks stressed that knowledge can be increased by reading, observation, contemplation and participation (which will all be explained on the example of extremism in the following pages). Guided by this ancient Greek hypothesis, we can say that, for every beginner planning on researching extremism, it is advisable to first read up the existent literature from this field (*desk research*). The best is to start from shorter texts (research papers published in scientific journals), and then analyse scientific monographs and encyclopaedia. Platforms such as *Google Books* and *Google Scholar* can be a good first step in finding relevant literature (based on key words). After this step, a researcher can start searching for literature (in available libraries or electronic databases). Reference list created by authors we are reading can also be a significant helping hand in selecting relevant literature.

Observation is also quite significant for young researchers who have embarked on the path of researching extremism. There are two

Review of General Psychology, Vol. 22, No. 1, p. 107-120

¹⁶ See more in: Đorić, Marija. 2021. *Ekstremizam i nova realnost: svet u doba koronavirusa*. Beograd: Institut za političke studije, p. 55-58.

types of observation: with participation and without participation. Having in mind security challenges carried along with the phenomenon of extremism, it is better to choose the former. For example, when researching football hooliganism (which represents a sort of extreme behaviour), researchers can go to a high-risk football match and observe behaviour of hooligans along with the rest of the regular audience. In such moments, it is important not to reveal the true reason for attending the match, but to act as a “regular spectator”. Mimicry is exactly what is expected from individuals dealing in scientific research of extremism. Observation doesn’t necessarily mean going to high-risk events¹⁷, but it can imply observation of such events online, on TV, etc. The most important thing for researchers when observing some form of extremism is – their safety. They must foresee all security risks threatening them and organize observation in a maximally secure manner.¹⁸

On the other hand, observation with participation is not recommended due to security risk to which researcher might be exposed.¹⁹

Finally, contemplation represents the “mother” of all methods of increasing knowledge. It implies wise reflections on the given phenomenon, synthetisation of the entire previously acquired knowledge, use of inductive-deductive method of making conclusions, and, above all – logic. Hermeneutics is also often used in researching extremism, especially when speaking of symbols of extremist groups, that are quite diverse and useful for identification of extremism ideology. Dialogue can also have an inspirational impact on the contemplation process, given that it is thought provoking. The questions asked by others (or the ones we pose to them) might represent a quite exquisite *brainstorming*, bringing us closer to making conclusions. This is like the old, well-known Socratic “elenctic method (maieutic), that is “giving birth” to knowledge”.²⁰

While we have listed some methods of gathering information, it is important knowing that information on extremism can be gathered from open, as well as from confidential sources. Open-source information represent information gathered from all publicly available sources (books, scientific papers, media...), while confidential sources are problematic

17 Despite everything, the best impression is made during live observation on the spot.

18 This can be achieved by observation from a safe distance or by leaving the event if it is estimated that the situation might become dangerous.

19 This form of collecting data is more characteristic of operatives engaged in the security sector.

20 At this point, it is important stressing that not only our colleagues, professors, academicians and other subjects of the academia can provoke our thought process, but the non-expert public, eager to find out something new, as well. Specifically, during my professional engagement as a university professor, on many occasions, my students inspired me to new ideas, thoughts and conclusions by their creative questions and constatations – which was precious for my research work.

given that researcher cannot adequately quote them. In such conditions, information gathered from confidential sources can be best used for making better judgements and analysis of the phenomenon, no matter the fact that the source cannot be quoted.²¹ Scientific gatherings and conferences can be quite useful for young researchers when collecting information. Not only do they enable exchange of ideas with older and more experienced colleagues, but during such sorts of events, young researchers might even learn of some exclusive information still not listed in monographs and research papers. At this moment, it is important stressing that scientific ethics reiterates that the ideas and thoughts (especially innovative ones) of others must be quoted, even if they were collected in oral form. In this case, the name of the quoted individual must be listed, along with the type of scientific gathering, place and time. Such form of scientific honesty is more than needed, given that, in this way, we are, first of all, paying tribute to our colleagues and their work, but also, we are protecting ourselves from possibly non-checked information presented in oral form.

In order for young researchers to know how to prepare for researching extremism, they should, first of all, ask themselves several questions:

1. Why am I interested in this topic? This is quite a significant question, since it speaks of our motivation. A man is capable of even moving the mountains, if necessary, only if guided by the right motive. The best motive in this case would be “the thirst for knowledge”, a common trait of nature of every man, as stated by Aristotle (Aristotle 2020). This motive is one of the strongest (and at the same time the most honest ones), since it implies “knowledge for the sake of knowledge”, which is the basis of every scientific research work, given that such work asks for the “entire body and soul”. The humane, philanthropic motive, can be singled out as well, referring to the fight “against evil” (extremism) as a sort of contribution to the common good. There are other motives, such as adventurism, social status, competition among colleagues... but they are all short-term and do not produce long-term results.

