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# CIVIL SOCIETY AND EXTREME-RIGHT COLLECTIVE ACTION IN POLAND 1990–2013

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**ABSTRACT** – *Civil society is considered an important element of the modern democratic order and is expected to fill the space between the state, the market and the private sphere. However, there are social movements that try to occupy this particular sphere, yet deviate from the ideal of civic-minded organisations that support and sustain the democratic order. The main feature of such movements is the acceptance of violence as a means of political struggle and an anti-state and anti-egalitarian ideology. Since the beginning of the 1990s in Poland, aggressive homophobic rhetoric has escalated and the number of attacks on ethnic minorities, LGBT communities and leftists has increased greatly. Nevertheless, only a few such incidents aroused interest and action at the highest political level. Drawing on social movement theory and the methodology of protest event analysis, which uses information gleaned from national newspapers, we propose a way to conceptualise the specific repertoires and targets of the Polish extreme right from 1990 to 2013 with a special emphasis on two kinds of repertoire: confrontational (violent) and conventional. Our general task is to show variations over time and analyse the three distinct time periods of this phenomenon: 1990-2000, 2001-2007 and 2008-2013. Our particular task is to test aspects of the mechanism of movement formalisation responsible for changes in the proportions of confrontational and conventional acts, actors responsible for such behaviour and targets related to these actions over time.*

**KEY WORDS** – *extreme right, civil society, social movements, collective violence*

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## INTRODUCTION

Civil society is considered an important element of the modern democratic order and is expected to fill the space between the state, the market and the private sphere. Such a normative understanding of civil society assumes that civic activism builds social capital, trust and shared values, which are then transferred into the political realm and help hold society together (Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1994). However, there are social movements that try to occupy this particular sphere, yet deviate from the ideal of civic-minded organisations that support and sustain the democratic order. The main feature of such movements is the acceptance of violence as a means of political struggle and an anti-state and anti-egalitarian ideology. If we define civil society as a sphere of rational and democratic social interaction (Habermas, 1991, p. 30), the extreme-right movement, with its anti-democratic and racist policies, could be considered as an important part of so-called “uncivil society”.

Laurence Whitehead (1997) defines uncivil society as a sphere populated by actors that (1) lack commitment to act within the constraints of legal or established rules, and (2) lack the spirit of civility, “civic responsibilities” or “civic-mindedness”. Yet the boundaries between “civil” and “uncivil” societies are neither clear nor definite, especially in newly born and struggling democracies. According to Cas Mudde, “uncivil movements and contentious politics should be included in the study of civil society” (Mudde, 2003, p. 164). The history of the extreme-right movement in Poland and Europe confirms Mudde’s doubts about the necessity of a strict delineation between two visions of civil society. It is not reasonable to dismiss the extreme right as an actor occupying only the dangerous

margins, as is often the case in media discussion. In the course of its activity in Poland, this movement has managed to shift away from the margins it occupied in the 1990s and has claimed a place at the very heart of the public sphere: in 2001 its representatives held elected positions in parliament, while its rank-and-file activists, skinheads and hooligans have been considered defenders of national values and tradition by a large part of Polish society. Of course, the extreme right invariably adheres to definitional traits of uncivil society (Piotrowski, 2009, p. 179), yet its repertoire of action changes and, as this paper illustrates, under favourable conditions the movement can blend into the sphere occupied by the organisations (and citizens) which use more conventional methods of interaction with the state. In this way, the movement is able to transcend the boundaries between these two spheres. We argue that this happens during the process of the institutionalisation of the movement's repertoire of action and its targets<sup>1</sup>.

Scholars claim that unconventional forms of European and American social movement protests in the last sixty years are growing less prevalent in the repertoires of social movements. For example, Soule & Earl (2005) find that the number of protests that use contentious tactics declined from the early 1960s to the late 1980s in the USA, while McAdam and his collaborators note the virtual disappearance of violent protest in Chicago after the 1970s (McAdam, Sampson, Weffer & MacIndoe, 2005). Everett (1992) finds evidence of a shift in tactical repertoire towards lower-risk activities over a similar time period. This is closely related to the argument that there has been an increase in the number of social movements that aim to support the "public interest" through the use of institutional means (Minkoff, 1997; Walker, 1991). Some argue that the decline in confrontational collective action is associated with the increasing organisational complexity and institutional involvement of social movements (Piven & Cloward, 1977; Staggenborg, 1988).

Similar phenomena can be observed in the case of the extreme-right movement. Koopmans and his collaborators (2005) show that the important factor that fosters the use of a more conventional repertoire of action is the presence of an extreme-right party within the established political system. The French example shows that the lowest number of confrontational protests occurred in France during the years (1980s and early 1990s) when the National Front occupied seats in the parliament. Conversely, the highest amount of racist vi-

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1. We use repertoire for a tool of action available to a movement or related organisation in a given time frame (see TILLY, 2008).

olence was recorded in the 1990s in Germany, which does not have an established extreme-right party (Koopmans *et al.*, 2005, p. 197). More recent studies (Rydgren, 2007; Betz & Johnson, 2004; Mudde, 2010) even raise the question of the difficulty of continuing to call these parties “extreme”, because of their acceptance of procedural democracy and recent electoral successes<sup>2</sup>. On the one hand, their popularity indicates that they represent more than a fringe element in the electorate, but on the other hand, their anti-immigrant stance and radical anti-pluralist rhetoric, which stress a homogeneous vision of the national community, is still a distinctive element of this type of organisation.

Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to the repertoires of the extreme-right social movements, ignoring the basic distinction between confrontational (violent) and conventional collective behaviour and the conditions in which these repertoires appear. At the same time little space has been devoted to the targets of the extreme-right social movements. A few researchers on collective violence provide a partial exception to this neglect. For instance, Koopmans’ (1996) findings on the extreme-right movement suggest that the ratio of violence varies across time and historical contexts. Caiani and her collaborators (2012, 2013a, 2013b) show that the ratio of disruptive actions varies according to the impact of the political opportunity structure on the extreme-right social movements in Western Europe and the USA. Additionally, Koopmans & Olzak’s (2004) study of the discursive opportunities and variations in right-wing violence in Germany also takes into consideration the distinction between different forms of action and the contexts in which they occur. Likewise, a few researchers have provided an exception to the aggregation of targets into one indivisible category of events. The work by Caiani *et al.* (2012) on the extreme-right movement shows that targets at which activists direct their actions also change when the extreme-right social movement tries to gain seats in parliament. When external opportunities change, the extreme-right organisations also begin to look for a new set of enemies.

