



# PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND SOCIAL EMOTIONS: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY FROM EUROPE 1900–2020

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*The paper presents the findings of a survey of parliamentary elections in Europe from 1900 to 2020, conducted in the chambers of deputies of European national states. The frequency of elections is examined in relation to the number of political parties elected to parliament, with an average correlation calculated for each year. The results demonstrate a correlation between these two phenomena. The correlation has been tested using the Pearson test. The presence of a greater number of parliamentary political parties and the occurrence of more frequent elections can be considered indicators of collective social emotions. The paper presents new perspectives of exploring the sociology of emotions or the politics of emotions. Furthermore, the author complements the research with a detailed statistical analysis of the period in which the correlation is most pronounced (1919–1990), which corresponds to the theory of the short twentieth century.*

**Key words:** parliamentary elections; political parties; social emotions; collective emotions.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Social emotion is an ambiguously measurable phenomenon (Halle and Darling-Churchill 2016; Nowinski 2021). Studying social mood across generations is even more ambiguous (Barrett 2006; Wilhelm and Schoebi 2006; Langener et al. 2024). Nevertheless, we can look for new ways to study social mood and emotions from the political science perspectives (Olson 2011). In this way, the field of political development and international relations can be seen as an integral part of the wider social psychological sciences (Tamene 2013). This paper presents the results of an analysis of parliamentary election results, which point to quantifiable phenomena indicative of the dynamics of social emotions as a “big picture” of European society.

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The research presented in this paper focuses on the technical aspect of parliamentary election results. The frequency of elections per calendar year in the European countries studied (1) and the average number of political parties elected to European national parliaments in the same year (2). These statistical relations, despite all the specific aspects of different national legislation and changes in electoral laws, point to generally measurable data from which the dynamics of social emotions in Europe can be observed from a macro perspective. These phenomena can therefore be considered as secondary manifestations of social sentiment. The research covers a statistically significant period of one hundred and twenty years, i.e. 1900-2020, and provides results on the degree of statistical dependence of the data describing the social phenomena mentioned.

Author focuses on the analysis of parliamentary elections in individual European countries. Normally, elections are held according to the recognised length of the government's term of office, which is usually limited to a maximum of four years (according to the constitution or laws of a given state). Four-year electoral cycles are part of the modern political tradition (outside Europe, four-year cycles also function in the USA as the four-year presidential cycle or the presidential cycle pattern, and these four-year cycles can also be found outside the political sphere, such as the holding of the Olympic Games or the world championships in various sports). However, regular four-yearly political elections tend to be altered by changes in the social emotions due to various political crises, which in a democratic society often lead to new elections (so-called snap elections). Governance opens to new political actors. The increase in the frequency of elections and the growth in the number of different political parties elected testify to the increasing dynamism of social emotions. Conversely, the decline in early elections, the adherence to four-year cycles and the shrinking number of elected political parties indicate a decline in the dynamics of social emotions in this area. The increasing dynamics of change and political fragmentation can be seen as a manifestation of diverse social emotions. In this paper, we do not explore the typology of social emotions. The individual expressions of emotions are diverse, depending on the mood of the time and the peculiarities of the nation states. Plutchik speaks of a *wheel of emotions* with different combinations of individual emotions (so-called dyads, triads, cf. Plutchik 1991). Ekman compares the combination to an *atlas of emotions*, where the individual colours overlap (e.g. Watt-Smith 2016; Barrett 2018).

This research provides empirical data on how, on average, the frequency of parliamentary elections in Europe relates to the average number of political parties elected to each parliament. The sociology of emotions can understand parliamentary elections as a concomitant phenomenon of the rise or fall of manifestations of publicly declared social sentiments. Indeed, an individual's decision to vote is linked to the mood of society as a whole. The observed correlation between these two phenomena does not provide an answer to the question of whether there is a third hidden variable and, if so, what their common cause might be. The existence of a correlation between two variables does not necessarily imply a causal relationship (in accordance with the scientific principle: "This, therefore, because of this", lat. *cum hoc, ergo propter hoc*).