2. What do I want to achieve in theoretical/empirical research? Even though researching extremism seems exciting at a first glance, young academic workers should know that it is not a “James Bond job” and that they will spend much more time in the

²¹ These sources partially refer to, for example, the *Chatham House Rule*, implying that information collected from a gathering where sensitive topic is being elaborated can be quoted, albeit the source must not be listed. This usually refers to meetings of international organizations/institutions, when the topic is of a sensitive nature.

office, library, at their work stations, than in the field. In order to, for example, conduct one valid empirical research (*in the field*), the researcher must beforehand be well-versed in theoretical knowledge.²² Moreover, it is of a great importance to set a scientific research goal (so that the research paper does not end up being too broad and thus lose its sense and purpose), which is most often being done through choosing a research question, that is, general hypothesis of the research.

3. What aspect of extremism do I wish to analyse? It is quite important knowing that, contrary to terrorism, which is a *par excellence* political phenomenon, extremism can occur in almost all spheres of life. Because of that, it is of crucial importance to study its psychological, social, criminal-legal, political, economic, cultural... nature. It is best to start from single segments to general, and thus, for example, one could first research extremism in one segment of the society (for example, in sports, in the form of football hooliganism), and then arrive to other manifestations of extremism, only to finally form a general image of extremism. It is also useful to research specifics of extremism in one region (or one state) and then focus on another, and finally, with the use of the method of comparative analysis, discover their similarities and differences. For example, the root of extreme right-wing is not the same in the EU, the US and in the Western Balkans. While right-wing extremism in the EU is generated primarily from xenophobia, which emerged as a result of migrations (from the Middle East and North Africa), the extreme right-wing in the US still has a racist background, to which testifies the continuing existence of the Ku Klux Klan and other similar racist organizations.²³ In the Western Balkans, yet, the situation is different, and the main generator of the extreme right-wing can be found in the post-conflict heritage, based on civil wars of the nineties. Besides this “old” generator of extremism, it turned out that there are also new ones, among which are the COVID-19 pandemic and the migration crisis.²⁴

22 And this can be achieved only through long-term and detailed examination of theory and literature.

23 See more in: Djorić, Marija. 2014. *Ekstremna desnica: međunarodni aspekti desničarskog ekstremizma*. Beograd: Udruženje Nauka i društvo Srbije, p. 245-252.

24 See more on new generators of extremism in the Western Balkans in: Djoric, Marija, Bojan Klacar. 2021. *Potential Generators of Right-Wing Extremism in The Era of COVID-19 Pandemic*. Sarajevo: IRI.

MOST COMMON CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG RESEARCHERS

First of all, we must state that it is not the same if you research extremism in Africa or, for example, in some country of the West. In the latter case, resources are richer and more available, which significantly eases the research process. For example, libraries at some American or European university campuses are equipped with the most contemporary literature, and the present staff is very eager to give a helping hand and instantly order new books if they are needed by students or researchers. Such approach to work significantly eases the research process. On the other hand, lack of resources drives young researchers to turn to some other forms of gathering knowledge, to go to the scene of action, to use an empirical approach (fieldwork), to give an original contribution. It all depends on the approach, as well as the motivation of young researchers.

Besides lack of literature, one of the most common challenges is – relevance of literature. Fifteen years ago, when I first started researching this phenomenon as a young teaching assistant, not only did I face the lack of literature on extremism (usually papers on terrorism could be found), but also, at the given time, I faced sensationalist writing about extremism (which was not scientifically founded). Even though sometimes even journal articles, podcasts, YouTube videos, and social media postings can be used for data gathering, it is important to make a distinction between scientific valid and non-scientific non-valid sources of information. It is very important to approach every (even scientific) reference from a critical standpoint. The fact that someone represents “the Alpha and Omega” of the academic world does not mean that their statement or conclusion must be unmistakably accurate. This is exactly why young researchers should examine different, and if possible opposite approaches and make their own conclusions from them. In order for this to happen, a researcher must possess significant foreknowledge, acquired only through dedicated work when examining literature (desk research).

The second challenge is of a security nature.²⁵ Namely, researching such security sensitive topic might represent some sort of a risk to researchers. Of this speaks the best the case of professor Adrian Guelke²⁶

25 See more on security challenges in: Gaćinović, Radoslav. 2020. “Osnovne funkcije države u procesu izgradnje sistema bezbednosti”. *Politika nacionalne bezbednosti* 2/2020. Beograd: Institut za političke studije, p. 277-295.

