DEUTSCHE SCHULE THESSALONIKI MODEL UNITED NATIONS | 2024

Committee: Youth Delegate Forum on Transnational Conflict Resolution and Peace Building (YDF)

Issue: Combating Rising Polarisation and Extremization of Political Ideologies

Student Officer: Miltos Stoltidis

Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Miltos Stoltidis and it is a great honor to welcome you to this year's 7th Deutsche Schule Thessaloniki Model United Nations conference. I am a 10th grader from the German School of Thessaloniki and I will be serving as one of the Deputy Presidents in the Youth Delegate Forum.

First of all, I wish to congratulate you for attending this conference. From past experiences, I am convinced that such a conference is helpful in many ways. On the one hand, you are given the opportunity to broaden your horizons and practice your English skills. On the other hand, you get the chance to comprehend a lot of current events and to learn about the fascinating world of politics and diplomacy.

This year's agenda consists of two very significant and highly debatable issues that need to be resolved in order to move towards the de-escalation of international conflicts. The topic covered in this study guide is "Combating Rising Polarisation and Extremization of Political Ideologies". This study guide should provide you with the fundamental information on this topic. Nevertheless, you are highly encouraged to carry out your own research to get a better and more profound understanding of the topic. The bibliography can be beneficial to the research process. Because of the significance of the topic that you will have to address in the YDF I expect all of you to be prepared and to be keen to participate in a fruitful debate.

If you have any questions regarding the topic do not hesitate to contact me. You will be able to get all the help you need, just send me an email at m.stoltidis@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Miltos Stoltidis

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, the world has witnessed a sea-change in the political discourse and the extremity of political ideologies. This has all happened due to several factors that, in general, may challenge each democratic institution of a nation and shape the political landscape upon cumulation. In essence, therefore, the bedrock of such a trend is multidimensional, enveloping social, economic, and technological dimensions that combine to create an environment in which moderate voices are usually overcome by radical positions.

The creation of more and more media and digital communication channels has probably been one of the biggest driving forces behind political polarization. Such technologies democratize an information outlet and create echo chambers, within which audiences are more exposed to similar views that support the pre-existing beliefs and ideology of the view holder. Once again in this case, the maximization of user experience tends to draw algorithms toward sensationalism and polarity. This often leads to nuanced discussions getting overshadowed and the ability to accept differing viewpoints thrown away and more acrimonious remarks coming to the fore.

Economic considerations are bound as well to enhance political polarization. The growing economic disparity, coupled with the shrinking middle class, has often resulted in a general feeling of dismay that a very large chunk of the society has been disenfranchised. Economical grievances are a force multiplier and a ticket to power for populist leaders or movements—when they only provide simple, more often oversimplified solutions to the complex crises.

This is further complicated by the implications of cultural and demographic changes today. Immigration, globalization, and shifting social norms have raised fears over identity and national cohesion. It is quite often the case that political consumers exploit these fears in the interest of defining the arena of social action as one of "us versus them," leading one social formation against another. Such a situation does not only polarize political debate but also offers the best breeding ground for extremist ideologies.

This increase in polarization and extremization has downright huge consequences: it undermines democratic institutions and processes so much that political compromise just cannot be found anymore. Loss of that trust in democratic institutions may lead to means of citizens' apathy and disengagement, thereby cutting down the very lifeblood of democratic governance. Indeed, its worst consequence is seen when this foments violence and societal fragmentation through the mainstreaming of radical views, as observed in several recent cases of political unrest and radicalization.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Consensus

"a generally accepted opinion or decision among a group of people"[1]

Division

"the act of separating something into parts or groups, or the way that it is separated"[2]

Extremization

"The conversion of something into an extreme form"[3]

Economical inequality

"Economic inequality is the unequal distribution of income and opportunity between different groups in society."[4]

Governance

The political institution that controls a country and is accountable for proposing legislations.("the way that organizations or countries are managed at the highest level, and the systems for doing this")[5]

Ideology

"a set of beliefs or principles, especially one on which a political system, party, or organization is based"[6]

Misinformation

Misleading information aiming to create a false image of something, "wrong information, or the fact that people are misinformed"[7]

Partisan

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[1]Cambridge Dictionary. "CONSENSUS | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Dictionary.cambridge.org, Cambridge Dictionary,

dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/consensus. Accessed 12 July 2024.