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2. To give some examples: the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) has won seats in every national election since 1956. Other countries have much shorter histories of extreme-right party success: in the 2010 general election the Sweden Democrats for the first time crossed the four-per-cent threshold necessary for parliamentary representation, The Swiss People’s Party has dominated at the polls since 1999 and gained 26.6 per cent of the national vote in 2011. While often vilified by larger parties, some have been legitimised in parliament; both the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) in 2010 and the Danish People’s Party (DF), in 2007 and 2011, have been supporting parties for minority governments.

The landscape of social protests in Poland has changed radically since 1989. Since the beginning of the 1990s, aggressive homophobic rhetoric has escalated and the number of attacks on ethnic minorities, LGBT communities and leftists has increased greatly. A dozen years later, in 2011, the Nigdy Więcej [Never Again] association, the biggest NGO engaged in the eradication of racism and xenophobia, registered more than 300 cases of hate speech, attacks on members of ethnic and sexual minorities, acts of vandalism against religious minorities and similar incidents aimed at leftist or liberal activists. Nevertheless, only a few such incidents have aroused interest and action at the highest political level. For many commentators, scholars and state agencies the extreme right as a political actor and perpetrator of violence was an entirely new phenomenon. Pankowski & Kornak (2005) argue that the state and its elites were blind to the fact that the extreme-right movement has existed and been active since the 1990s, and not even when an extreme-right party came to power (2001) and then left it (2007) did this attitude change. What is more, currently (2016), it seems that the state elites, represented by the right-wing Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice] party (hereafter PiS), are very close, ideologically and organisationally, to the actors of the extreme right. Despite the fact that our study covers only the years 1990–2013, we observe an almost similar phenomenon which we experienced in 2001–2007: one of the main forces in the Polish parliament was a right-wing political party (PiS), with a strong extreme-right political party (League of Polish Families—hereafter LPR) alongside. There are also some differences. The organisation which today brings together the extreme right and the populist right-wing politicians (Kukiz'15) is not a party itself but a committee of voters, thus, the extreme right is not formally represented in parliament, as it was in 2001–2007. Moreover, in 2001–2007, right-wing political forces did not dominate the parliament obtaining a majority, as happened after the elections in 2015<sup>3</sup>, and PiS was accompanied by the post-communist political formation Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej [Democratic Left Alliance], hereafter SLD. Our results suggest that the presence of the extreme-right party in parliament reduces the level of violent (confrontational) action, but, nowadays, there is also support for the opposite argument that when the right-wing party with

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3. Some 51% of Members of the Polish Parliament belong to PiS. PiS and its coalition partner (Kukiz'15) occupy a total of 60.2% of seats in the Polish parliament. Furthermore, the presidential election in 2015 was won by the PiS member Andrzej Duda. The party has in its hands both executive (President, Council of Ministers and the Prime Minister) and legislative powers (Parliament).

the support of the extreme right dominate the political arena the acceptance of violent action increases<sup>4</sup>.

Drawing on social movement theory and the methodology of protest event analysis, which uses information gleaned from national newspapers to measure occurrences of protest events, we propose a way to conceptualise the specific repertoires and targets of the Polish extreme right from 1990 to 2013 with a special emphasis on two kinds of repertoire: confrontational (violent) and conventional. Our general task here is to show variations in protest mobilisation by the Polish extreme right over time and to analyse the three distinct time periods of this phenomenon: 1990-2000, 2001-2007 and 2008-2013. Our particular task is to test aspects of the mechanism of movement formalisation responsible for changes in the proportions of confrontational and conventional acts, and the actors responsible for such behaviour and targets related to these actions over time. To do so, we focus on the quantitative traits of the actors and repertoire of protest configurations and show the dominant patterns of each period correlated with the most central targets. Our research is the first quantitative attempt to analyse the trajectory of the mobilisation of the Polish extreme right.

## FORMALISATION AND INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE EXTREME RIGHT

In the social sciences *formalisation* refers to the general process of embedding a given organisation into a wider social environment, political system or (civil) society as a whole (Staggenborg, 1988). The term is also used to describe the creation or foundation of governmental institutions or specific bodies responsible for overseeing or implementing policy. “Formalized organizations have established procedures or structures that enable them to perform certain tasks routinely and to continue to function with changes in leadership” (Staggenborg, 1988, p. 587)<sup>5</sup>. In turn, the notion of *institutionalisation* is used to highlight a distinction between socially accepted and legal forms of collective actions, and those that are more contentious and violent (Tilly, 2003, p. 46). Institutionalisa-

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4. When PiS and its coalition partner (Kukiz'15) won a parliamentary majority, the number of episodes involving violence, particularly against ethnic minorities, increased significantly.

5. In contrast, an *informal* organisation has few established procedures and loose membership (STAGGENBORG, 1988, p. 590). Informal leadership makes it impossible to govern with the help of procedures. For this reason major changes in leadership (e.g. death of the leader) are likely to coincide with major changes in structure and activity.



tion means that conventional forms of action become prevalent in the repertoire of a given movement. We hypothesise that the very presence of an extreme-right party in the parliamentary arena (*formalisation*) goes hand in hand with the institutionalisation of the extreme right. In a situation of formalisation the movement's repertoire of contention is expected to be much more conventional (i.e. less violent) than in a situation when the movement does not participate in institutional politics and can only act in an extra-parliamentary arena.

Protest is a form of action through which groups make contentious politics (Tilly, 1978). And protest is a means towards achievement of a strategic goal—gaining the public's attention or more power relative to the target of the demonstration, and the type of protesting actor. To give some examples, in democratic societies there is considerable pressure on certain political actors to secure access to the polity by mobilising large numbers of people to legitimise electoral support. Yet in order to achieve (or to maintain) a status of parliamentary actor these groups must play by the formalised rules of the game. Violent action, especially against people, reduces legitimacy and excludes a large part of civil society from potential supporters (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). By contrast, small, marginalised groups may benefit from violence against civilians as attackers receive negative, albeit salient, media attention, gaining an opportunity to present their ideas to the wider public (Amenta *et al.*, 2009). We posit that the explanation of the process of institutionalisation of the repertoire as a result of the formalisation of the movements' structure must include the impact of *internal* factors complemented by the approach which explains *external* context. We argue that if we want to explain the place of the confrontational repertoire in the process of collective mobilisation we must look at how it operates against other forms of repertoire, especially the most distant from violence. Similarly, if we want to explain the place of specific targets used in a particular period of time we must look at which targets the extreme-right movement distanced itself from, regarding them as most controversial.

