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COUNTERING RADICALISATION OF MUSLIM COMMUNITY OPINIONS ON THE EU LEVEL

ABSTRACT: The paper explores selected factors influencing the process of radicalisation leading to the use of political violence and terror by the Muslim minorities living in the European Union member states. Internal and external catalysts conditioning this process and methods of their analysis have been presented. The second section examines various counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation efforts of the EU. The authors analysed the multidimensional European Union policy in the area of counteracting radicalisation for empowering the population and member states in preventing the radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism and emphasising the role of social partners and local authorities. Also, the promotion of good practices for combating radicalisation, developed under the auspices of the multidisciplinary Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) is presented.

KEY WORDS: Radicalisation, De-radicalisation, Terrorism, European Union, Strategy.

Introduction

European Union countries, which during the last decade incurred losses resulting from terrorist attacks, initially focused on prosecution of the perpetrators. Later on they launched long-term planes of prevention and counteraction of radicalisation often constituting the first stage in the formation of potential terrorists. The identification of factors fostering radicalisation allowed the

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development of a joint a EU action plan, which to a large extent rests on two pillars:

- prevention of the formation of radicalisation – a fostering environment, that creates resistance to extremist propaganda;
- reversal of processes which have already started within an individual/group succumbing to radicalisation, in other words bringing back those, who have already “crossed the line” in an ideological sense, but have not committed a crime yet (a so-called “exit strategy” assisting individuals in escaping from brutal extremism).

The social and legal situation of Muslims in Europe is varied and depends on historical background, the regime and the public opinion in the host country. A comparative analysis of factors which may foster radicalisation of opinions in countries such as Great Britain, France, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Sweden may improve the understanding of the phenomena in general, and consequently – ameliorate the strategy and tactics of counteracting terrorist threats.

In this context, it seems crucial to provide an answer to the question of why more and more often cases of terrorism concern educated people who are born in the European Union states, and live and work there. Moreover, the issue of efficiency of assimilation and multi-cultural policy, promoted presently in many western democratic states is important. Self-radicalisation, concerning especially the 2nd and 3rd generation of young Muslims (including western converts) requires special treatment: they use modern technical devices such as the Internet¹ with more ease than the previous generation.

The high level of civilization and technical development of the EU states is paradoxically both hindering and facilitating radicalisation. An open society, the possibility of free expression of own opinions, criticism of authority and attractive economic opportunities are the reasons for which a vast majority of European Muslims choose deep integration with indigenous citizens and peaceful co-existence.

On the other hand, a citizen-friendly state organisation system facilitates activities of individuals and groups, such as extremely radical Muslims who show incomprehension and absolute hostility towards the West. The protection of citizen rights may have

¹ Presently, in descriptions of Islamic immigrants in the EU, the following division into generations is adopted: 1st generation – people aged 60 and more, 2nd generation – people aged 30-50, 3rd generation – people aged 30 and less.

impact on weakening the efficiency of law enforcement institutions and judicial authorities which often have their hands literally “tied” in clear cases of threat with extreme radicalisation, and consequently with terrorism (e.g. the acquitting judgement in case of the Dutch Hofstadt Group – Hofstadgroep). Apart from political areas, economic and technological development (e.g. widespread access to network mass media) equips radicals with modern instruments for battling a system very difficult for definite and successful counteraction (e.g. a constant set up of new “www” sites by Islamists in order to replace websites blocked due to dissemination of hatred or encouragement to acts of violence).²

The Concept of Radicalization

In literature, radicalisation is defined as a process of adopting an extremist system of values combined with expressing disapproval, as well as supporting or using violence and threat as a method of achieving changes in the society. An often quoted definition of radicalisation resorting to violence is the one developed by the European Commission, compliant to which radicalisation is the “phenomenon of people embracing opinions, assessments and views that could lead to the commitment of terrorist acts.” On the other hand, experts of e.g. Dutch intelligence services (*Algemene Inlichtingen – en Veiligheidsdienst*, AIVD) present the process of radicalisation as a (growing) readiness of a given individual to independent realisation and (or) introduction of changes in the society (with various methods, including non-democratic ones) or encouragement of others to do so. At the same, AIVD emphasizes that in this case an especially important factor is the attitudes among immigrant societies which influence the radicalisation process taking place gradually without any clearly accentuated beginning and end. In addition, it may develop very violently. Consequently, radicalisation is a process including a change in the way of thinking – heading towards fundamentalist ideas and increased readiness to act in order to achieve a specific goal (Veldhuis, Bakker 4-7). The term employed in the further part of the article shall be understood as socialisation for extremism (a set of opinions and behaviours characterised by the main feature of extremism in reference to the

² *Hofstadgroep* was composed mainly of Muslims of North-African origin aged 18-28, mostly of the 2nd generation immigrants and converts.

existing distribution of political forces), manifested with the negation of the existing political system/order by the threat to use or an actual use of political violence (terrorism). Radical attitudes and behaviours shall be recognised in relation to political mainstream, that is to democracy of EU states, and they may result in readiness for illegal operations.

It is worth emphasizing that the same radicalisation process does not have to result in commitment of terrorist activity. Radicalisation may concern: individuals, groups and masses, their beliefs/opinions, feelings and behaviours. Behaviours, including engagement in political violence result rather from interaction and inter-group conflicts, than from the urge to destroy individual psychology (Maculey, Moskalenko 415-433). Consequently, “self-radicalisation” constitutes a form less frequent than recruitment into a terrorist organisation and preparation of a recruit (also mentally) for the task of killing with the aim to attain the objectives of the organisation. Identification with a group facilitates creating an alternative moral system supporting the process of mechanisms neutralizing aggression towards “not us”/”strangers”/”enemies.” However, it does not mean that the self-radicalisation process will not push the individual to join groups using violence.