[2] ---. "Division." Cambridge Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, 22 Dec. 2021, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/division. Accessed 12 July 2024.

[3] Your Dictionary. "Extremization Definition." Yourdictionary.com, Yourdictionary.com, 2021, www.yourdictionary.com/extremization. Accessed 12 July 2024.

[4] American Psychological Organization. "Economic Inequality." Apa.org, American Psychological Organization, 2022, www.apa.org/topics/economic-inequality. Accessed 12 July 2024.

[5] ---. "GOVERNANCE | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Cambridge.org, Cambridge Dictionary, 20 Nov. 2019,

dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/governance. Accessed 12 July 2024.

[6] ---. "IDEOLOGY | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Cambridge.org, Cambridge Dictionary, 2024, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ideology. Accessed 12 July 2024.

[7] ---. "MISINFORMATION | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Cambridge.org, Cambridge Dictionary, 2019,

dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/misinformation. Accessed 12 July 2024.

"a member of a secret armed force whose aim is to fight against an enemy that is controlling the country"[8]

Polarization

"the act of dividing something, especially something that contains different people or opinions, into two completely opposing groups"[9]

Political gridlock

"In politics, gridlock is a situation in which no political or congressional action can be taken one way or the other due to a lack of consensus or other impediment."[10]

Political Correctness

Refers to language intended not to offend any sexual orientation, gender, race and culture. Basically it is the act of avoiding language and actions that may offend a group of people. Its opposite is the term "Political Incorrectness".

Populist

A person that addresses the masses and is proposing simple and inefficient solutions that everyone can understand in complex problems in order to gain votes and favorability.

Radical

"believing or expressing the belief that there should be great or extreme social or political change"[11]

Social Safety Nets

Social safety nets can be defined as policies and programs that help individuals and families manage risk and volatility , protect them from poverty and inequality, and help them to access economic opportunity. Social safety nets also include equal access to welfare in a lot of cases.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Causes of polarization and extremization

8 ---. "PARTISAN | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Dictionary.cambridge.org, Cambridge Dictionary, 2019,

dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/partisan. Accessed 12 July 2024.

9 ---. "Populist." Cambridge Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, 15 Dec. 2021, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/populist. Accessed 12 July 2024.
10 Annenberg Classroom. "Gridlock." Annenberg Classroom, Annenberg Classroom, 4 Aug. 2017, www.annenbergclassroom.org/glossary_term/gridlock/. Accessed 12 July 2024.

11 ---. "RADICAL | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Cambridge Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, 2019, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/radical. Accessed 12 July 2024.

The factors that increase political polarization and extremization are numerous. A major determinant is economic inequality because it provides a greater gap between people in terms of wealth and opportunities, leading to dissatisfaction with the way things are and paving the ground for the accommodation of radical ideologies. However, cultural and demographic changes are an important factor in the growing tension between the different political cadres in the context of immigration, economic inequality, and so on. This cannot be understated due to the role that media, in particular social media, play as echo chambers in which extreme views are amplified, creating an enabling environment wherein misinformation and partisan rhetoric can thrive.