26 Some of his most known works: Guelke Adrian. 2027. *Rethinking the rise and fall of apartheid: South Africa and world politics*, London: Bloomsbury Academic; Guelke Adrian. 2022. *Peace Settlements and Political Transformation in Divided Societies: Rethinking Northern Ireland and South Africa*. Oxon and New York: Routledge; Guelke Adrian. 2012. *Politics in deeply divided*

from Queens University in Belfast, a well-known expert in the field of researching terrorism. In 1991, he was shot in the early morning while asleep in his house in south Belfast. Members of the loyalist terrorist organization from Ireland claimed responsibility for the attempted murder (he survived the attack).²⁷ This does not mean that everyone who researchers security topics²⁸ will be a potential target of extremists and terrorists, but surely, they will be a subject of their interest. Due to all of this, researchers must be strictly professional when writing or speaking of the phenomenon of extremism. This would entail citing relevant research sources, elaborating firstly the phenomenon, and not individuals in extremist/terrorist groups, and to always be objective when making conclusions (without dealing with politics, ideology and emotions²⁹).

The next challenge refers to gender sensitive issues, which especially reflects on female researchers. Prejudices stating that politics (as a public sphere of action) is predominantly a “male thing” (especially in patriarchal environments) might represent a sort of a Gordian knot for women.³⁰ They will often encounter contestation, and they might need a longer period of time to prove themselves and express their knowledge. In this case, an advice should be given to women researching extremism through support and a promotion of a motto that **knowledge is the only authority**. The moment when you start having a good command of the subject you deal with (which is exclusively the result of your work, effort and love for your work), no one will care for your gender, where you come from, what is your religion, etc. Besides, sometimes it can be easier for women researchers of the so-called “male phenomena” (such as extremism) to observe some events in which extremists take part (for example, football hooligans), since they are perceived as “benign occurrences”³¹. Moreover, women can stand out faster from the crowd

societies, Cambridge: Polity Press, etc.

27 See: Encyclopedia. (n.d.). “Guelke, Adrian”. *Encyclopedia.com*. Last accessed 15 September 2022. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/guelke-adrian>

28 See more on security topics in: Đorić, Marija, Tanja Milošević. 2020. “Uticaј Saudijske koalicije na nacionalnu bezbednost Jemena”. *Politika nacionalne bezbednosti* 2/2020. Beograd: Institut za političke studije, pp. 153-174.

29 The last thing on the list might sometimes be difficult since we are all living beings, made of flesh and blood, with specific emotional set – albeit one should work of achieving the highest level of objectivity.

30 The prejudices stating that politics are predominantly a “male sphere of action” originated in the ancient period. Namely, even in ancient Greece it was believed that governing the *polis*, and thus politics as the public sphere of action, is reserved to men. Contrary to that, *oikos* (as a synonym for house, craft) belonged to women, as a private sphere. Of course, many centuries have passed since then, but in primitive and misogynistic communities, stereotypes still persist.

31 This would mean that hooligans in a football matches do not even assume that a woman could

of predominantly male researches exactly due to “oddity” of the topic they deal with. To conclude, success in the academia should not be predisposed by gender, but it should exclusively be based on knowledge and results. And when speaking of prejudices, they can sometimes stand in our way, but they must not prevent us from fulfilling our goals. After all, prejudices exist so that they could be refuted.

Besides the previously listed challenges, financial problems, faced especially by young researchers, should be mentioned as well. Namely, it is quite expensive to travel to a scientific gathering abroad at your own expense. However, there are always grants for young researchers³² that might provide financial support, it is only necessary to express an interest on time and write a good paper that will be accepted. International contacts are quite desirable, not only for exchange of knowledge, but also for creation of a network of contacts with colleagues world-wide, which will be quite precious at one point in the future.

CONCLUSION

Even though this paper was paved with the good intention of the author to stress the most important issues faced by young colleagues who decided to research extremism, this does not mean that all existing challenges were analysed. They will be conditioned by correlation of socio-political events, personal factors of researchers, working environments and many other factors. Scientific work can sometimes resemble the Sisyphean work (especially in the beginning of the research), but quite often it provides a significant feeling of satisfaction in the end.

The goal of this a little bit unusual paper was to encourage all the ones who decided to dive into the adventure known as – researching extremism, but also to light the way to all of them preparing themselves for researching extremism. It is much easier when we know what awaits us and it is good to prepare on time for scientific research challenges and possible obstacles on the way.

Besides the fact that basic characteristics of extremism, its forms and definitions, should be examined, every young researcher also needs a certain dose of dedication. This dedication will serve as a “tail wind” that will push us forwards when the days of hardship in the process of research arrive (and they always do arrive). Apart from that, we need the audacity to go to places never stepped into before. And, of course – the observe them, exactly due to prejudices. This is an example of prejudices working “for” women researchers.

32 The author of this paper used grants intended for young female researchers aged to 35 many times.

love of knowledge, which should be the predominant motivating factor. Some of us were pushed into research by the need for passing knowledge to the arriving younger generations (students).

As stated in the beginning, the quest for knowledge on extremism is like the quest for the Holy Grail. It is possible that none of us will ever find it, but we will set many hypotheses along the way which will, let us hope, one day become scientific laws. For every great piece of work, it is necessary to stand out and make the first step, which is usually the hardest thing to do. As the Chinese wise man Lao Tzu said: *The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.*

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