Conditions of Radicalization

Complex separation of radicalisation threat directions seems possible with the engagement of research instruments remaining in the scope of the whole range of scientific disciplines, such as economy, psychology, sociology, political science and international relations or anthropology (See more: Veldhuis, Staun). Among factors fostering radicalisation of opinions of Muslims in the West, we may list a whole range of various conditions and incentives, inter alia:

- poor political, economic, social and cultural integration;
- identity crisis intensified with the feeling of humiliation, inferiority and discrimination (real or imaginary problems – in a subjective opinion of an individual);
- foreign policy of the host country (supporting governments recognised as unfair by a given Muslim, and causing harm for the so-called “Muslim world,” literally “abode of Islam” (Meines 35-36).

The so-called root cause model may be useful in the research of factors radicalising opinions of Allah supporters in the EU

countries. It assumes the existence of causes which constitute a foundation, and a specific catalysis which accelerates the radicalisation process (Veldhuis, Staun 22). An individual is located in the centre of the discussed model (individual dimension) and is subject to influence of various external and internal factors. Even though every such factor may become the main reason for radicalisation of a given person's opinions, usually a combination of several of them launches the discussed process.

Among macro factors (conflicts, integration, globalisation) we may include other categories such as demographic, political, social, economic and cultural changes together with participation in the labour market (Veldhuis, Staun 24). This set of elements is conditional for an initial occurrence of risk of dissatisfaction, frustration and eventually – potential radicalisation process onset of a given individual or group (e.g. young Muslims which are not able to compete on the labour market, who become trapped in the “vicious circle” of poverty and doubt). However, the macro category alone cannot explain the radicalisation phenomenon. What becomes useful here is the micro dimension of the discussed model which focuses on direct characteristics of a given individual, as well as his or her social relations.

A division of micro categories into a social and a more private, individual dimension aims at emphasising the important role of every individual and his or her internal (usually unique) motivations. Personality features of a given Muslim may be discussed together with his or her opinions, temperament and the remaining elements of the psychological profile (See more: Mellis). Radical Muslim imams teaching in mosques on the territory of the EU often refer to an individual feeling of humiliation of Muslims in their public speeches. In 1966, in the so-called “Declaration of War” (Declaration of jihad against American occupation of the land of two holy sites) a contemporary leader of Al-Qaeda argued that death is better than life when it comes to humiliation, which may be interpreted as an incentive for committing suicidal attacks (*The Change Institute* 119).

Alex P. Schmid presents another proposition for analysis. He decided, that radicalisation should be discussed in referral to: vulnerability, recruitment, indoctrination and actions, each time taking account a psychological, social, economic and political context (Schmid 3-5). The first level (*micro level*) should take into consideration an individual's identity problems, crisis and aspiration deprivation issues, humiliation, stigmatisation, desire for revenge

and retaliation. The second level (*meso level*) concerns should draw attention to the radicalisation of the environment surrounding the individual, including family, the closest relatives, colleagues, friends, neighbours, social networks. The third level (*macro level*) takes a broader circle into account, that is public opinion attitudes and behaviour trends. It is worth noticing that political decision-makers may also succumb to radicalisation, which is often visible at a verbal level and at a level of permissible social behaviour (discrimination), as well as a legislative level: reinforcing provisions of the penal code and the code referring to visas.

The full picture, composed of causal and catalyst factors is dynamic. Political, social, economic and individual life experience is all subject to the process of formation in time. However, the causal factors themselves do not have to have causative power (*Causal factors* 9-31). Moreover, they are easier to diagnose and foresee, in contrast to cases of incidents or impulses specified as catalysts. On the other hand, they are not able to independently initiate the very process of self-radicalisation. It is possible only as a result of a specific combination of the catalyst with factors originating from a macro, mezzo, micro or individual dimension. For example, publishing Muhammad cartoons in Denmark and their reprinting in many EU countries may be recognized as one of the crucial catalysts launching the present wave of radicalisation processes of certain individuals or groups in Great Britain, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Italy and Denmark. Differentiation of the radicalisation phenomenon causes was already indicated in the '80s of the 20th century when, among others, the breakthrough work by Martha Crenshaw titled *The Causes of Terrorism* was published (See more: Crenshaw).

The Facilitation of Radicalization

An analysis of radicalisation cases indicates that causes of this phenomenon cannot be found exclusively in poverty, poor adolescence conditions or lack of possibility to integrate with the citizens of the host country (e.g. due to lack of knowledge of the language). Rather contrary, extremists usually appear to be non-distinctive, well-educated married citizens (with children) who become vulnerable to the message sent by the adversaries of western values (*Causal factors* 12).

Materials disseminated by the perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Great Britain and in the Netherlands that is: Mohammed

Siddique Khan (one of the originators of the attack in the London underground in 2005) and Mohammed Bouyeri (the assassin of the film director Theo van Gogh in 2004) indicate a strong influence of the political factor. In the above-mentioned cases, radicalisation took place as a result of impossibility to agree with an unjust, in the opinion of the terrorists, fate of Muhammad's followers abroad (in Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria). In the case of this pattern's confirmation, as well as in other situations connected to the radicalisation of opinions, it would signify a serious challenge for western communities. At that moment we cannot expect that the improvement of living conditions of Muslims in the host country is sufficient for considerable reduction of the threat coming from the activities of extremely radical individuals (Emerson et al. 44).