Consequences of polarization and extremization

The implications of these trends are high, and they do not only cause an effect in one nation but in the whole political landscape of foreign relationship and cooperation between countries. Political polarization undermines democratic governance through difficulties in making consensus and compromise. It might result in political deadlock,where the government becomes nearly incapable of passing essential legislation or effectively addressing serious issues. These issues are further exacerbated by extremization, leading to division and very often non peaceful actions that would cause erosion of trust in democratic institutions and may end up in political instability. The continuous emergence of populist and extremist leaders who are using this division to their political benefit deepens the crisis, with some threats going to the very foundations of democratic societies and the integrity of the branches of power themselves.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

France

France has witnessed a radical change in political terms. The far-right populist party of Marine Le Pen has had a tremendous success in the recent european elections, by becoming the majority party and leaning all its political opponents. This incident worries the overwhelming majority of political scientists and spreads fear among the progressive European population and the democratic majority overall. The National Rally (Marine Le Pen's party) has also accomplished to become the most popular party in the first round of the latest national elections. Even though the party didn't manage to become the most popular party in the second round, it surely proved that the French people are tired of moderate policies and that the polarization is rising at a fast pace. In addition, the coalition of leftist parties that stood up against the populist far-right gained a big percentage of the popular vote. In conclusion, French voters are not satisfied by the moderate policies that have been implemented the previous years and they are now moving towards the far sides of the political spectrum, while wishing that radical decisions will address their problems. [12]

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12 Caulcutt, Clea . "French Left Beats Le Pen's Far Right in Election Shock." POLITICO, Politico, 7 July 2024,

www.politico.eu/article/france-legislative-election-2024-second-round-front-populaire-jean-luc-melenchon-raphael-glucksmann-shock-victory/. Accessed 12 July 2024.

Germany

Germany is believed to be the heart of the European Union. Moreover, Germany has the largest number of European parliamentarians and the largest impact when voting in order to pass European legislation. Furthermore it is important to mention that in recent polls an extremist populist party named Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) takes second place and that populism, anti immigration policies and policies against the islamic population are very popular among german voters.[13]

Hungary

The Hungarian government is known for being made up by a lot of far-right extremists including the prime minister, Viktor Orban. Viktor Orban and his close associates have been used numerous times as an example of an extremist government within the European Union that promises to the people stronger anti migration laws and controls via power the media.The Hungarian government is also very strict in terms of press freedom and is highly conservative.[14] Moreover Hungary is seen as the only country in the European Union that has a far right government that is anti immigration, extremely conservative and tries to eliminate any form of free speech that is opposing it. Last but not least, the governing party of Hungary has managed to form a European party that promotes polarization and the extremization of political ideologies. The Hungarian prime minister has also managed to make the far-right a political mainstream.[15]

United States of America (USA)

In 2016 the Republican Party (GOP) won the presidential election in the USA by landslide and Donald J. Trump, a billionaire presidential candidate from Florida with extremist anti immigration views, became the 45th President of the USA. This was a shock that changed the global political landscape by a lot, because before the victory of Donald Trump Hillary Clinton was supposed to win and it was almost certain that she would continue the already eight-year-old progressive governance of Barack Obama. The presidency of Donald J. Trump had various serious consequences. First of all, the discrimination against the Afro American community increased significantly and the police violence reached a new high point. Moreover, Trump's government signed a bill that initiated the construction of a wall on the

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13 European Parliament. "Home | 2024 European Election Results | Germany | European Parliament." European Parliament, European Parliament, 9 June 2024, results.elections.europa.eu/en/germany/. Accessed 13 July 2024.

14 Election Resources. "Election Resources on the Internet: Elections to the Hungarian National Assembly - Results Lookup." Election Resources.org, Election Resources, 2014, www.electionresources.org/hu/assembly.php?election=2006. Accessed 13 July 2024.

15 Kirby, and Nick Thorpe. "Who Is Viktor Orban, Hungary's PM Halting Funds for Ukraine?" Www.bbc.com, 31 Jan. 2024, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67832416. Accessed 14 July 2024.

southern border of the USA. Furthermore, under Trump's governance a lot of social programmes were canceled and political incorrectness thrived. Last but not least, far right populism became a mainstream ideology for the first time in the USA.[16]