Our hypotheses state:

*Hypothesis 1.* An extreme-right political movement that operates in the presence of a strong extreme-right political party in the parliament (formalisation) is more likely to reduce its amount of confrontational actions and choose more moderate (conventional) types of action (institutionalisation), but the overall

level of mobilisation is expected to be higher than in other periods because of a higher degree of visibility and legitimacy for extreme-right ideas in the public sphere.

With data on over 23,000 protest events in the United States between 1960 and 1995 Wang & Piazza (2016) provide robust evidence that protest events that target state actors or generally protest demands with appeal to broader audiences are less likely to deploy violent tactics. By contrast, protest events with demands that have narrower targets (specific persons or groups) are more likely to use confrontational tactics. In other words, extreme-right activists whose demands are not widely shared in the democratic public sphere (controversial or against political correctness) will be more likely to turn to more disruptive forms of actions. We found that the Polish extreme-right movement directs its action at 1) *broader* targets and 2) *narrower* targets. In the first category are events which include targets such as politicians in parliament, governmental organisations and institutions of the state, international institutions (e.g. EU, NATO), socio-economic issues and traditional values. The second category includes persons or groups belonging to sexual and ethnic minorities, and members of left-wing political organisations. Thus, we hypothesise:

*Hypothesis 2.* An extreme-right political movement that operates in the presence of a strong extreme-right political party in parliament is more likely to concentrate its action on targets that could be regarded as broader than targets considered as being typical enemies for extra-parliamentary extreme-right violent action: leftists, ethnic and sexual minorities.

## DEFINING THE EXTREME RIGHT IN POLAND

What is the extreme right? Most definitions define the movement as nationalist, xenophobic and promoting anti-democratic authoritarianism (Carter, 2005). A comparative study by Wimmer (2002) shows that extreme-right ideology consists of a political and an ethnic component, i.e. the devotion to the idea of a sovereign nation state, ethnic exclusivity and cultural homogeneity. Koopmans *et al.* (2005) also stress the ethnocultural idea of citizenship in the extreme right's words and actions. Other authors stress the movement's "all or nothing", radical stance (Caiani *et al.*, 2013a). Perhaps the common denominator for all actors who belong to the category of the extreme right is their commitment to

an ideology of an intrinsic inequality among humans on the one hand, and the acceptance of violence as a mean of political expression on the other (Eatwell, 1996). Caiani *et al.* state:

*“Beyond ideology, the extreme right has also been defined by its preference for disruptive or even violent forms of action. Anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian frames have normally been accompanied by aggressive behaviour towards political opponents as well as ethnic, religious, or gender minorities”.*

*(Caiani et al., 2012, p. 6)*

We find this general definition especially accurate and apt for the aims of this article, yet it should be complemented with a note on the specificity of the context within which an extreme-right grouping operates.

Mann (2004) proposes adding to the ideology and specific repertoire a third trait, which is the historical continuity of extreme-right organisations. What defines the Polish extreme right as a relatively coherent political milieu is its constant reference to the nationalist programmes and organisations of the inter-war period (Lipiński, 2013, p. 5). In the history of Poland, the interwar period (1918–1939) was the time of the most zealous activity of extreme-right organisations<sup>6</sup>. The communist regime that ruled Poland from the end of World War II until 1989 banned such organisations. The revival came in 1989. Almost all of today’s extreme-right organisations in Poland refer to the traditions of the interwar pe-

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6. One of the most active organisations at the time was the Narodowa Demokracja [National Democracy] movement—hereafter ND. The founder and principal ideologue of the movement was Roman Dmowski. Born in Warsaw in 1864, under Russian occupation, he was one of the most popular politicians in Poland’s interwar period. In 1903, he published his nationalist manifesto entitled *Thoughts of the Modern Pole*. This book is still very significant in the canon of Polish political thought dedicated to the issues such as national sovereignty and anti-Semitism. The ND political programme was based on the idea of fighting for Poland’s sovereignty against the repressive imperial regimes and an anti-Semitic stance, intending to exclude Jews from Polish social and economic life. Movement support was made up of the ethnically Polish intelligentsia, the urban lower middle class, some elements of the wider middle class, and its extensive youth movement. In 1937, under the influence of dissident former ND members (including the members of radical organisations such as Młodzież Wszechpolska [All-Polish Youth], hereafter MW, and the Obóz Narodowo Radykalny [National Radical Camp], hereafter ONR, the rectors of several Polish universities created a *numerus clausus*—reducing the percentage of students of Jewish origin to 10%. This was a part of a comprehensive discriminatory campaign that also aimed to bring about the segregation of Jewish students from Polish students. After the outbreak of the Second World War, extreme-right activists engaged in the fight against Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

riod, drawing from it their political agenda and symbols<sup>7</sup>. Consequently, in our article we will use the term “extreme right” to refer to those political groups that adopt nationalist ideology, (sometimes) extremist forms of action, and a reference to the traditional symbols.

Due to the virtual absence of ethnic minorities or immigrants in modern Poland, the extreme right here is forced to construct its enemy using different tactics to those used in Western European countries. Its attitude towards other nationalities is based on historical sentiment rather than current affairs, as in the case of traditional anti-Semitism or Germanophobia<sup>8</sup>. Its major ideological tenets refer to the notion of a traditional national identity defined by Catholicism, the Polish language and Polish ethnicity. In the early 1990s, one of the central elements of Polish extreme-right ideology was anti-Semitism (Pankowski, 2010, p. 3). Later on, questions of access to the European Union and a fight against sexual minorities have become more important.

What extreme-right movements in the West and East have in common is a desire for a culturally and ethnically homogeneous society. According to Statham (1998), the extreme right conveys an ethnocultural conception of national identity. By “the extreme-right movement” he means strategic intervention, either verbal or nonverbal, in the public domain “by groups who react to and mobilize against the presence of migrants and ethnic groups, demanding that the state enforce measures that exclude such groups from social, political and cultural rights” (Statham, 1998, p. 14). In the case of the Polish extreme right this definition has to be slightly modified. By “the extreme right” we mean political groups who mobilise around the task of preserving “national identity” (defined by ethnicity, religion and language) and nationalistic symbols (as signs of political affiliation), demanding that the state enforce measures that support this vision of “national identity” and oppose competing visions, especially the idea of the nation as a political and democratic civic community (see Koopmans *et al.*, 2005, p. 181).

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7. The *falanga* symbol (a stylised arm with sword in hand) used by the pre-war ONR activists has become the trademark for almost all today's extreme-right organisations.