The tendency of individual choices to be influenced by public mood opens the possibility of interdisciplinary research between the two fields, first explored in classical ethnomethodological or anthropological studies of modern society (Kemper 1978; Collins 2004; Jasper 2011; Hochschild 2016). Knowledge of the possibility of individual universal or social emotions allows for an elegant explanation of how decision making is transmitted from the individual to the

mood of the whole society (Haidt 2003; Ekman and Cordaro 2011). The research question examines whether there is a statistical relationship between the number of elections and the number of political parties elected to national parliaments in Europe 1900-2020.

## 2 SOCIOLOGY OF EMOTIONS

The intersection of social emotions and political behaviour is a fundamental area that highlights the importance of emotional dynamics in shaping political attitudes and social interactions. Collective emotions play a crucial role in political discourse, influencing how individuals engage with political content and each other (Gross 2008; Groenendyk 2011; Brader 2011). Theory of collective emotions is closely linked to the current theory of communitisation (Habermas 1979). For example, it is emphasised that the emotional responses elicited by political disagreements within social networks can significantly influence political engagement and behaviour, suggesting that emotions are not merely personal experiences but are deeply embedded in social contexts (Parsons 2009). This is consistent with findings arguing that emotions, particularly hatred, can shape political behaviour by influencing intergroup dynamics and attitudes (Halperin, Canetti and Kimhi 2012). The emotions that arise from political contexts can thus lead to collective behaviours that are central to political mobilisation and discourse.

Damasio states that personally beneficial decision making requires emotion as well as reason (Damasio 2008). He also proposed the somatic marker hypothesis, which describes a mechanism by which emotional processes can guide (or bias) behaviour (Bechara and Damasio 2005). Pfister and Böhm (2008) have developed a classification of how emotions function in decision making that conceptualises an integral role for emotions, rather than simply influencing decision making. The possible relationship between individual and social emotions can be examined according to the traditional Schachter-Singer theory of the transmission and dynamization of individual emotions in interaction with others (Kleef van et al. 2002; Doorn van et al. 2015).

Emotional transmission and mood changes in society are not only studied in sociological settings but are also related to the question of the philosophy of history (Hesiod, Aristotle, T. Aquinas, G. T. Aristotle, T. Aquinas, G. Vico, G. W. F. Hegel, A. Toynbee, V. Pareto, O. Spengler). Research into the universal manifestations of biological emotions, from the mammalian level to human society, is one of the cornerstones of the gradualist theory of zoopsychology, which links evolutionary development within Darwinian theory (White 2009).

The history of empirical research on social emotions dates to the first half of the 20th century, with A. Kroeber, M. Mead or P. Sorokin, but it was the possibility of comprehensive data collection that brought new discoveries to the field (Shariff and Tracy 2011). This is modern research on social emotional change and stock market decision making (Saurabh and Dey 2020). The most comprehensive research in this area is brought by a specific research direction in culture and socioeconomics, which is called socionomics (Prechter 2017). Prechter's socionomic hypothesis suggests that social mood drives various types of social action in the areas of cultural, political, and financial behaviour. Therefore, based on socionomic approaches, typologies are created that classify the types of moods of society and individuals according to similar types. One such typology is the Profile of Mood States, which is based on seven dimensions of social mood.

These include 1. Tension - relaxed or anxious, 2. Happiness - happy or depressed, 3. Calmness - calm or angry, 4. Vigour - apathetic or vital, 5. Fatigue - rested or tired, 6. Confusion - sure or confused, 7. Friendliness - aloof or friendly (Bollen et al. 2011).

The process of sharing emotions in social contexts is not straightforward. The intensity of emotions can determine the extent of social sharing, suggesting a non-linear relationship between emotional experiences and social behaviour (Luminet et al. 2000). This indicates that in political contexts, the emotional intensity experienced by individuals can markedly influence their inclination to engage in political discourse and disseminate their perspectives, thereby impacting the broader political landscape. It is imperative to acknowledge the significant role that social media plays in amplifying this emotional exchange. The available evidence indicates that messages characterised by strong emotional content are more likely to be shared on social media platforms such as Twitter, thereby increasing their reach and impact on public opinion (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan 2013). The nature of social emotions is undergoing a transformation. The statistical correlation between the frequency of elections and the number of political parties has been declining since 1990, with the advent of modern social networks. This indicates that emotions such as anger and fear can drive different online behaviours and influence how individuals interact with political content and with each other (Wollebæk et al. 2019).