India

In 2014 the Hindu nationalist party of Narendra Modi (Bharatiya Janata Party) won the elections in India, while putting the Congress Party (center-left) in second place. The reason why the Bharatiya Janata Party won the elections is thought to be the propaganda of the party, the incompetence of the Congress Party to deal with the unemployment and the governmental scandals. That led to a four year long governance of Narendra Modi and his extremist Hindu party and as a result a pretty sizable part of the Indian Muslim population was denied its political rights and had to face a lot of discrimination. Furthermore the extremist government of India didn't manage to combat poverty and worsened the situation by implementing an unrealistic plan that would provide employment to millions of Indians. Even though the Indian Government made a lot of mistakes while in power, there was not any serious criticism against it in the media, leading to a rise of Narendra Modi's party and winning the elections in 2019 comfortably.[17]

Italy

Italy is now ruled by Giorgia Meloni, a politician with great political ambitions that was elected after Mario Dragi, a moderate economist and previous president of italy, announced that general elections would be held. Giorgia Meloni was the presidential candidate of an Italian far-right party named Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy). Giorgia Meloni and her party managed to do something that was thought to be impossible, to be the first far-right party that managed to form a government after Bennito Mussolini in the country. Italy, as a founding member of the European Union, has a tremendous impact on European decisions. This event was a key point for the European political landscape, as it initiated the rise of right-wing extremists.Since then, Giorgia Meloni has managed to pass a lot of conservative laws and bring the far-right viewpoints back to mainstream. In addition Fratelli d' Italia has rosen into an example of how a strictly conservative, anti-lgbtqia and anti-migration can form a stable government within the European Union. Nowadays, Italy is a highly divided country that has made a tremendous shift to extremism and moves into a more conservative and backward-thinking path. [18]

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16 270toWin. "Presidential Election of 2016." 270towin.com, 270 to Win, 2016, www.270towin.com/2016_Election/. Accessed 14 July 2024.

17 Agarwal, Pulkit. "The 2014 Indian General Elections: THE MOTIVATION of EDUCATED FIRST TIME VOTERS in PILIBHIT, UTTAR PRADESH." World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues, vol. 18, no. 4, 2014, pp. 70–85, www.jstor.org/stable/48505122. Accessed 14 July 2024.

18 Voce, Antonio, and Seán Clarke. "Italian Election 2022: Live Official Results." The Guardian, the Guardian , 26 Sept. 2022, www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2022/sep/25/italian-election-2022-live-official-results. Accessed 14 July 2024.

BLOCS EXPECTED

BLOC A

Bloc A consists of nations that would be considered more authoritarian and that are extremely divided.There are a few exceptions e.g. the Russian Federation. Some of the countries that could join this bloc are Iran, Myanmar e.t.c. The main goal of this bloc is to prove that the extremization of political ideologies and the polarization are minor problems and do not affect the global political scene. Instead they are trying to push a more moderate agenda.

BLOC B

Bloc B consists of countries that have not been so affected by polarization and extremization of political ideologies. The majority of the EU nations belong to bloc B. Some nations with more moderate governments and thriving economies may also be included in the second bloc. Two examples of countries that would probably join this bloc are France and the UK. The main goal of this bloc is to eliminate the extremization of ideologies and to combat polarization. These countries are willing to implement more radical changes.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
January 6 2021	On January 6 2021 the Capitol was attacked by supporters of the 45th US President Donald Trump denying the outcome of the presidential elections that took place on November 3. The goal of these extremists was to keep the former President in power by preventing a joint session of Congress counting the Electoral College votes to formalize the victory of President-elect Joe Biden. In order for this incident to stop Donald Trump posted a video through a social media platform thanking his supporters for their loyalty and urging them to return to their homes. After this gesture from the Trump side, his supporters abandoned the Capitol and stopped attacking it.

