THE MODERN PROCESSES OF RADICALIZATION AND THEIR CONNECTION WITH TERRORIST ACTIVITY

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Abstract: *In its modern manifestations, terrorism increasingly relies on synergy between different influences and approaches. This allows the impact, the effect of which significantly exceeds the mechanical sum of the effects of the individual forms and approaches. The main component and motivational tool of terrorism is the process of radicalization. Despite the lack of consensus on the understanding of the phenomenon of radicalization. This phenomenon is imposed as a consequence and result of increasingly complex social processes in modern and postmodern societies.*

Keywords*: terrorism; radicalization; motivational tool.*

Introduction

In its modern manifestations, terrorism increasingly relies on synergy between different in character influences and approaches. This synergy allows for impact, the effect of which significantly exceeds the sum of the effects of the single approaches. At the same time, the information age has changed the work of existing security systems, making them function in a rich information environment by establishing and implementing a number of new complex policies, missions and tasks and emphasizing the growing complexity of management, which is the basis for improvement of their organization and skills on scientific grounds[1]. The Internet serves as fertile ground for terrorist networks such as al Qaeda or Islamic State to spread their ideas and plan the destruction of life and property[2].

The main component and motivational tool of terrorism is the process of radicalization. Threats are changing their forms and become unconventional, such as modern forms of terrorism, information attacks in cyberspace against government institutions or against energy, transport, and financial critical infrastructure among others. Attacks on the population by radicalized persons born and raised within the European Union or by newly arrived migrants in the community are intended to create and maintain panic and fear, and to disrupt normal social processes[3].

Modern definitions of radicalization

Radicalization is perceived as a change of views, feelings and behavior, which results in intergroup violence and requires self-sacrifice in the name of protecting one group at the expense of another. It can also be explained as a strategic use of violence to change the behavior of certain social groups or state institutions. This diversification of interpretation also explains the multilayered nature of the factors that have led to the beginning of the process, as well as the achievement of the corresponding state, namely radicalism. It is not uncommon in the research on the topic to equate radicalism with extremism and terrorism. If we analyze the various definitions of "radicalization", we will notice that it is most often associated with extremism[4].

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[1] S. Stoykov, S. Dimitrova, R.Marinov, *The development of educational capacity of human resources in the field of security-main priority of national security*, International Conference on Creative Business for Smart and Sustainable Growth, CreBUS 2019, March 2019, Article number 8840062, Category number CFP19U17-ART; Code 152084, ISBN: 978-172813467-3, DOI: 10.1109/CREBUS.2019.8840062.

[2] I. Savov, *A look at the inviolability and protection of personal data in the digital age*, Bulletin no. 37, Faculty of Police, Academy of the Ministry of Interior, 2017, ISSN 1312-6679, pp. 79-97.

[3] I. Savov, *A Look at Counteracting Hybrid Threats in the European Union*, International Conference "Asymmetric Threats, Hybrid Wars and Their Impact on National Security", New Bulgarian University, March 2018, ISBN 978-619-7383-09- 6, pp. 179-185.

[4] V. Chukov, *"Radicalization - a complex and contradictory social process"*.

In 2012, Mandel gave a very precise definition. According to him, "radicalization is the increase of extremism in the way of thinking and/or in the feelings of a person or group of people." Sinai's definition is very similar. This American scholar believes that "radicalization is a process by which the individual (individually or collectively) is influenced by the extremist ideologies which he adopts".

The broader definition of forced radicalization is "a process of socialization leading to the use of violence"[5]. Such definitions provide an opportunity to generate tools for risk analysis and assessment and to identify behaviors and attitudes related to violence, while at the same time differentiating manifestations related to broader extremist views. Individuals and groups can profess extremist views without necessarily using aggressive tactics or promoting the use of violence.

Participation in acts of violence is not necessarily conditioned or motivated by empathy for extremist beliefs or thoughts, but may be motivated by personal or group loyalty or peer pressure. Other researchers claim that all terrorists have become radicalized, but not all individuals who have become radicalized, get involved in terrorist attacks or become extremists who commit violence. It is important to underline that radical views do not automatically or inevitably lead to violence, and in fact the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) protects freedom of thought (Article 9) and freedom of expression (Article 10)[6].