The implications of these emotional dynamics extend to the understanding of collective behaviours in political contexts. Collective emotions, particularly fear, can significantly influence group behaviour and political orientations, particularly in contexts perceived as threatening (Bar-Tal 2004). This collective emotional orientation can lead to heightened political engagement or, conversely, to political apathy, depending on the emotional climate, emotional expressions can bolster moral claims and influence public perceptions (Brady et al. 2019).

The concepts of social emotions, social sentiments or social mood are integral to understanding human behaviour in both social and political contexts. Social emotions refer to the feelings that arise in interpersonal interactions and are influenced by social dynamics, while social mood encompasses the collective emotional state of a group, which can significantly impact decision-making and behaviour. Social sentiments, often reflected in public opinion, can be shaped by these emotions and moods, particularly in the context of social media and interpersonal communication.

Research indicates that social emotions can significantly influence individual and group behaviours. For instance, demonstrate that online social evaluation can affect mood and cognition, particularly among young people, highlighting the role of social rejection sensitivity in shaping emotional responses (Grunewald et al. 2022). This finding aligns with the work of, who explore the co-evolution of emotional well-being with friendship ties, suggesting that both positive and negative effects are crucial in understanding social behaviour (Elmer et al. 2017). The interplay between mood and social interactions is further emphasized. The mood can affect self-control and decision-making, indicating that emotional states can drive individuals toward or away from specific social goals (Fishbach and Labroo 2007).

The influence of mood within social networks plays a pivotal role in shaping collective emotional states. The evidence presented by Block and Heyes (2022) challenges the traditional notion that positive emotions are more contagious, demonstrating that negative moods can spread more readily than positive ones.

This dynamic is of great importance in understanding how social moods can shift within groups, particularly in response to shared experiences or crises. One such example is the response to the global pandemic of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), where social distancing was found to exacerbate feelings of isolation and negative moods (Zhang et al. 2020).

The implications of social mood extend to various domains, including financial behaviour. Define social mood as the aggregate mood of investors, suggesting that fluctuations in social mood can influence risk tolerance and investment decisions (Asad et al. 2021). The collective emotional states can drive financial and social trends, emphasizing the importance of understanding social sentiments in the economic contexts. The interplay between social emotions, social sentiments or longer-term social mood is complex and multifaceted. These constructs not only influence individual behaviours but also shape collective dynamics in various social contexts, including political engagement, interpersonal relationships, and economic decision-making. Understanding these emotional undercurrents is essential for comprehensively analysing human behaviour in social settings.

### **3 SOCIAL EMOTIONS AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

Political elections serve as a significant expression of social emotions, reflecting the collective sentiments and moods of the electorate. The interplay between social media and political campaigns has transformed how emotions are expressed and perceived during elections, making it crucial to analyse these dynamics critically. Research indicates that public emotions, as captured through social media, can serve as a powerful predictor of electoral outcomes (Groshek and Al-Rawi 2013).

The role of social movements and protests in shaping electoral outcomes is a critical area of study. Social emotions mobilized through protests can directly impact election results (Ellinas and Lamprianou 2023). This connection between social movements and electoral behaviour underscores the importance of understanding the emotional undercurrents that drive voter mobilization and sentiment. The use of emotions analysis in political campaigns has gained traction, enabling candidates to gauge public emotions and adjust their strategies accordingly. For instance, discusses how sentiment analysis can provide insights into public perception during elections, allowing political actors to tailor their messaging to align with prevailing sentiments (Khan et al. 2023). This approach is further supported by studies, which highlights the significance of sentiment analysis in understanding voter specific concerns and preferences during elections (Chandra and Saini 2021; Passi and Motisariya 2022; Gunhal 2023).

The frequency of political elections is a significant indicator of the underlying socio-economic aspects of society. It is erroneous to view elections as mere procedural events; rather, they reflect the underlying emotional and psychological states of the electorate, which are influenced by several factors, including socio-economic conditions, political stability, and public sentiment. The relationship between election frequency and socio-economic factors can be investigated through several different lenses, including the impact of political uncertainty, the dynamics of social media, and the psychological effects of governance.