6 October 2023	The Australian government has enhanced its counter-terrorism framework, including the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Strengthening Counter-Terrorism Powers) Bill 2023. This bill increases the powers of law enforcement agencies to prevent and respond to terrorist activities, including those driven by domestic political extremism. It also aims to improve cooperation between federal and state agencies in tackling these threats.[19]
16 February 2024	In response to increasing polarization and extremism, the European Union has implemented various measures, such as tightening regulations on online hate speech and misinformation. The Digital Services Act, which took effect in 2024, requires large online platforms to remove illegal content swiftly and enhances transparency around content moderation decisions. This legislation aims to reduce the spread of extremist content and misinformation that can fuel polarization.[20]
14 March 2024	The UK government introduced a new definition of extremism in 2024, which includes behaviors that negate fundamental rights and freedoms, undermine liberal democracy, and intentionally create environments that enable extremism. This definition aims to provide a clearer framework for identifying and addressing extremist activities while balancing the protection of civil liberties and democratic rights.[21]

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

19 Commonwealth Parliament; address=Parliament House, Canberra. "Review of the Counter-Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023." Www.aph.gov.au, Parliament of Australia, 2023, www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Intelligence_and_Security/CTOLAB2023. Accessed 14 July 2024.

20 European Commission. "The Digital Services Act Package | Shaping Europe's Digital Future." Digital-Strategy.ec.europa.eu, European Commission, 2022, digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package. Accessed 14 July 2024.

21 UK Government. "New Definition of Extremism (2024)." GOV.UK, Government of the United Kingdom, 2024, www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-definition-of-extremism-2024/new-definition-of-extremism-2024. Accessed 14 July 2024.

International Day for Tolerance (November 16)

Established by the UN General Assembly in 1995, this day promotes tolerance, respect, and dialogue among different cultures and political ideologies. Such an initiative aims to inform people about mutual respect among different communities and provide a sense of equality between religious and racial groups.

UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) - Established in 2005

UNAOC aims to improve understanding and cooperation among nations and peoples across cultures and religions, countering extremism by fostering mutual respect and dialogue between racial, cultural and religious groups.

Global Forum on Youth, Peace, and Security (First held in 2015)

This forum engages young people in peacebuilding efforts and addresses the role of youth in preventing violent extremism. Furthermore this forum aims to inform younger generations about the prevention of polarization and extremization of political ideologies. Last but not least this initiative promotes the political engagement of young people and tries to make them care about politics.

UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2015)

This comprehensive plan outlines measures for addressing the drivers of extremism, including governance, human rights, and social inclusion strategies. In addition, this plan urges all member states to take immediate measures in order to combat violent extremism, polarization and the extremization of political ideologies that may turn into a threat to the democratic institutions.

UN General Assembly Resolution 73/285 (2019) - Promoting Dialogue, Understanding, and Countering the Ideologies of Terrorism

The resolution calls for the development of strategies to counter extreme ideologies, particularly through the use of the internet and social media, which have been instrumental in the spread of extremist propaganda. Moreover this resolution highlights the importance of fostering dialogue and mutual understanding to counter extremist ideologies and reduce polarization.

UN Security Council Resolution 2686

This resolution passed in 2023 calls on the international community to prevent incitement and to condemn hate speech, racism, and other such acts of extremism. It also calls for the promotion of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, interreligious and intercultural dialogue. It

also called for more participation of women in this direction and deepening social cohesion, increasing peace education in reply to hate speech and extremism.[22]

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PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

UK Online Safety Bill

This proposed legislation requires social media companies and online platforms to protect users from harmful content, including extremism and hate speech. The bill introduces stringent regulations for tech companies to prevent the spread of extremist content and to protect users from radicalization online.[23]

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Programs

CVE programs have been established across many countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, aiming to stop the cycle of radicalization and extremism. The programs comprise community engagement, education, and promotion of social cohesion in an attempt to counter the messages of extremist groups. For example, through the "Prevent" strategy, the UK aims to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism by dealing with the ideological dimension of terrorism and by providing support to those at risk of being radicalized.[24]

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22 United Nations. "Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2686 (2023), Security Council Urges International Community to Prevent Incitement, Condemn Hate Speech, Racism, Acts of Extremism | UN Press." Press.un.org, United Nations, 14 July 2023, press.un.org/en/2023/sc15321.doc.htm. Accessed 15 July 2024.