8. It should be stressed that hostility towards ethnic minorities have never ceased to be one of the main elements in the ideology of the extreme right in Poland. Even if the proportion of citizens of Jewish origin after World War II decreased considerably, anti-Semitism still played a big role in the rhetoric of such organisations after 1989 (PANKOWSKI, 2010, p. 3). However, anti-Semitism never became a topic allowed in the public sphere and was frequently condemned by numerous moral authorities. From 2014 to 2016 attacks on persons of Arab ethnic origin intensified, regardless of the fact that Poland was not the object of Islamic fundamentalists' attacks or a significant immigrant destination. Furthermore, anti-Islamic rhetoric became a part of discourse in the public sphere.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In order to test our hypotheses we have created a dataset of extreme-right activities in Poland covering the last twenty-four years (1990-2013). The main unit of analysis is a single protest event. To define a protest event we take the concept of “political claim” (Koopmans *et al.*, 2005, p. 180) as a basis. This means that we consider as a “protest event” every intervention in the public domain, verbal or nonverbal, which includes a political claim. In order to be coded, events must be political, in the sense that they relate to collective social problems and solutions. What is more, a political claim must be backed by an identifiable political act. We do not analyse the individual statements of politicians as in text analysis, but a concrete act, for example a demonstration, march, strike, letter, lawsuit, etc. The characteristics of such acts (events) are derived from mentions in the daily newspapers. One such article may describe several events, and the opposite is also true—one event may be described in a number of press articles.

Protest event analysis is a method for quantifying detailed properties of protests (McCarty *et al.*, 1996). It informs a researcher about changes in the forms of action and targets, and helps to identify periods of intensification or decrease in the frequency of confrontational protests and other similar phenomena. Despite some reservations, and its many weaknesses, newspaper-based analysis allows us to present, if not the real number of protests, at least the associations among specific variables of forms of protest events, as well as much more general trends (Franzosi, 1987; McCarthy *et al.*, 1996). For the period of time under analysis we used articles published by *Gazeta Wyborcza* and the Polish Press Agency—the largest and most reliable press agency in Poland. We have used a standardised codebook and coded all the protest events that fit our operational definition of an extreme-right protest event<sup>9</sup>. As a result, a database consisting of a total of 962 recorded events was created. Protest events were then divided into three period groups. The division of time was designated by three historical events. First (1990-2000, N=336), the revival of the Polish extreme-right movement dates back to the end of the communist regime in Poland. Second (2001-2007, N=396), the extreme-right party, Liga Polskich Rodzin [League of Polish Families], hereafter LPR, enters the parliament winning 38 seats. Third (2008-2013,

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9. We used paper copies of the *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper. We looked through them by hand in search of the events with the participation of the extreme right. The next step was to create an index of all the identified extreme-right actors (organisations and subcultures) for the search through the electronic archives of the Polish Press Agency.

N=230), as a result of the elections in 2007 the LPR party lost all its seats and the biggest central-right party, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice]—PiS—obtains a virtual hegemony on the right wing of the political scene.

Regarding the operational criteria used for the dataset, three aspects of a protest event are important: 1) *actors*; 2) *repertoires*; 3) *targets*. All of these aspects were variables for coding. The first aspect concerns the actors. In order to control the consistency between various characteristics of extreme-right political actors, we classified them into broader categories: (1) under the *political parties* category, we encoded groups that openly engage in political activities in the parliamentary arena<sup>10</sup>; (2) in the *political movements* category we included those less formalised organisations and groups that openly engage in political activities, but do not act in the parliamentary arena; (3) in the category of *subcultural groups* we included those protest events in which the members of extreme-right subcultures, such as skinheads, soccer hooligans and nationalists take part.

Since we were interested in all forms of Polish extreme-right action, the spectrum of codes for repertoire ranged on a scale from the most disruptive action to the most moderate forms. These repertoires are as follows: (1) *confrontational actions* (usually illegal and violent) against people or groups considered as enemies, or actions whose aim is to disrupt official meetings or opponents' demonstrations; i.e. persons were attacked, injured or killed<sup>11</sup>; (2) *demonstrative actions* (mostly legal, or illegal but non-violent demonstrations, pickets, marches, occupations of buildings etc.): and (3) *conventional actions* (such as press conferences, lawsuits, letters, and campaigns, including those in the parliamentary arena). This type of action is considered to be the most moderate form of repertoire.

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10. In the Polish context after 1990, most extreme-right groups participated in local or parliamentary elections, but their organisational structures differed significantly from the classical political party composition; for example, formal membership was not required. It seems that organisation of the political movement with the top hierarchical structure of leadership and unorganised "sympathisers" prevails today as a dominant form of organisational structure in the extreme-right movement.

11. As "confrontational" we coded all events during which persons or groups were physically attacked, regardless of whether they were injured (or killed) during this attack or not. We excluded from this category all the events against property because in most cases it was impossible to identify the perpetrators of such events. In this study we did not distinguish between "heavy" and "light" violence as is commonly accepted in the sociological studies on collective violence (e.g. FREEDMAN, 2001; FUCHS, 2003; RIPPL & BAIER, 2005), i.e. "heavy violence": physical attacks on groups or persons, which resulted in at least one person injured or died. "Light violence": events during which extreme-right activists attacked a person or group, blocked or tried to disrupt the meeting, manifestation, or other form of collective activity of organisations recognised as enemies, but no one was injured or killed.