Nowadays, the results of research over individual, personal factors fostering radicalisation may contribute to supporting anti-terrorist tactic, as well as prevention. It was not always the case, because in the past, it was often believed that terrorists were people with mental diseases, fostering the assumption that they were not able to think in a reasonable manner and plan their actions. The modern approach to the issue of terrorism resulting from the application of a series of specialist scientific sub-disciplines, such as e.g. psychology of terrorism, delivers more comprehensive research instruments in the discussed scope. In 2006, Dutch psychologists Roel W. Meertens, Yvonne R.A. Prins and Bertjan Doosje performed a review of radicalisation theories in the area of the scientific discipline which they examined. They analysed the impact of environmental conditions of a given individual such as authority, leadership and social pressure reaching the conclusion that they may radically change the manner of behaviour: from regular to exceeding generally accepted norms (Veldhuis, Staun 54-7).

Supporters of the theory of a decisive personality factor in radicalisation believe that issues of faith may constitute a secondary impulse. Compliant to this assumption, gaining extremist opinions by M. Bouyeri, the assassin of T. van Gogh in the Netherlands, might not have had a direct connection to his faith. A radical interpretation of Islam supposedly constituted an additional radicalisation factor, but not the root cause, because in the period preceding the attack, M. Bouyeri experienced a series of traumatic experiences, among others the death of his mother and his imprisonment (Veldhuis, Staun 56).

In 2006, a research conducted by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUCM) showed that Muslims

in the EU countries, in a majority of cases, did not feel the connection with public institutions and organisations which are supposed to represent them. The acquired data showed an indifference coming from the conviction that in the political life of European countries they live in, there is not enough space for debates about the problems and the situation of Muslims. Respondents said that they did not have institutional support for challenges Islam faced in Europe. Among the most important problems, the following were listed: insufficient representation of the Muslim community in state and local administration, discrimination on the labour market, as well as in the housing and education domain. It causes a situation resembling a “vicious circle,” where socio-cultural integration of Muslims in Western countries is hindered by a set of listed factors. Muslims living in large groups on the outskirts of large European cities (in the so-called ghettos) experience, among others, lack of the sense of belonging to the rest of the population in which they live (Veldhuis, Staun 31).

An important factor influencing radicalisation of Muslims is long-term conflicts in the international area perceived by Muhammad’s followers as a conflict between Islam and the western world. It concerns mainly the Middle East problem between Israel and Palestine, which has been engaging consecutive generations. Olivier Roy, the well-known researcher of political Islam, considers it to be the main reason for radicalisation of contemporary Muslims (Veldhuis, Staun 35). It needs emphasizing that, despite the domination of subjective conviction of the Muslim majority, it is not a true picture, because the military operation goals in Iraq and Afghanistan were not to fight with religion, they were actually directed against regimes and counteracting terrorist threat caused by jihad fighters hosted by Talibs. It may be considered as a method of protection against a political form of aggressive Islam having a strategic dimension.

Public opinion research, already conducted in December 2002 in Great Britain on the commission of the BBC television network showed that the majority of British Muslims considers war on terror as war against Islam. Muslims are the largest religious minority in this country (around 1.6 million) which in their opinion is presented either as radicals ready to use violence or as defenders of peaceful Islam. On the other hand, a detailed interdisciplinary social research, managed in the context of radicalisation of young Allah worshippers living in the EU countries, showed that currently this process proceeds not only in extremely radical mosques,

but also in youth shelters and clubs, thematic libraries or via the Internet.

In reference to the problem of radicalisation of European Muslims, the economic factor has a significant meaning. In the era of an economic slowdown, when living conditions of citizens dramatically drop, the so-called phenomenon of negative association may be discussed, noticed among others by Brock Blomberg (Veldhuis, Staun 14). In short, it may be defined as an increase of occurrence probability in cases of terrorist events during the time of poor economic situation in the country. In the situation of adverse economic conditions, that is poverty, and the connected risk of social marginalisation, many Muslims choose extremism as a “reasonable solution.” In fanatic organisations, they are offered everything which they missed so far, that is: the feeling of belonging to a community made of people resembling them, coherent and clear aim of actions (fight with the western enemy), and financial means. We may even risk a statement, that they gain a specifically understood prestige and recognition also increasing their own self-esteem (Veldhuis, Staun 14).

In the opinion of a larger group of Muslim communities in the EU, this environment also suffers from pauperisation resulting from comparison to indigenous population (the remuneration level, availability of senior posts, etc.). Economic differences in the level of life are not a decisive factor influencing the launch of radicalisation process, but they create a fostering environment. Many Muslims who used to be suspected of connections to terrorism were very well educated. In the past, the difference between less the wealthy Muslims living in Europe and the wealthier ones living in the USA was more visible, but now it seems to have become less important. Attempts at terrorist activity are undertaken on both sides of the Atlantic, irrespective of the level of income, social position or type of work (e.g. in 2009, an Algerian scientist was arrested in the LHC research centre at the French-Swiss border, and in the same year 13 soldiers were murdered by the American major Nidal Malik Hasan in Fort Hood in Texas). In the terms of factors fostering radicalisation connected to globalisation and modernisation processes, we may mention two dimensions of this issue:

– The first is the technical and scientific progress realised by dissemination of modern communication means such as the Internet (The National Coordinator for Counterterrorism 79-81). By the intermediary of global mass media, radical Muslim groups disseminate extremist content with ease, directly or indirectly inciting

for hatred or (and) acts of violence. Salafism is one of the most active Islam factions developing globally with the use of modern technical achievements.