According to Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission, radicalization can be analyzed as a complex gradual process which an individual or group is influenced by a radical ideology or religion that they adopt or use to justify violence, including terrorist acts within the meaning of the European Union's counter-terrorism directive, in order to reach a specific political or ideological goal. Although radicalization is not a new phenomenon, its trends, means and patterns are evolving. Homeless individuals and (returning) foreign fighters from terrorist organizations pose security issues and specific challenges to preventing them. At the same time, the Internet and social media are giving extremist and terrorist groups and their supporters new opportunities to mobilize and to communicate.[7]

Adequate to the European institutions concepts is the definition in the "Strategy for Counteracting Radicalization and Terrorism 2015-2020"[8], adopted in the Republic of Bulgaria: Radicalization is characterized by a strong willingness to impose one's own views and principles on those of the rest of society by rejecting the constitutional foundations of democracy and non-recognition of fundamental human rights". The main emphasis in the document is that radicalization is a process, not a single act. As such, it should follow patterns and relevant causes, which in turn accelerate or hinder its development.

There are numerous analyzes of the reasons leading to the radicalization of individuals, groups and countries. They can be grouped into socio-economic (poverty, social inequality, social hopelessness, etc.), psychological (fear, loss of sense of belonging to one's own social or political group, etc.), ideological (desire to change the status quo in competition with another social group), religious (hyperbolizing certain dogmatic norms in order to show superiority over other religious communities), political (the use of violence in order to achieve dominance in government), and others.

Huntington[9] speaks of lines of fracture between civilizations, which can also be considered as lines of possible conflict between those civilizations. Such fracture lines do not

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[5] European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation (2008), *Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism*, submitted to the European Commission on 15 May 2008, p. 5.

[6] R. Dzhekova, M. Mancheva, N. Stoynova, D. Anagnosto (2017), *Monitoring the risks of radicalization*, Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia ISBN: 978-954-477-300-7, p. 22.

[7] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/crisis-and-terrorism/radicalisation_en - 19.05.2020 г. 13.15 ч.

[8] *Strategy for Counteracting Radicalization and Terrorism 2015-2020*, Republic of Bulgaria, Council of Ministers, Sofia 2015.

[9] S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon&Schuster, 1997.

only exist as state borders; they can also exist within states or societies. These lines can be social, ethnic, racial, religious, cultural and others or a mixture of all these elements. Fracture lines also represent the boundaries of urban ghettos, regardless of their racial, ethnic or religious characteristics. Christopher Lasch[10] talks about the criminal subculture of the ghetto. The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy points to the direct link between terrorism and organized crime. Urban ghettos can create parallel societies, which under certain conditions can become a serious threat to societies, to social peace and national security.

In the second half of the 20th century, Europe wanted to import cheap labor from the Third World, but not its violent conflicts. The idea, however, was to consider immigrants as guest workers that is, cheap labour that will return to their country after a while. This was a political mistake that separated a part of the citizens in ghettos in the suburbs of large cities, in particular.

Initially, the segregation of ethnical or cultural neighborhoods of a homogeneous nature was not considered as an obstacle to integration. On the contrary, there was an idea that they would act as a bridge and would help to overcome the initial problems of acclimatization in the host country, creating final integration in the next generation, in which the children of the first migrants become naturalized citizens, leaving behind their ethnic enclave. However, this did not happen with the vast majority of Muslim immigrants who settled in Europe between the 1960s and 1970s; the original neighborhoods became the final destination. There was stagnation in their social integration, so that over time they preserved the habits and customs of their countries of origin, even began to open their own travel agencies, insurance companies and more. Their religious life was becoming more demonstrative. In brief, these societies have created their own infrastructure, thus showing their absolute lack of interest in integration into the host society.

The next stage is degradation which happens gradually and unnoticeable. Since rap music, drug use, or domestic crime used to be a way to escape social frustration, everyone was initially relieved that the young people had found a framework, references which would prevent those socially unoccupied young people from committing more serious crimes. Imams became authorities and role models who were recognized by local authorities as privileged interlocutors and who became the new social regulators. But what these religious figures preached (and professed) had nothing to do with the orthodox Islam of first-generation immigrants that was based on tolerance. That provoked controversy in families between parents who did not understand radical and traditional religious practice, and their children who blamed their parents for their ignorance because of their interpretation of the Qur'an. This misunderstanding, in turn, created an identity crisis, which also became a significant factor in radicalization.