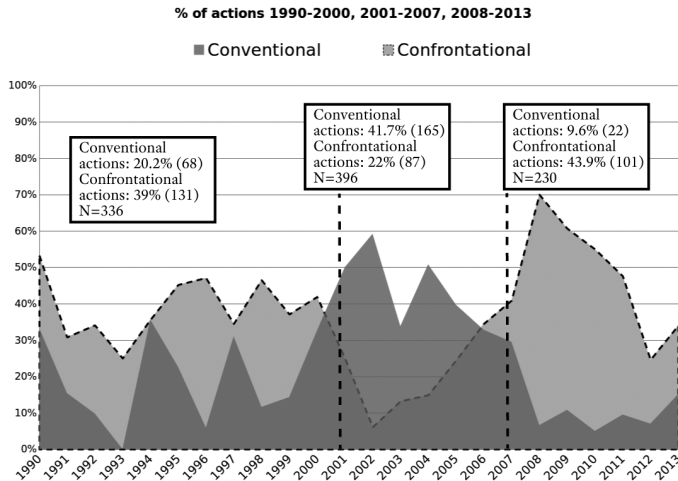
The third aspect applies to the thematic focus of the events covered. Our codes comprise acts performed by extreme-right activists directed at any targets and in any field of issue: (1) *politicians* is a code concerning political actors (persons or political organisations) who appear in the parliamentary arena; (2) the *socio-economic* code includes all issues concerning the living conditions of the Polish people: privatisation, loss of jobs, taxation, the sale of national assets to foreigners etc.; (3) *leftists* includes organisations and individuals on the extra-parliamentary level targeted by the extreme right (anarchists, socialists, punk subculture) and also public figures (e.g. public intellectuals, leftist writers etc.); (4) the *ethnic minorities/foreigners* code refers to all people considered by the extreme right as foreign or racially inferior (Roma, black people and also those from other countries, like Germans and Jews); (5) the *sexual minorities* code refers to homosexuals (gays and lesbians) as well as the political and cultural organisations that defend LGBT rights or support same-sex relationships (feminist movements, human rights activists who defend the rights of sexual minorities etc.); (6) the *international politics* code refers to international organisations, foreign institutions (e.g. the European Union, NATO etc.), embassies of foreign countries targeted by the extreme-right movement; (7) in the category *traditional values* and us we included all the targets and issues related to the celebration of national holidays, various national anniversaries, conventions dedicated to the celebration of extreme-right organisations' historical moments etc.; this category also includes acting in defence of the values considered as "purely Polish" (e.g. protecting the lives of "unborn children"). Most of the events belonging to this category of targets correlate with the category of expressive actions.

## RESULTS

### "Civil" and "(Un)civil" extreme right

The majority of events coded in the study period (1990-2013) consisted mostly of street demonstrations (35.1%) and confrontational actions (33.2%). More than a quarter of the events were conventional (26.5%). However, the fact that the movement remains faithful to its general strategy, which is expressed in terms of the choice of confrontational and demonstrative actions, does not tell the whole story. The difference lies in the ratios of specific actions against specific targets in specific periods of time.

**Figure 1. The proportion of conventional and confrontational types of actions divided into three periods**



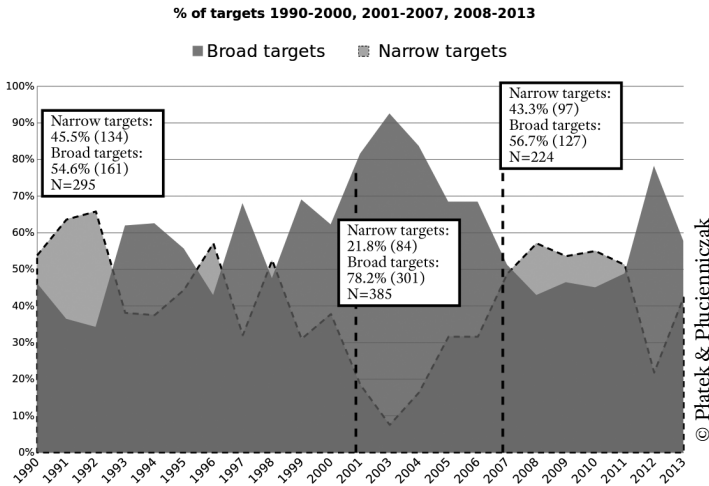
*Frequency of events in parentheses. N=962.*

As Figure 1 shows, the extreme right can and does employ both a “civil” and “uncivil” repertoire of actions and some of these activities may prevail in given periods. There is a relative reduction in the proportion of confrontational events in the years 2001–2007. In 2000, the percentage of confrontational events stayed at level comparable to the previous year (around 40% of all events), yet just after the LPR entered parliament in 2001, the share of confrontational actions significantly reduced. The proportions were reversed when compared to the previous period: 22% of actions were confrontational and 41.7% were conventional (see Figure 1). During the period of LPR’s participation in power, the extreme-right party focused mainly on claim-making by legal institutions. After 2007, the scale of confrontational actions increased again and the share of conventional actions has been reduced drastically. Our findings confirm hypothesis H1. When the extreme-right party is in parliament the level of confrontational actions is reduced and the overall level of mobilisation is higher than in other periods. The opposite is also true.

In relation to the targets (see Figure 2) we note that in the second period (2001-2007) there is a clear predominance of broad targets which indicates



Figure 2. The proportion of narrow and broad targets divided into three periods



*Frequency of events in parentheses. N=904. The year 2002 was excluded from the analysis because of the large amount of missing data.*

the focus of the LPR party on actions aimed at conventional politics. However, in other periods a percentage balance between broad and narrow targets is maintained. There is a slight advantage for broader targets over narrow targets between 1990-2001 and 2008-2013, but in the first period the real number of events directed at narrow targets is the highest among all periods. With an extreme-right party in the government, the movement became more “civil”: the level of violence with the percentage of narrow targets felt sharply, which confirms our detailed hypotheses (H1 and H2).

However, it should be emphasised that the relationships presented are based only on observations of changes in the proportion of percentages. On this basis, we cannot answer the question why this relationship occurs. In other words, because we cannot say what mechanisms are responsible for the observed relationship and they still remain in the realm of hypothesis, we would need look more closely at the actors and their repertoires of action in relation to their targets. We would like to show the reaction of the social movement to its environment in more detail. As we will see, there is still some generality and speculation in such analysis, but it is also a step forward on the way to understanding the phenomena occurring at the intersection of *inside* and *outside* in the Polish extreme-right social movement.

### **First period (1990-2000)**

In 1989, the general aim of the political elites was the rejection of the communist system and privatisation of state enterprises. Sociological analysis focused on the social consequences of transition. A dominant metaphor was that of “revolutionary moment” (Pakulski & Higley, 1992): the end of the old world (Pakulski, 1991, p. 4), and also “the state of social anomie” (Szafraniec, 1986). Reforms of the political system and the harsh economic conditions accompanying the privatisation process, connected with the desire to develop closer economic links with Western countries, all came under some criticism, including from the extreme-right wing of the political forces.

The first parliamentary elections of 1991 brought to power the Unia Demokratyczna [Democratic Union], a political party of liberal elites that supervised the process of transformation. The second place was taken by the post-communist Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej [Democratic Left Alliance], hereafter SLD, the party that gathered votes of public sector workers worried about their fate in the destabilised economy. Katolicka Akcja Wyborcza [Catholic Election Action], a committee formed mostly of the representatives of the biggest conservative party of the time—Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko Narodowe [Christian National Union], won 49 seats. The presence of a strong right-wing party in the parliament made it more difficult for the extreme right to establish a foothold in politics. What is more, sixth place in the election went to the Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej [Confederation of Independent Poland], a conservative organisation that was very visible in the public sphere because of its anti-communist, anti-establishment demonstrations involving occupations of buildings. The extreme right was then left without many opportunities to expand its structures and make resonant claims. It had to turn toward historical ethnic enemies: international “Jewish” conspiracy, “Jewish politicians in the parliament” and “hostile Germans”, and other groups that it could attack directly: especially Roma people and members of leftist movements (anarchists, socialists, punks etc.).