– The second dimension may comprise the predominance of western patterns which is an ideological mainstream shaping globalisation presently (democracy, liberalisation of socio-cultural norms, etc.). This picture is particularly well grounded in a certain groups of Muhammad followers perceiving this situation as a threat to their religion (The National Coordinator for Counterterrorism 16, 20).

According to Benjamin Barber, who created the idea of the so-called “McWorld,” globalisation is simultaneously associated with consumerism, immoral lifestyle, emancipation of various environments (e.g. sexual minorities) and development of modern technologies (Barber). Most of those developmental trends are generally considered to be contradictory to the cannon of Muslim faith, even though it seems that this belief is not fully true. The change of lifestyle in western democratic states (so-called westernization) is clearly visible in many EU states and concerns Christians to a similar extent, as they are more flexible in their adaptation to social changes and modernisation (Veldhuis, Staun 35).

The risk of radicalisation of Muslim communities representing relatively moderate opinions is more probable if we assume the impact of specific factors, such as gaining influence by the so-called Islamism and politicized Islam. Identity and social identification disorders, which are beyond all doubt present among young British and Dutch Muslims, constitute an important radicalisation factor. According to the social identity theory, a group becomes a reference point, being defined based on the contrast between the supporters – in other words the in-group, whereas the hostile environment created by the representatives of the remaining structures or relationships among people turns into out-groups (Veldhuis, Staun 40). Some researchers even state that identification with a group constitutes the main factor responsible for the radicalisation of Muslims. Research conducted during 2006-2008 in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Philip Hermans, Elenor Kamans, Ernestine H.Gordijn, Hilbrand Oldenhuis, Sabine Otten) clearly shows that Moroccan youth living and growing up in this country painfully experiences lack of acceptance and a certain type of alienation.³

³ In case of Moroccans in the Netherlands, their situation is analysed by among others Paulo de Mas drawing attention to the problem of migration. Moroccan emigrants who settled in the Kingdom of the Netherlands acquiring the citizenship

Other analysts (e.g. Frank Bujis) go one step further stating that, additionally, this generation does not feel emotional-cultural relationship with their parents representing a different type of Muslims. This state has an interesting name of hybrid identity, which is not accepted by any of the two groups in the environment of young Moroccans (family, Dutch community). Not belonging to any of the above-mentioned groups, the Muslim youth turns towards the community of faith (Arab. *Ummah*), which permeates the issue of nationality or ethnic origin and creates the (false) impression of a specific “safe” harbour for young people searching for their place. Instead of identifying themselves in the context of nationality (Briton-Pakistani, Dutchman-Moroccan, Frenchmen-Algerian, Swede-Somali), such people start to perceive themselves in exclusively religious categories or rather in pseudo-religious categories (*Causal factors* 18-19).

The Internet is an element worthy of particular emphasis in terms of Muslim youth radicalisation issues. Rapid dissemination of this technology taking place for over ten years redefined the values of a safe environment and conditions of the very policy of counteracting terrorism. Easiness of access and relative anonymity of this medium causes prerequisites to call it a crucial weapon of extreme fundamentalists active in the EU and across borders. In the domain of the progressive self-radicalisation of moderate Islam followers, we may state that in this case the Internet network provides the main instrument, a source of information and relationships among people. A computer connection today may be specified as a factor instantly supporting the global jihad movement.

The specificity of the penitentiary system cannot be left out in the radicalisation of a share of Muslims. Imams often play an active role here. Mohammed Bouyeri, the assassin of Theo van Gogh, the Dutch director, most probably adopted extremist opinions when serving his sentence to imprisonment. In such conditions, the process of belonging to a given group (in this case a group of radical Muslim co-prisoners) is crucial for the convict to survive in prison conditions. It accelerates radicalisation and strengthens

and good economic status often support their countrymen facilitating them (not always legally) the acquisition of passports or visas. It is worth mentioning, that majority of terrorist attack perpetrators in Madrid 2004 were of Moroccan origins, but the decisive impact on radicalisation leading to terrorist acts comes not from nationality or ethnic origin, but from understanding the Muhammad faith (The National Coordinator for Counterterrorism 85-117).

its foundations – a specific understanding of the bond among co-prisoners who support each other (Veldhuis, Staun 46).

At the same time, the threat coming from the phenomena of self-recruitment requires emphasizing. According to Marc Sageman (the author of the bunch of guys' theory), this process consists of an independent organisation of individuals into a group which, by applying the ideology of radical Islam, initiates the self-radicalisation process, resulting in initiating the activity of terrorist nature (Sageman 8; Causal factors...8). Those individuals train in their own scope and independently radicalize their opinions with the use of propaganda materials placed on the Internet by extremists. The Member States report cases where EU residents support actions of terrorist groups show the severity of this situation. As a result of radicalisation, the Union becomes a platform for preparation and initiation of attacks in other parts of the world (recently most often on the territory of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Arab. *ad-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-'Iraq wa Ash-Sham*)).

Various events influencing the mental state of a Muslim may constitute to triggering a factor which would initiate the process of radicalisation. Among them we may list the following: persistence of unemployment, detention of a friend-Muslim, and observation of ultra-realist, violent films concerning the situation of Muslims in specific regions (e.g. civil victims of armed conflicts). Another serious cause of Muslim radicalisation is the activity of extremist centres and single units which are supported (financially and ideologically) abroad (state-sponsored radicalization). Sponsors usually come from countries having an ultra-conservative perception of Islam such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. In countries of this type, European Imams frequently undergo religious indoctrination (Exploring Root... 11).