These young people, frustrated by European society for excluding them physically and/or socially, tired of unfulfilled promises by the authorities, and offended by the extremely negative image of Islam, decide to turn to Islamist environment, embracing Islam as a way to restore their dignity. They find a new element in religion that gives meaning to their lives, because Islam offers them a space that protects them from the hostility of the outside world and gives them a mission to fulfill, i.e. either transformation of their parents or the creation of the Islamic micro society within the non-Islamic surroundings, or the realization of jihad against the "enemies of Islam"[11].

According to the research conducted by OSSE[12], the South East Europe professional community views violent extremism mainly through the prism of the threat of ISIS. This research also finds that other forms of extremism, such as domestic right-wing extremism, are

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[10] Ch. Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, New York: W.W. Norton&Company, 1995.
[11] Nieves Sanz Mulas (2018), *Parallel societies as a quarry of jihadism*; A.I. Pérez Cepeda, *Terrorism today: a new criminal political approach*, Tirant lo Blanch, Valencia, pp. 247-282.
[12] *The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism*, Guidebook for South-Eastern Europe, Transnational Threats Department OSCE Secretariat Wallnerstrasse 6, A-1010 Vienna, Austria, ISBN 978-3-903128-28-6.

noted as secondary concern, if acknowledged at all. As noted in the Introduction, Muslims across the Western Balkans have lived for most of history in peaceful coexistence with their non-Muslim neighbors. But post-communist nationalism, the conflicts of the early 1990s, and revived religious passions have produced social divisions in and among the Western Balkans. And while this review addresses Islamic radicalization, it is important to mention, in line with argument, that extremism is indeed present among all religious groups in the Western Balkans. Perhaps it is no surprise that Salafism has found fertile soil in a socio-political climate in which the glorification of war criminals, an undermining of state structures, and inflammatory nationalist speech are norms across the region. The literature that touches on these issues is considerable and now extends back some time, especially addressing the dissolution of the SFRY, transitional justice mechanisms, state-building, and challenges to democratization. To include these sources here would require straying both too far from the topic at hand and too far into a historical background that should be well known to researchers working in the region.

In addition to Salafists, there are Wahhabis in the region of the Western Balkans. Wahhabis are usually focused on recruiting young people 19-27 years old with little education, who are poor and often come from dysfunctional families. The youth are being indoctrinated in private places of worship (masjids), which are either rented or owned by Wahhabis, and in certain religious places (mosques) whose imams support Wahhabi teaching, and prayers in these mosques are always led by Wahhabis.

In the region, the two most concentrated locations are in BiH, in Gornja Maoča and Ošve. In these places, Salafists are unfriendly to outsiders, live in isolation, and have repeatedly challenged the rule of law and the authority of the state with attempts to influence education curricula. These villages are also known for providing foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq. However, only some 30 per cent of Bosnian foreign fighters come from these places. Qehaja[13] makes a point that conservative locations, such as Gornja Maoča and Ošve were not the only suppliers of jihadists and that the causes of violent extremism and terrorism are not always grounded around these concentrated locations.

In Bulgaria there are also signs of the processes described above. In an in-depth interview with Ahmed Musa[14] in 2019 conducted by a research team led by the author of this report, the question: Can the security authorities guarantee your security in the neighborhood? Musa replies - *No, they can't because they don't know Islam. When I came in the neighborhood, then there was security. Before I came here, there was stealing, there were fights and rapes. After I came, crime decreased. The same was in prison - there was a mass perversion between young adults and adult prisoners. But when we got in there, it stopped. In addition, while I was not here, crime jumped again. However, when I was taken out of prison and brought order, it dropped.*

The answer shows a clear sign of encapsulation and an attempt to downplay the role of state institutions as a guarantor of security. The conducted research shows the negative attitude of such leaders towards the state institutions and state functions (social, education, etc.). In the same interview the question: What is your attitude to secular education? Should children learn and integrate into society? - Musa answers: *This is the big problem. These children do not study and the state does nothing. They do not teach them in Bulgarian, they do not know the language, although they are smart children. Here, we even wanted to make a foundation to teach them, but it didn't happen because of the [judicial] cases.*

Another factor for radicalization is the role of foreign influence. Many countries in the region have seen students leave for the Gulf States, where they are being educated in the more conservative Hanbali school of Islamic thought. Upon their return to the region, these students

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[13] Florian Qehaja, Director, Kosovar Centre for Security Studies.
[14] A Roma religious leader from the town of Pazardzhik (Bulgaria) who received an effective sentence (in the court of first instance) in 2019 for spreading the ideas of "Islamic State" and preaching religious hatred, religious intolerance and for calls for war.

continue to advocate for the 'purification' of traditional religious. The core of the Salafi proselytization effort revolves around Bosnians who are educated through this scholarship scheme, and who have established local NGO's and madrassas.