In the first period, between 1990 and 2000, the extreme right gathered around one major political movement—the Polska Wspólnota Narodowa [Polish National Community], hereafter PWN. Although PWN political movement organised only 43.7% (128) of protest events in the period between 1990 and 2000, people appearing or speaking during many demonstrations, even when not being officially affiliated with PWN, often admitted to being “sympathisers” of

the organisation. Great numbers of press mentions claimed culprits of beatings were also merely “sympathisers” of the PWN. PWN was registered as an official political party, yet its activities and organisational structures resembled an organisation of “sympathisers”. This is why it should not be treated as a political party proper, but rather as a semi-formal political movement. PWN neither kept a record of its members, nor ran regular enlistment. The movement was formed mainly from skinhead subculture, loosely related to the core of the PWN activists. Characteristically, the dominant political movement in the early transformation period was inspired by doctrines hostile to the Catholic tradition. PWN worked on the development of Pan-Slavism, which is mostly viewed as a pagan and racist ideology. This is the likely cause of their failure to win a major place in political discourse, as society in general was Catholic and Western-oriented<sup>12</sup>.

Table 1 shows that during the confrontational actions targets were mainly ethnic minorities and leftists (phi coefficient .210 and .425 respectively<sup>13</sup>). Violent behaviour was highly and positively correlated exclusively with the subculture. Such actions were almost never aimed at politicians in parliament, international institutions or traditional values—the correlation sign here is negative with high significance. In the years 1990-2000, the loose group of supporters of the extreme right and skinheads killed 20 people and injured 153. Events involving skinheads most commonly took the form of small groups of people (10-20) undertaking acts of confrontation. Killings occurred mainly during uncoordinated actions against “enemies” who accidentally ran into aggressive gangs of skinheads. The second situation of violence was related to counter-demonstrations against leftists. During these events people were often injured.

Demonstrative actions were correlated with targets such as “politicians”, “ethnic minorities”, “socio-economic issues” and, most strongly, “international institutions” (especially NATO). This type of action, like conventional action, was also the exclusive domain of the political movement. Skinheads were not interested in the events directed at NATO, politicians in parliament or socio-economic issues.

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12. During this period other European nations and Americans, contrary to the ideology of the PWN, were treated with open sympathy (see CBOS I, 1997). International institutions were also generally trusted, e.g. accession to NATO, which was concluded in 1999, was seen not as a threat to Poland’s sovereignty but rather as a warranty of the state’s safety (CBOS VI 1995).

13. The phi coefficient varies from 0 (corresponding to no association between the variables) to 1 (complete association) and can reach 1 only when the two variables are equal to each other. In the social sciences, it is assumed that Phi is strong when it exceeds .40.

Table 1. Correlations between types of actions, actors and targets

	1990 - 2000				2001 - 2007				2008 - 2013			
	Conventional	Demonstrative	Confrontational	Conventional	Demonstrative	Confrontational	Conventional	Demonstrative	Confrontational	Conventional	Demonstrative	Confrontational
<b>Actors</b>												
Subculture	-.389**	-.409**	.695**	-.227**	-.168.**	.414**	-.111	-.259**	.408**			
Political Movement	.321**	.391**	-.641**	-.318**	.192**	.097	-.013	.071**	-.218**			
Political Party	-	-	-	.436**	-.110*	-.306**	.148*	.212**	-.175**			
<b>Targets</b>												
Politicians	.549**	.137*	-.240**	.351**	-.165**	-.250**	-.006	.142**	-.176**			
Socio-economic	.049	.154**	-.086	.189**	-.074**	-.125*	.127	.024	-.059			
Leftists	-.204**	-.234**	.425**	-.064	-.091	.102*	.019	-.267**	.240**			
Ethnic minor.	-.304**	.031**	.210**	-.181**	-.069**	.298**	-.036	-.172**	.273**			
Sexual minor.	-	-	-	-.284**	-.179**	.402**	-.049	-.329**	.157*			
International politics	-.071	.358**	-.209**	-.156**	.404**	-.103*	-.008	.248**	-.096			
Traditional, Us.	-.014	-.076	-.184**	-.007	.052	-.059	.028	.350**	-.285**			
	N=68	N=117	N=149	N=165	N=135	N=82	N=22	N=86	N=87			

Phi coefficient; \*\*  $p < .05$  \*  $p < .10$  (two-tailed tests).

Due to the non-existence of a political party in the first period our analysis draws attention to the division of targets between subculture and political movement. The political movement focused its conventional and demonstrative actions on parliamentary politicians and international institutions, while the subculture employed confrontational actions focused on ethnic minorities and leftists. An efficient division of labour allowed these two interconnected actors to virtually dominate the extreme-right movement. A similar “division of labour” will be noticeable also in subsequent periods.

As Andrews & Edwards (2005) point out, newly emerged movements are often characterised by an inability to form long-lasting alliances, and a weak identification of proper political targets. The case of the Polish extreme right in the first decade after the transformation confirms especially this last point. The transition of regimes, the transfer of political power, and the introduction of dramatic economic reforms produced a high level of popular mobilisation and contentious politics. The overall magnitude of protest in the Polish society increased after 1990. Ekiert & Kubik (1998, p. 555) reported 1,475 protest events during the years 1989-1993, which amounted to a total of 14,881 days. Poland turns out to have been the most contentious state among all Central Eastern European states at that time, but socio-economic issues do not occupy the main place among the targets of the extreme right. It is worth noting that the strong correlation threshold was exceeded only by “leftists” and “politicians” targets, which means that the extreme right chose, on the one hand, targets highly visible in the public sphere (politicians), and, on the other hand, targets readily available on the streets (leftist subcultures).