In general, four approaches may be applied to the analysis of the terrorism phenomenon (and indirectly – also radicalisation):

1) *a multi-causal approach*, consisting of a whole range of factors: psychological, economic, political or sociological – searching the sources of terrorism among a combination of conditions, in this case it focuses the least on examining its genesis;

2) *a political/structural approach*, that is recognizing the environment as having the strongest impact in the form of political events on a domestic and international stage;

3) *an organizational approach*, emphasizing an informed selection of an instrument for terrorist battling as an optimum strategy to realise political goals;

4) *a psychological approach* focusing on the analysis of individual motivations of people facing the threat of radicalisation and terrorism (Exploring Root... 13-6).

Table 2. Differences in root and trigger causes (catalysts) of radicalisation

Root causes	Trigger causes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rapidly progressing modernisation and urbanisation is strongly connected with the development of an ideological type of terrorism. 2. Shortages in the democratic system, civil liberties and the rule of law are a necessary prerequisite for developing many forms of national terrorism. 3. Historical conditions for using violence in political life. 4. Oppression of a foreign occupant or colonial-type policy. 5. Experience of ethnic or religious discrimination. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Events connected to the possibility of undertaking revenge or other counter-reaction (e.g. as a result of questioned choices, cases of police brutality etc.) 2. Lack of possibility to participate in political life. 3. Concrete proofs of dissatisfaction among specific groups of community. 4. Belonging to strong community groups which put pressure on the identity of their members. 5. Peace talks.

Source: “Exploring Root and Trigger Causes of Terrorism,” *Transnational Terrorism, Security and Rule of Law*, (28 June 2007, revised April 2008), p. 20

The organisation system of democratic states characterised with political openness seems to foster free dissemination of radical Islam ideas. It is pointed out, among others, in the report by *Policy Exchange*, a tank type analytical institution, developed during yearly research (2006-2007) of literature and other information materials available in places of worship and Muslim centres in Great Britain (mosques, libraries, etc.). The analysed materials show a picture of places where, under the cover of spreading faith, extremely negative content and opinions about the culture, customs and political system of Western states are disseminated. The authors of the report, trying to pre-empt the potential accusation of *islamophobia*, reasonably show that many of the official (the so-called mainstream) British Muslim centres *de facto* spread ideologies of hatred. In the USA these types of actions are close to the definition of hate crime which is very severely treated by the judicial system. This type of message reaches the Islam community on the EU territory in religious sites such as mosques, where, in comparison to practising Christians in churches, many more Muslims gather, increasing the disquietude.

Having noticed a difficulty in adequate definition of social groups vulnerable to radicalisation slogans, we may draw a general

conclusion that the group most vulnerable to the discussed problem is representatives of minorities feeling discriminated. European Muslims living in Great Britain, France, Italy, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany or Sweden certainly belong to such minorities. Community identity of a given individual is crucial here. Analysis of this identity may, with a large degree of probability, enable to foresee the individual's behaviour in the future. Here it is worth noticing, that diversity of the very Muslim minority and the factors triggering its radicalisation (from low economic status to international conflicts unsolvable in the foreseeable future) makes the risk in the discussed scope particularly difficult to level.

EU Initiatives to Counter Radicalisation

Adequate recognition of factors fostering rapid radicalisation and their neutralisation constitute a crucial element of the European Commission's work in the scope of counteracting terrorism. Prevention and resistance to radicalisation are the priority elements of anti-terrorist measures listed in key documents such as:

- *Declaration on Combating Terrorism*, founding the institution of the Coordinator for Combating Terrorism;
- *Action Plan on Combating Terrorism* of March 25, 2004;
- *Commission's Communication on Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Terrorist Attacks* adopted on October 20, 2004;
- *The Hague programme for strengthening freedom, security and justice in the EU* adopted on November 5, 2005 for 2005-2009;
- *The Stockholm Programme – An open and secure Europe serving and protecting citizens 2010-2014* of December 11, 2009 and the action plan for its realisation;
- *The EU Internal Security Strategy in Action: Five steps towards a more secure Europe* of November 22, 2010;
- *The Commission Communication on Preventing Radicalisation leading to terrorism and violent extremism: Strengthening the EU's measures* of January 15, 2014.

EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism

All the above listed documents have reference to the radicalisation and recruitment phenomena translated into the pressure on the stage of prevention in the European system of combating

terrorism. Based on the Commission Communication of March 25, 2004 to the European Parliament and the Council on the Recruitment of Terrorists in December 2005, the Council adopted a *EU Strategy for combating radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism*. Member states shoulder the responsibility to assure security, but the Strategy delivers common standards and indicates new means for combating sudden radicalisation of attitudes among socio-religious minorities.

This Strategy together with the action plan constitutes a foundation for preventing the creation of extreme attitudes and recruitment to structures of terrorist organisations. Means to achieve those goals are: neutralisation of individual operations and groups of people who attempt at recruiting new members into terrorist organisation; moreover, assuring a dominating position of moderate voices in reference to those who express radical opinions, and intensifying efforts in order to promote security, justice, democracy and equal opportunities to all.

In the globalized world, the radical messages reaching specific groups have become simpler than ever before. It is due to new communication means and the possibility of rapid travelling, together with a dynamic development of instant transfer of financial means. It signifies that in a short period of time, terrorist groups may have funds necessary to promote radical ideas and train recruits at their disposal. The Internet is a medium which supports radicals' actions to a large extent; moreover, it informs about the motifs of the realised terrorist attacks. Surveying public sentiments, monitoring the content posted on the Internet and reaching zones experiencing conflict situation are the adopted measures of recognizing radicalisation, which may lead to violent acts. Knowledge allowing the recognition of areas subject to risk should be collected based on the exchange of domestic reports and analyses. Neutralising measures aiming at radicalisation of the environment also cover places of prayer and religious activity, academic centres and prisons. It also concerns areas of residence and any other sites with access of individuals who may influence the occurrence of extreme attitudes in the community. People travelling to destinations where conflict occurs will be subject to particular supervision. The EU decided to take steps towards adequate protection against incitement to violence and justification of its use. In this scope, defining the most efficient means to combat recruitment via the Internet became crucial. At the same time, the EU expressed its will to promote such actions outside of its borders as well. The conducted

political dialogue and readiness to offer support in technical issues could bring other countries to undertake similar steps counteracting rapid radicalisation.