Research that explores the extent to which foreign influences play a radicalizing role and thus contribute to violent extremism in the region and in diaspora communities, is crucially important. Analysis of links between Gulf-funded scholarship schemes, the funding of Salafist NGOs, and a recent influx of foreign investments could prove incredibly valuable to uncovering patterns that inform policy-level intervention strategies.

Recent research by Adrian Shtuni[15] has confirmed that in Kosovo, That this process is supported by purposeful foreign investments and interests that use religion as a tool to achieve external geopolitical goals.

Simply stated, Shtuni's research shows that very poor regions of Kosovo, which have not been touched by the activities of Gulf-funded charities, do not suffer from problems of radicalization or violent extremism. This appears to be true across the region, and demands that diplomatic pressure be used to compel Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries to stop funding organized Salafist proselytization. For, this is clearly the main pull factor for radicalization away from traditional regional Islam generally, and for radicalization into violent extremism specifically.

Many Western donors, out of respect for religious freedom, but also due to financial links with Gulf States, are not yet ready to support projects that focus on the deconstruction and delegitimization of Salafist discourse. Instead, they support programs that only indirectly address this issue, which complicates efforts to distinguish between 'legal radicalization' and 'violent radicalization.' Deconstructing Salafist discourse and making links between these two phenomena would significantly contribute serious prevention efforts.

Based on the described radicalization factors and the existing definitions, **Radicalization Levels** can be formulated. This will contribute to increasing the descriptiveness of ongoing analyzes and also to focusing more precisely on prevention policies and measures, and deradicalization programs. Synthesis can be applied to the definition in the Bulgarian strategy for counteracting radicalization and Terrorism and it can be presented with details about conditions and signs that characterize each level:

1) **Level 1** – Determined, firm position, accompanied by signs of suppressed anger.
2) **Level 2** – Extremeness, contrast in assessments and perceptions.
3) **Level 3** – Rejection of alternatives. Rejection of discussions. Declaring a position without argumentation.
4) **Level 4** – Negative reaction at each alternative opportunity, even in cases of verbal expression of other opinions and positions.
5) **Level 5** – Manifestations of verbal or behavioral aggression in defense of the cause. Clear signs of manifest anger.
6) **Level 6** – Determined readiness to impose one's opinion on others through personal example (change in behavior, appearance, etc.) and active propaganda.
7) **Level 7** – Determined readiness to impose one's opinion on others by force.

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[15] Adrian Shtuni is a Washington D.C. – based foreign policy and security analyst with a regional focus on the Western Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Conclusion

Almost every adult person has a position on certain issues and very often it is extreme, unappealable and difficult or impossible to change. Thus, this is a condition very close to the first level of radicalization, defined above, and sometimes even close to higher levels of radicalization. The balance, or its disturbance, of the described influencing factors leads to transition along the basic algorithm. In most cases, the deterrents prevail and the "movement" along the levels of the algorithm stops at a certain level. However, when they are not stable, especially the part that concerns the individual and society (system of moral values, intellect, education, public relations and norms, etc.), the supporting factors prevail. Depending on the amplitude, this can significantly accelerate the radicalization process. This is especially true for people whose values and morals are not yet well established (children and adolescents) or people who have an identity crisis. Therefore, it cannot be argued that radicalization necessarily leads to terrorism, and that a certain person who has extreme positions, even if they are accompanied by a certain form of extreme behavior, is not necessarily a terrorist. Still, the transition from extreme states to the level of terrorism is expected to be easier in such cases. However, it must be strongly emphasized that every terrorist has gone through the process of radicalization at a certain speed.

From all that has been said so far, it can be assumed that in different force majeure or crisis situations, different parts of society, individual segments and/or communities in different regions, may demonstrate surprisingly different characteristics and behavior. This means that policies and measures for prevention of radicalization and terrorism must be different, specific and targeted for different communities, regions, age groups and literacy levels. This should have an impact not only on the planning and preparation of anti-terrorist operations, but also on the development of counter-terrorism capabilities in the armed forces.

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