### **Second period (2001-2007)**

The breakthrough came with the parliamentary elections in 2001. The position of the extreme right was strengthened in the face of Poland’s integration with the European Union, as all parliamentary parties strongly supported the integration. Even the biggest conservative party, PiS, which held 44 seats in the parliament, was pro-European. As no politician wanted to discuss the uncertainties of the integration the extreme right became the sole representative of people afraid of integration or uncertain of its outcomes. Surveys conducted during the period in question prove the existence of a relatively stable group of opponents of integration. In 2000, the number of opponents of the EU was almost equal to the number of its supporters, 29% to 30% (CBOS VII, 2000). At the beginning

of 2003, one year before the integration, 25% of people opposed it and 60% were declared supporters (CBOS II, 2003). The number of opponents dropped suddenly to 18% on the eve of the integration referendum, due to the massive pro-EU campaign but in 2004 the number of “eurosceptics” again rose to 31% (CBOS III 2004). The relatively high and stable number of opponents was in great part a consequence of the campaigning of the extreme right. Its influence is evident in the opinion polls showing that one of the most frequent reasons for the opposition to the EU was “negative, emotional judgments expressing fears of the loss of sovereignty, of Poland’s submission to foreign capital, threat of the enslavement of the Poles and turning them into a cheap labour force” (CBOS II, 2002, p. 7).

The elections in 2001 opened a new phase in the history of two extreme-right organisations. One of these organisations was the aforementioned League of Polish Families political party. LPR was founded in 2001 as a coalition of various conservative and nationalist organisations supported by the All-Polish Youth, a political movement bringing together youth and aspiring nationalist politicians. Indeed, LPR as a party was founded by MW’s politicians. The leader of the LPR was Roman Giertych, a nationalist politician and grandson of Jędrzej Giertych, one of the most influential pre-war nationalist politicians. Roman reactivated the MW in 1989 after many years of the ban on its activity. From the early 1990s, MW portrayed itself as a national organisation in the spirit of the politics of patriotism. One of the main tasks of the newly reformed organisation was the building of central and regional structures, but in its first period of activity MW failed to gain much political sympathy. As the 21st century dawned, the movement was trying to change its image by distancing itself from negative connotations, such as open ties with skinhead subculture and anti-Semitic ideology. However, the depth of the MW’s immersion in the white power culture was observed as late as 2006 when the organisation boasted representation in the parliament. For many years these organisations have been shaken by political scandals based on suspicions that MW is nothing more than a Polish equivalent of fascism<sup>14</sup>. Nonetheless, in 2001, for MW and LPR, the reinvigoration of the nationalist tradition from the inter-war period, as well as fundamentalist Catholicism, served as a vehicle that enabled them to enter mainstream political discourse.

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14. Examples of scandals which occasionally surfaced between 2001 and 2007 are given by Rafał Pankowski in his book *The Populist Radical Right in Poland* (2010, p. 114-120).

MW and LPR accounted for almost all the extreme-right events organised in this period. There were 396 protest events in this phase: 30% (119) of them were organised by the MW and 29% (115) by the LPR party alone. The movement cooperated with the party during 35 events. There were 16 episodes when coalitions of the MW and the LPR were supported by a third or fourth, weaker companion. In sum, then, 72% of all events were organised by the LPR and the MW movement or the coalition formed by them. LPR focused on conventional actions (.436, with high significance), while MW and other organisations of the political movement were correlated with demonstrative actions. As in the previous period the subculture was responsible for confrontational actions.

In comparison to the first period of mobilisation, in this period conventional actions were predominant, as the parliamentary party employed mainly legal means of political struggle and discouraged confrontational (violent) interventions. Polarisation of actions and targets was more pronounced here than in the first period. More than half of all events in the category “actor: political party—type of action: conventional action” was concentrated on politicians in parliament. Surprisingly, the conventional actions were not focused on international institutions, but on the socio-economic issues and parliamentary politicians. Actions against the EU were the domain of the organisations of the political movement (MW and other minor organisations) and their demonstrative actions. Demonstrative actions were negatively correlated with any other targets except “international politics” and “traditional values”, but this last category isn’t statistically significant. The subculture concentrated on sexual (.402) and ethnic minorities (.298) and also leftists (.102), although to a much lesser extent than in the first period where leftists were the main skinhead target. The subcultural faction of the movement found a major new enemy launching a campaign of confrontation against sexual minorities and the LGBT movement.

In this period of mobilisation part of the movement distanced itself not only from violence, but also from targets and issues that could be regarded as most controversial. LPR seldom, if ever, openly (not counting the verbal attacks frequently presented in the party propaganda) confronted or demonstrated against sexual and ethnic minorities. Its aims were as legitimate as possible, and did not involve breaking the law. More controversial issues or actions were left for the organisations of the political movement to tackle. “Leftists” partially disappeared from the group of enemies targeted by the extreme right in this period, but it was clear that sexual minorities and organisations involved in the protection of

their rights took their place. This is additional proof of the process of institutionalisation taking place: the movement was organised around certain formal institutions (i.e. a political party) and adopted an appropriate repertoire. Targets associated with the previous period were actively discouraged by dedicated activists, as they could do more harm than good to the formalised movement.

### **Third period (2008–2013)**

At the beginning of the third of the periods analysed, the LPR party dissolved amid political scandals and it was left divided into several factions. After the parliamentary elections of 2007, which President Lech Kaczyński called early (only two years after the 2005 elections), LPR lost all its seats and the biggest right-wing party, Law and Justice (PiS), obtained a virtual hegemony on the right wing of the political scene. As well as MW, two organisations in the 1990s, the National Radical Camp (ONR) and the Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski [National Rebirth of Poland]—hereafter NOP, were reactivated on the extra-parliamentary level. The NOP is the only organisation in Poland that openly promotes racist and neo-fascist ideology. It is a member of several international extreme-right organisations, such as International Third Position and the European National Front. The MW and ONR organisations of the political movement distance themselves from such associations and instead manifest their ties with traditional inter-war nationalist ideology. In 2012 the nationalist part of the movement tried to unite and attempted a return to parliamentary politics. Ruch Narodowy [The National Movement], hereafter RN—an umbrella organisation and party—was formed by the coalition of MW, ONR and the conservative-libertarian Unia Polityki Realnej [Real Politics Union], UPR.

At the same time, opponents of the extreme right mobilised: a number of civil society groups began monitoring the extreme-right organisations and started to publicise their findings (see Grell et al., 2009). What is more, the movement faced the first serious repressive measures by the police and security agencies. Extreme-right organisations were deemed a threat to the public and legal order and action began against groups promoting fascism. Altogether between 1999 and 2008 there were 234 crimes related to promotion of totalitarian ideologies, but according to police sources in 2013 alone there were as many as 267<sup>15</sup>. In 2013 a special team to combat neo-Nazism was formed at the Polish Internal Security Agency.