One crucial aspect of this relationship is the concept of political uncertainty and its impact on economic behaviour. The argument is put forth that elections provide incumbents with incentives to manipulate fiscal and monetary policies with the aim of influencing economic activity to secure re-election (Brandon and Yook 2012). Such manipulation can result in short-term economic gains that may prove unsustainable, ultimately affecting long-term economic stability. The cyclical nature of elections can thus create an environment of uncertainty that exerts an influence on corporate investment decisions and broader economic trends. It is evident that parliamentary elections are not merely procedural events; they are deeply intertwined with social emotions that shape voter behaviour and public sentiment. The advent of social media as a platform for expressing these emotions has transformed the electoral landscape, making it imperative for scholars and practitioners to undertake a critical examination of the emotional dynamics at play. An understanding of these dynamics can provide invaluable insights into the motivations behind voter behaviour and the factors that influence electoral outcomes.

#### 4 RESEARCH

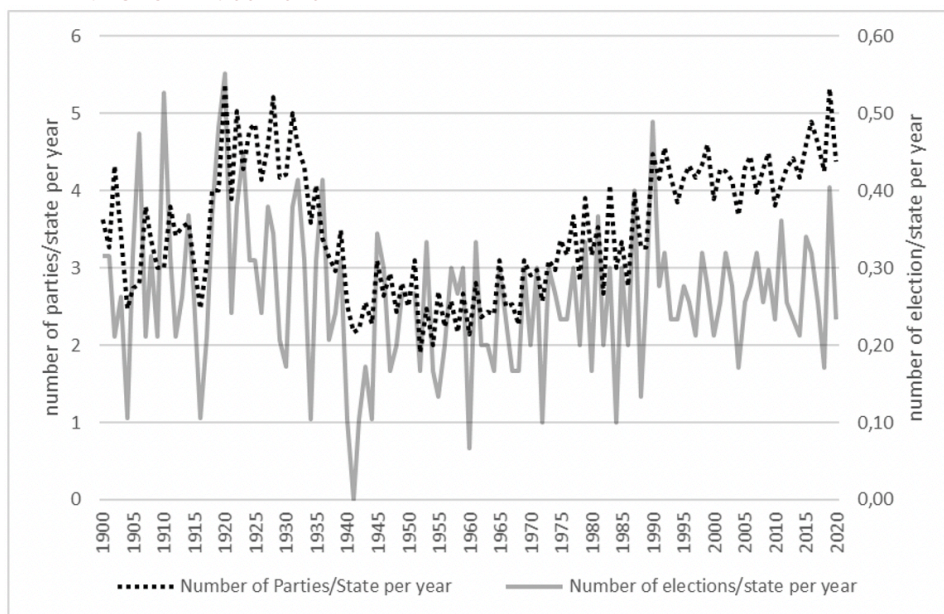
The presented research analysed parliamentary elections in each European country from 1900 to 2020. It looked at the average number of parliamentary elections per year and the number of political entities that made it into the national parliament. Individual states were included in the research in turn when universal parliamentary suffrage for men and women was introduced in each state. Between 1900 and 1919 there were 19 states, between 1920 and 1989 the number fluctuated around 30 states, and since 1990 there have been 47 states. The survey covers all European countries where the constitution provides for the possibility of voting in parliament. Including the countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc, where, in addition to the dominant political force of the People's Democratic Party and the Communist Party, there were also representatives of other political associations (in the case of Czechoslovakia, for example, the Czechoslovak People's Party or the Czechoslovak Socialist Party).

The research focused on a summary of all elections to the lower house of parliament; if there was only one house of parliament in a state, that house was counted. The research did not include types of democratic or communist systems (e.g. presidential or constitutional systems). All data were analysed. It involved parliamentary elections to national parliaments in European countries between 1900 and 2020. Where there are two chambers of parliament, the analysis focused on the results of elections to the lower chamber (the House of Commons). Due to specific and different electoral systems and cross-cultural differences, presidential, upper house and regional elections were not included. The research analysed election results in all European countries during the period, including the Communist Bloc from 1948-1989. The research examined the absolute frequency of occurrence of all elections, because the proportion of European states has gradually increased since 1900 (average frequency analysed).