23 Department for Science, Innovation & Technology. "Online Safety Act: Explainer." GOV.UK, Government of the United Kingdom, 8 May 2024, www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-safety-act-explainer/online-safety-act-explainer. Accessed 15 July 2024.

24" NRC. Countering Violent Extremism and Humanitarian Action. Norwegian Refugee Council, July 2024, www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/position-papers/170622-nrc-position-paper_cve-and-humanitarian-action---fv.pdf. Accessed 15 July 2024.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Regulate Social Media Platforms

Enforce stricter regulations on social media platforms to limit the spread of hate speech, misinformation, and extremist content. Platforms should be held accountable for moderating content and promoting responsible digital citizenship.[25]

Promote Transparent Governance

Ensure transparency and accountability in governance to build trust in democratic institutions. Corruption and lack of transparency can fuel disillusionment and extremism.[26]

Strengthen Social Safety Nets

Enhance social safety nets to ensure that all individuals have access to basic needs such as healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. This can reduce social grievances that often lead to polarization and extremism.[27]

Promote Responsible Journalism

Encourage media outlets to practice responsible journalism that emphasizes fact-based reporting and avoids sensationalism. Media organizations can play a critical role in shaping public discourse and should strive to present balanced viewpoints to reduce polarization.[28]

Fact-Checking Initiatives

Support fact-checking organizations and initiatives that can quickly address and debunk misinformation and extremist content online. Collaboration between tech companies and fact-checking organizations can enhance the reach and effectiveness of these efforts.[29]

Promote Inclusive Economic Policies

Develop economic policies that promote inclusivity and address the needs of marginalized communities. Ensuring that all citizens benefit from economic growth can reduce the sense of exclusion that often fuels extremism. These measures would combat economic inequality, which is one of the main reasons why people are turning to more radical ideologies that also

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25 Forrest, Stephanie, and Joshua Daymude. "Reducing Extreme Polarization Is Key to Stabilizing Democracy." Brookings, Brookings, 26 Jan. 2022, www.brookings.edu/articles/reducing-extreme-polarization-is-key-to-stabilizing-democracy/. Accessed 15 July 2024.

26 Forrest, Stephanie, and Joshua Daymude. "Reducing Extreme Polarization Is Key to Stabilizing Democracy." Brookings, Brookings, 26 Jan. 2022, www.brookings.edu/articles/reducing-extreme-polarization-is-key-to-stabilizing-democracy/. Accessed 15 July 2024.

27 Forrest, Stephanie, and Joshua Daymude. "Reducing Extreme Polarization Is Key to Stabilizing Democracy." Brookings, Brookings, 26 Jan. 2022, www.brookings.edu/articles/reducing-extreme-polarization-is-key-to-stabilizing-democracy/. Accessed 15 July 2024.

28 Forrest, Stephanie, and Joshua Daymude. "Reducing Extreme Polarization Is Key to Stabilizing Democracy." Brookings, Brookings, 26 Jan. 2022, www.brookings.edu/articles/reducing-extreme-polarization-is-key-to-stabilizing-democracy/. Accessed 15 July 2024.

29 Forrest, Stephanie, and Joshua Daymude. "Reducing Extreme Polarization Is Key to Stabilizing Democracy." Brookings, Brookings, 26 Jan. 2022, www.brookings.edu/articles/reducing-extreme-polarization-is-key-to-stabilizing-democracy/. Accessed 15 July 2024.

include racist policies in their agendas. Furthermore these measures may also provide economic stability to people that struggle to make ends meet and make them trust the democratic institutions. [30]

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30 Forrest, Stephanie, and Joshua Daymude. "Reducing Extreme Polarization Is Key to Stabilizing Democracy." Brookings, Brookings, 26 Jan. 2022, www.brookings.edu/articles/reducing-extreme-polarization-is-key-to-stabilizing-democracy/. Accessed 15 July 2024.

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