In its Strategy, the EU expressed its belief that radical opinions justifying violence and encouraging its use are being spread. The root of the problem is the propaganda presenting global conflicts as an alleged proof for a clash between the western and Muslim civilisation. It triggers the feeling of bitterness among people who consider themselves to be victims of the world divided into better and worse parts and it is an expression of their anger. It is even more dangerous when we take into account the fact that the politics of the western countries is perceived with a lack of trust and suspected of hidden intentions, as well as applying double standards in contacts with partners. Cooperation with Muslim organisations, which by general rule reject the distorted version of Islam promoted by extreme organisations belonging to the Al-Qaeda movement, constitutes a EU way to level the impact of an extreme voice and emphasize the voice of the middle-of-the road majority. It has been assumed that an efficient strategy has to include an element of dialogue among the governments of states, scientific staff and Muslim community inside and outside Europe. It is required to provide broad access to literature containing middle-of-the road opinions and also support education of European Imams and organise courses, including language courses for Imams from outside of Europe to make their message even more efficient. In addition, Europe believes it is necessary to supervise and intensify efforts for changing the perception of European and western policy, especially among the Muslim community. Unfair or imprecise opinions about Islam and its followers in Europe are yet another issue requiring immediate improvement. One step towards this direction is to develop a vocabulary devoid of unnecessary emotional burden allowing for a discussion in which Islam would not be combined with terrorism. Apart from the phrase “Islamic terrorism,” other unwelcome words are: Islamist, “fundamentalist” and “jihad.” Employing the last term in the context of terrorist attacks is particularly insulting for a vast majority of Muslims, for whom the world signifies the Muslim’s struggle with their own internal weaknesses. The Union emphasized that the measures they undertook cannot lead to deepening the divisions (*The European Strategy for Combating*).

In the Union’s strategy, there is a list of factors whose occurrence in community may, although it doesn’t have to, lead to its radicalisation. Among them are: weak or authoritarian governments,

states with a regime transforming towards an incomplete democratic system due to inadequate reforms, rapid, but unsuccessful modernisation, lack of perspectives for the improvement of the economic situation, unsolved internal or external conflicts and an insufficient or inadequate cultural offer or a range of possibilities to gain education by young people in comparison to the needs. The EU emphasizes, that many of those factors do not occur in member states, but they may occur in certain social layers. The list may be expanded with the issue of national minorities identifying themselves with the rest of the nation. There is a widespread consensus that structural factors contributing to the increase of radicalisation in the EU and outside it should be eliminated. Levelling social disproportions and signs of discrimination should be supported with inter-cultural dialogue, exchange of opinions and short-term or long-term integration. Outside the EU borders, good governance, human rights, democracy, education and welfare should be promoted together with contribution to solving conflicts. Political dialogue and support programmes should serve this goal (*The European Union Strategy for Combating*).

Radicalisation of individual representatives of the Muslim community in Europe is a relatively new phenomenon. European locations where this issue is not reported, or areas without considerable Muslim community are also subject to extremist activities in the future. The EU's intention is a multilayer and flexible, adjusted to changing circumstances approach to this issue: maintaining contact with communities of diverse religions and beliefs, comparing domestic experience and creating a correct image of Europe. The EU realises a yearly review of its measures in order to assure flexibility.

The provisions of the Strategy are realised both individually and jointly with the assistance of the European Commission. It has been emphasized that the assistance of non-governmental community in counteracting extremists and disclosure of their offences shall play a key role in the efficiency of the developed plan. The EU focuses on the effort on a national, regional and local level in reference to counteracting radicalisation, because foreign policy and the policy of security and defence is *de facto* developed and realised at those levels. The approach to the issue differs largely from member state to member state. Consequently, the EU Strategy for combating radicalisation and recruitment of November 24, 2005 constitutes a foundation of jointly defined causal factors for radicalisation and rules and counteractions

aiming at them. At the same time, it takes into account diversity on national, regional and local levels. Moreover, the Strategy constitutes a platform for communication among member states and the exchange of experience gained at lower levels. The European Commission's support in this scope has the form of transferring financial means for research, organizing conferences, education and inter-cultural activity. It also has a form of control on the EU strategic level. Measures restricted to the EU territory comprise instruments, mechanisms and processes which the Union offers to particular countries or organisations.

In November 2008, the Strategy was updated and in 2009 its detailed Action Plan was too. The document stipulates that member states shall regularly and with a multilayer approach evaluate the threat resulting from the occurring extreme attitudes and they shall share their knowledge in this scope with the other EU member states. Mechanisms allowing for systematic analysis of main factors in radicalisation processes shall be launched. Their goal is to monitor and collect information concerning this phenomenon in the EU and in other regions of the world prone to their occurrence. Various environments liable to the occurrence of radicalisation and connected to its recruitment into terrorist groups shall be subject to identification and systematic analysis.