In most European countries, access to the lower chambers of parliament is limited by a mandatory minimum threshold (usually 5% of a political party's profits). Therefore, this research looked at the outcome of entering parliament. That is, only those political parties that were elected regardless of the percentage gain they had to meet in each election. A key data source was open historical databases on the conduct of parliamentary elections in different European countries, considering published political science studies on parliamentary

elections (Caramani 2000; Siaroff 2018; Casal-Bértoa and Enyedi 2021). Other data sources were open databases on European electoral history and political parties (ParlGov project 2024; Parties and Election 2024; IDEA report 2024). These databases provided input data on the average number of political parties in European parliaments and the average number of parliamentary elections in each year. These data have been further analysed. The graphical result of the research is presented in Graph 1.

GRAPH 1: NUMBER OF PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES AND NUMBER OF ELECTIONS PER YEAR IN EUROPE 1900-2020



Source: Own processing.

The statistical analysis of the data focuses on the calculation of correlations. The research measured the statistical correlation between two variables: the number of parliamentary elections (1) and the number of parliamentary parties in national parliaments (2). The statistical method used was the Pearson correlation test. The results of the analysis show that there is a correlation between the two elements. The calculation of the correlation is shown in Table 1.

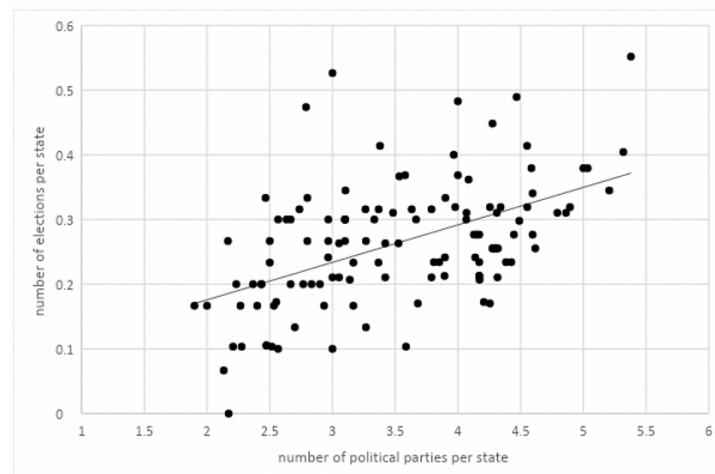
TABLE 1: CALCULATION OF STATISTICAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Correlations between variables		Pearson Correlation	Significance
Number of political parties per state	Number of elections per state	0,512	<0,001

Source: Own processing.

Total correlation over the whole period (with normality test). Significant (<0,001) moderately strong (0,512) correlation between number of political parties per state and number of elections per state. The scatterplot with a linear regression line can be seen in Graph 2.

GRAPH 2: DISTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES SHOWING CORRELATION



Source: Own processing.

For the period 1919–1990, the highest correlation is 0.655. Significant ( $<0.001$ ) moderately strong (0.655) correlation between the number of political parties per state and the number of elections per state. Scatterplot with fitted cubic curve (coefficient of determination  $R^2 = 0.442$ ). This dependence suggests a closed cycle in the dynamics of social emotions. This period is consistent in the length of measurable social change with theory of *the short century* (Hobsbawm 1994), *long social cycle* (Modelski 1987; Goldstein 1988) or the period of a person's average age as a specific cultural cycle (Halberg et al. 2004; Páleš 2009). The stronger correlation of higher social emotion dynamics in parliamentary elections is consistent also with the theory of social emotions measured on century time series within cliodynamics (Turchin 2018). The literature on party politics and party systems has advanced several relevant claims. One advanced the 'freezing hypothesis', which essentially posited that the party systems of the 1960s resembled those of the 1920s due to the absence of change in the cleavage structure (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

## 5 DISCUSSION

The presented statistical analysis demonstrates that social emotions can be examined also from the results of parliamentary elections. The research findings indicate a statistically significant correlation between the frequency of parliamentary elections and the number of political subjects elected to national parliaments in Europe between the years 1900 and 2020. This indicates that this statistical link was most pronounced during the so-called 'short century' (1919–1990). The social emotions may not be as prominently expressed through these phenomena in the present era as they were during the period under examination. The role of social media in influencing voter decision-making is evolving (Brady et al. 2019), as are new political marketing strategies. Contemporary political parties are fielding candidates in coalitions comprising entities that previously operated independently. Predominantly protest parties are uniting several smaller political entities (Electoral Fusion).