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15. See <http://statystyka.policja.pl/>



From 2008 to 2013, political movement organisations employed a demonstrative repertoire in 29.5% of actions (68 events), and a confrontational one in 20% of actions (46 events). A total of 95% (only 21 events) of conventional actions were undertaken by the members of the party (RN or LPR). At the same time, the overall frequency of conventional actions decreased from 41.7% in the second phase to only 9.6% in this third period and they were not correlated positively or significantly with any identified targets. This indicates that conventional actions lost their importance after the LPR left parliament. We obtained results almost similar to those presented in the first period of mobilisation, except for the demonstrative actions. In contrast to the dynamics of mobilisation in the first period, they are associated not only with the organisations of the political movement, but also with the members of political parties. Political parties together with organisations of the political movement found new set of targets during the demonstrative actions: “international politics” and “politicians”. At the same time, they managed to construct a positive programme focused on the necessity not only to defend, but also to promote “traditional” values. The negative and positive programmes supplemented and strengthened each other, as, for example, attacks on gay pride parades were justified as means of protecting Polish families from Western decadence. These extreme-right actions against the LGBT communities in the second and third period were, in fact, largely supported by public opinion. In 2008, 66% of Poles were against demonstrations of LGBT groups, and 76% were against formalisation of same-sex marriages (CBOS VI, 2008). In 2013, 83% of those surveyed considered homosexuality a deviation and 26% of them stated that it should not be accepted in Poland at all (CBOS II, 2013).

Despite the fact that skinheads are traditionally responsible for violence, what is also new in the third period is a reduction of the strength of association between “confrontational actions” and “sexual minorities”. As targets of violent actions, “ethnic minorities” and “leftist groups” start to be more important again. The number of violent acts rose, with a peak between 2008 and 2010, when they comprised more than two-thirds of all events. These results coincide with a new wave of demonstrations by leftist anti-fascist organisations and LGBT rights movements, against which the extreme-right movement organised counter-demonstrations.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Some scholars argue that protest is a traditional strategy of political participation used by left-wing actors, one which articulates goals that adhere to ideal of a civil society (Dalton, 2002). While protests in Western Europe and the United States have been historically associated with progressive social forces, recent evidence suggests that protest activities are drawing activists from across the political spectrum. The surge of right-wing mobilisation is evidence for this thesis. Soule & Earl state:

*“In the 1960-65 period, just over 31% of right-wing events drew between 10 and 99 people, while in the 1980-85 period, this figure was 28%. On the other end of the size spectrum, in the 1960-65 period, 1.4% of right-wing events drew 10,000 or more people, while in 1986 3% of right-wing events were this massive.”*

*Soule & Earl, 2005, p. 357.*

More recent qualitative data highlight the reinvigoration of various (neo) conservative and extreme movements, such as the anti-abortion movement (Blanchard, 1994), the extreme right in Germany (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004), the Tea Party (McVeigh *et al.*, 2014) and white-power militants in the United States (Dobratz & Waldner, 2012). We have observed that in a favourable socio-political environment the movement was able to not only formalise its structures (create a political party and enter into parliament), but also institutionalise its repertoire of contention (favour conventional forms of action over confrontational forms of action) and moderate its targets (favour broader targets over narrow targets). As hypothesised, the percentage share of conventional events rose significantly in the second period of mobilisation. The extreme right in post-communist Poland went through three distinct phases of mobilisation. At the same time the movement has changed and remained the same: it never relinquished its fundamental structure of relations between actors, targets and repertoires, while, in terms of the frequency of events, its action repertoire and targets changes according to the shifts in the external opportunity structures.

Our analysis also produced some unexpected observations. Between 1990 and 2000, the magnitude of mobilisation was on average 29.3 events per year, but with a high standard deviation (11.2). Between 2001-2007 the number of events was on average 56.1 events per year, but, as in the previous period, this

featured high standard deviation (16.0) and this is consistent with hypothesis H1. In the third period the magnitude of mobilisation was on average 41.5 events per year, also with a high standard deviation (13.3). Generally speaking, the number of events per year tends to spread over a wide range of values, which suggests that the movement follows a cyclical pattern of mobilisation rather than linear growth. In Figures 1 and 2 we see the characteristic peaks and valleys. They are both present on the figures of repertoires and targets. This may indicate a rather unusual form of mobilisation of the Polish extreme right based on periodic “ups and downs”, which may suggest structural weakness of the movement’s resources or cyclical absence and presence of favourable political opportunities. A framework that incorporates aspects presented here, aided by more rigorous data and evidence, may unearth some of the structural dynamics of how the extreme-right movement has transformed over time, as well as the recurrent features of this long historical transformation. Our findings provide support for an aggregated approach to conventional and confrontational actions. While we focus on the link between actor, repertoire and who is the object of actions, other theoretical frameworks may provide additional insight into the dynamics of the extreme-right social movement. For example, many of the events we analyse involve interaction between the extreme-right movement activists and counter-movement activists. We might extend research on counter-demonstrations by exploring the covariance of leftist movement behaviour as well as police repression. Police and leftist presence during street demonstrations can have a crucial impact on cyclical mobilisation of the extreme right in its extra-parliamentary environment. We argue that capturing the reciprocal nature of police/counter-movement/extreme-right interaction would be critical to understanding such outcomes.

Our foundational insight is the recognition that the extreme-right movement is stable in its anti-systemic attitude toward politicians from mainstream political parties and its actions are also always directed against different minorities, be they ethnic or sexual. This way, the movement clearly belongs to the “uncivil” part of society. However, as we have demonstrated, extreme-right activists can and do employ both a “civil” and “uncivil” repertoire of action depending on current public debate and socio-political configurations. It should also be stressed that all the above-mentioned studies on the institutionalisation of the radical right, including Koopmans’s work on the European extreme-right repertoires of actions presented here, have been conducted within democratic (pluralistic) party-political systems, where the extreme right is mostly a minor component

of the parliamentary arena. This may partly explain why extreme-right activists and politicians want to mitigate their confrontational actions, as they see themselves as belonging to parliament and within democratic institutions (and also surrounded by other democratic and leftist parties) that do not tolerate violence as a mean of political expression. Interesting further research questions might include the issue of the functioning of the extreme right and changes in its repertoire when surrounded by other right-wing political actors, as we have at present. Recalling David Ost (2009), it should be noted that political anger is not automatically aroused towards minorities or those responsible for unjust economic transformation, but is instead a complex process of the adaptation of movements to prevailing political, cultural, social, and economic conditions, and this requires both further qualitative and quantitative, in-depth research.

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