The Strategy was revised also in May 2013. The updated *EU Strategy for combating radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism* assigns a task to the member states, based on paying particular attention to residences and places frequented by individuals supporting radicalisation. The member states are obliged to exchange information concerning activities of radical religious leaders and individuals or groups undertaking actions stirring up hatred and inciting to committing terrorist offences. A platform for exchange of sensitive information is sought as a means to achieve this goal. Mechanisms of controlling the process of collecting and exchanging the data concerning extremist leaders of extremist communities and their movements inside the EU should be launched. Moreover, EU members are obliged to exchange analytical data in the scope of environments leading to radicalisation and recruitment activity, as well as recent cases of court sentences for terrorist activity with the use of EUROPOL (European Police Office) and EURJUST (European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit), or through EU INTCEN (EU Intelligence Analysis Centre), depending on the situation. It aims at acceleration of the development of analyses targeting cause examination of the radicalisation phenomenon (*Revised EU Strategy*).

EU Internal Security Strategy in Action

The EU Internal Security Strategy: Five steps towards a more secure Europe for 2011-2014 approved on November 23, 2010 among five strategic goals mentions: Preventing terrorism and addressing radicalisation and recruitment (STEP: 2). A superior task in this area is empowering communities to prevent radicalisation and recruitment of terrorists. The Strategy emphasises that the development and implementation of means aiming at combating radicalisation belongs to the member states, consequently the most important measures should be undertaken at a national and local level, in environments facing the strongest exposure. The document presents three detailed measures:

- the so-called Radicalisation Awareness Network founded in 2011, also called RAN⁴ addressed to individuals and institutions dealing with the radicalisation issue leading to violent extremism and terrorism (the network should comprise users such as security institutions together with social workers, teachers, youth leaders, cultural and religious centres);

- a ministerial conference organized in 2012 on the prevention of radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism where member states were to present lectures on best practices in preventing the ideology of violent extremism;

- drawing up a handbook on measures and experiences in preventing radicalisation (in particular with the use of the Internet), disrupt recruitment channels and the so-called “exit strategy” from extreme attitudes by the Commission in 2013-2014.

The RAN initiative, founded in September 2011, is the most complex initiative of the *The EU Internal Security Strategy* aiming at empowering the role of the community in counteracting radicalisation and recruitment of terrorists. Today, the *Radicalisation Awareness Network*, has over 700 experts and practitioners from all over Europe. Presently, there are nine working groups in its framework:

- RAN POL, developing opportunities for local communities and police institutions in preventing radicalisation through, among

⁴ It is worth noticing, that already in 2008 the Commission founded the European Network of Experts on Radicalisation. The ENER constitutes a platform of exchange of information and comments concerning radicalisation and supports in this scope the policy on the European Union and national level. The ENER network draws up publications, organises seminars and workshops for individuals connected to academia centres and for representatives of governments of European member states and other countries.

others, creating contact lists, organizing workshops, seminars, study visits and spreading good practices.

- RAN VVT – its main task is to present terrorist threats through the experience of terrorism victims, having potential impact on discouraging terrorist activity and increasing awareness.

- RAN@, focuses on the use of the Internet in combating radicalisation leading to extremism and terrorism. Moreover, the group concentrates on “positive” initiatives on the Internet.

- RAN PREVENT focuses on “early intervention” forms both in case of individuals and groups potentially exposed to radicalisation, mainly under 26 years of age. A collection of good practices, examples of intervention and databases are addressed mainly to individuals “operating in the field.”

- RAN DEPARD is concerned by support for people who are “close” to individuals and risk groups (“the first line of risk”) such as probation service, NGOs, police services in local communities. The goal is to strengthen the techniques and methods of work and exchange experience.

- RAN P&P develops means and methods for prison institutions and entities operating in penitentiary institutions (including social benefit organisations) in order to prevent radicalisation of individuals serving their sentences. Moreover, it analyses the issue of “reintegration” of an individual after having served their sentence and the “potential” threat of returning to society, as well as manners of monitoring such an individual.

- RAN HEALTH aims at increasing the awareness concerning the issue of combating extremism and terrorism in the health care sector.

- RAN INT/EXT examines the location and role of diasporas in combating radicalisation of opinions and behaviour inside member states, also in external contacts and enabling training abroad.

- RAN SC that is the Steering Committee, headed by the European Commission, gathering all chairs of the remaining groups and holding regular meetings.

- RAN’s work is addressed mainly to institutions competent for identification of radicalisation and polarisation and providing assistance. Among them, the following may be listed: local authorities, security services, including mainly the police, border guards, schools, universities, social and family assistance institutions, penal institutions, probation service institutions, health care sites and teams assisting under age offenders and institutions combating social pathologies.

The EU Internal Security Strategy was subject to evaluation three times: in 2011, 2013, and 2014. The realisation of the STEP No. 2: empowering communities to prevent radicalisation and recruitment of terrorists for 2010-2014, received very good evaluation of the European Commission.

At the end, it is worth adding, that all the present measures realised for combating radicalisation in the European Union, including measures in the project titled: *Renewed EU Internal Security Strategy* (for 2015-2020) have to be highly coherent with the approach of the European External Action Service, EEAS and the activity of the UE coordinator for combating terrorism. Moreover, those measures are composed in a manner preventing the infringement of fundamental rights and freedoms of the EU citizens stipulated in the Charter of EU fundamental rights, including the freedom of expression and information, freedom to assembly, freedom of association and respect of linguistic, cultural and religious diversity.