The frequency of elections also has implications for voter turnout (Garner et al. 2021). As the frequency of parliamentary elections increases, voter turnout decreases. Consequently, according to sociological conflict theory, accumulated civic discontent filters through and the dynamics of social emotions decrease



(Garman 2017; Kostelka et al. 2023). The number of elections is associated with the intercultural dimensions of each national culture. It is therefore evident that the presented research methodology cannot be overestimated. Nevertheless, it introduces new perspectives to the investigation of social emotions. In general, conservative approaches, which emphasise stability, longevity, tradition, credibility and expertise, are preferred in this area of political marketing. One of the primary political principles of nation-state governance is the dampening down of the uncontrollable dynamics of social emotions. Early elections are often a protest expression of dissatisfaction with the incumbent government (Daoust and Péloquin-Skulski 2020; Turnbull-Dugarte 2022).

The literature on party organisation has highlighted the fact that such organisations have undergone significant evolution over time. Furthermore, any modification to the structure of the entities must be accompanied by a shift in voter preferences. In accordance with this, Katz and Mair (1995) identify four distinct categories of political parties: cadre parties, mass integration parties, catch-all parties, and cartel parties. The identity of voters and their political party affiliations evolve over time, as do their preferences (Schulman and Pomper, 1975; Broug and Kritzinger 2012). The catch-all or cartel parties have a significantly diluted ideological connotation. This indicates that they no longer appeal to voters based on identity. As parties become increasingly de-ideologized, voters' electoral behaviour becomes more fluid. New parties emerge to intercept the preferences of these less ideological voters, and the number of parties increases. Consequently, the growth in the number of parties is no longer as closely tied to the frequency of elections as it had been in the past.

The inverse relationship between the frequency of elections and voter turnout may be explained by a simple equation: more frequent elections result in lower voter turnout, which in turn leads to an increase in the number of political parties represented in parliament. This equation demonstrates the expansion of parties, particularly with smaller electorates, as voter turnout declines. In such cases, minor parties are more likely to secure a parliamentary seat than they would otherwise be.

The social emotions expressed through parliamentary elections have undergone a transformation in the wake of the global pandemic caused by the Covid-19. In response to this unprecedented crisis, governments have altered the conventional methods of enacting legislation within parliamentary frameworks, resorting to emergency decision-making procedures. This has resulted in a significant alteration in the frequency of elections and the principles espoused by political parties. The impact of external factors on voter turnout demonstrates how socio-economic conditions can influence electoral dynamics. Higher incidences of the virus near election dates have been observed to decrease voter turnout, while incidents further away have been found to have the opposite effect (Constantino et al. 2021).

The relationship between the frequency of parliamentary elections and the number of political parties has been demonstrated to be most pronounced between the years 1919 and 1990. The development of modern information technology in the political marketing changes the strategies of political parties. The method of forming joint parliamentary candidates from different political parties is undergoing a transformation, has resulted in a weakening of the statistical link (Graph 1). Nevertheless, the research results can be seen as an interdisciplinary contribution to the way social emotions are studied.

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## PARLAMENTARNE VOLITVE IN DRUŽBENA ČUSTVA: KVANTITATIVNA RAZISKAVA IZ EVROPE 1900–2020

*Prispevek predstavlja izsledke raziskave o parlamentarnih volitvah v Evropi od leta 1900 do 2020, opravljene v nacionalnih parlamentih evropskih držav. Pogostost volitev se preverja glede na število političnih strank, izvoljenih v parlament, pri čemer se za vsako leto izračuna povprečna korelacija. Rezultati kažejo na povezavo med tema pojavoma. Korelacija je bila testirana s Pearsonovim testom. Prisotnost večjega števila parlamentarnih političnih strank in pogostejše volitve lahko štejemo za indikatorja kolektivnih družbenih čustev. Prispevek predstavlja nove perspektive raziskovanja sociologije čustev oziroma politike čustev. Nadalje avtor raziskavo dopolnjuje s podrobno statistično analizo obdobja, v katerem je korelacija najbolj izrazita (1919–1990), kar ustreza teoriji kratkega dvajsetega stoletja.*

**Ključne besede:** parlamentarne volitve; politične stranke; družbena čustva; kolektivna čustva.