Conclusions

The radicalisation of Muslim opinions in the EU, as observed in other Western countries, is subject to possible influence of diversified factors. Among them a set of conditions fostering such processes may be discerned. In general, a conclusion may be drawn, that varied internal factors (individual, personal) and external (the impact of the political, social and economic environment) may make the Muslims follow two main paths of radicalisation:

1. The first, caused by the crisis of an individual's identity, is determined mainly by macro-type factors (integration, economy, diplomacy, culture etc.). The Muslim adopts a beneficial for him manner of perceiving the world (Islamism) which (illusively) guarantees readiness to use solutions to problems (*a solution-providing belief system*). This radicalisation path corresponds to the concept of a phase model. Gradual change of opinion takes place (e.g. compliant to the model by analysts from the New York City Police Department – NYPD: Stage 1; Pre-Radicalisation, Stage 2: Self-Identification, Stage 3: Indoctrination, Stage 4: Jihadization) which may finally lead to an act of violence⁵.

⁵ Authors of the report emphasize the following:

- each of those stages is unique and it has features characteristic only for itself;

2. The second path results from interaction of a series of factors included in the dynamics of social interactions, which may be comprised in the micro-type areas. Here, social norms and pressures, the rules governing given groups or relationships among people may be more important than ideological or opinion issues (Veldhuis, Staun 63-4).

Radicalisation of Muslims in Europe is not always connected to violence, however, this phenomenon in general cannot be considered beneficial from the point of view of internal security of democratic states and the security of the whole EU. An individual or a group undertaking terrorist activity is the final and the most extreme stage of radicalisation. However, the process of radicalisation of opinions triggered by a varied range of factors may be either brought to a halt or reversed (Meines 11).

Identification and strong feeling of religious community with other brothers in faith (*Ummah*) doubtlessly makes a given Muslim more sensitive to the situation of the followers of this religion in other parts of the world. It naturally multiplies the impact of international situations and conflicts connected to Islam on opinions of a given Muslim. A perfect example of such a situation is the mass commitment of citizens of the European Union states in actions (both military and propaganda) of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Bernard Cazeneuve, the French Minister for Interior, in mid-September 2014 confirmed, that around 930 French citizens had joined “jihad” in this region (France24, *France says 930 citizens.*). Moreover, in 2014 other massive numbers of citizens joined ISIS: in Germany – 450 citizens, Belgium – over 300, Sweden – 400 and Great Britain reported a record number estimated at 600-2000 individuals (Radio Free Europe, *Foreign Fighters in...*). Those people, after coming back to Europe, constituted a real threat for the EU due to gained skill and experience. Moreover, there is the risk that they still have strong bonds with extreme organisations and in short time perspective they may constitute logistic support for them and even more, actively participate in the realisation of actions with the

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- not all individuals initiating this process have to undergo all the stages. Many individuals interrupt or withdraw from this process at various levels of progress;
 - despite the fact that this model is sequential, not all individuals follow it with perfectly linear progress;
 - there is considerably large probability that individuals who undergo the whole radicalisation process will be included in planning or realisation of a terrorist act (Silber 6).

use of violence inside the European Union. Further, in the mid-term perspective, they may even become catalysts of a broader terrorist activity.

Preventing the threat in the discussed area is (and probably will continue to be) a very complicated problem for western states due to the fact that motifs of rapid change in personality and radicalisation remain an individual issue. On one hand, there is the need of rapid and efficient counteraction of the risk of terrorist activity, on the other however, methods which are too strict (and additionally publicized by the mass media) may lead to even greater radicalisation of numerous Islam environments in many European Union member states.

It is worth noticing that some researchers examining radicalisation processes indicate certain deficiencies in presently widespread phase models such as the 4-level system developed by analysts from the New York City Police Department (NYPD). According to Tinka Veldhuis and Jørgen Staun from the Dutch Institute of International Relations in Clingendael, phase models cannot distinguish between the specific nature of gradual radicalisation (moving from one stage to another) and the phenomena which occurs suddenly. It concerns cases of individuals, whose opinions quickly become extreme resulting in “immediate” movement to the advanced stage of radicalisation and consecutive commitment of a terrorist act/ or the act of regular violence/ crime (Meines 31-3).

Reducing the risk of radicalisation and home-grown terrorism would require solving a series of long-lasting international conflicts which seems impossible in the foreseeable future. Moreover, spreading radical opinions challenging democratic values could exacerbate the already present conflict between values represented by the western world and the world view of Muslims living in the EU.

There are signals showing that such a threat may become real. In many EU countries there were cases of attempts or real use of violence in reaction to events or communications which were compliant with the set of principles of the civil and democratic society. Among them, there is the assassination of the politician Fortuyn, the film director Theo van Gogh, threats addressed against the member of parliament Geert Wilders in the Netherlands or continuous terrorist acts against the Swedish artist Lars Vilks, the author of the first cartoons of Muhammad in the EU (e.g. the last terrorist attack in Copenhagen – 14.02.2015), as well as against the editorial office of the satirical French newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*

(7.01.2015) publishing articles, among others, about Muslims. It doesn't mean that violent extremism is supported by the majority of Muslims living in the above mentioned countries, but having learned the results of public opinion surveys it is difficult not to notice the Islam followers' hidden consent to the use of violence.

Understanding the full range of factors which may trigger radicalisation of Muslim communities could contribute to a more complex approach to the issue of counteracting terrorism. Undertaking measures aiming at preventing or bringing to a halt the processes of radicalisation among Muslims, which may be connected to the use of violence and increasing resistance to extreme propaganda, may turn out to be critical. In de-radicalisation methods⁶, considering this issue from the point of view of the very Muslims living, residing and working in western societies seems to be worth of attention.

The EU's approach to combating radicalisation assumes, first of all battling terrorism at its roots by developing projects engaging a broader range of social actors and local authorities. Such projects first of all target the following:

- early identification and support of people belonging to high risk groups, particularly strongly open to learning distorted, extreme Islam ideology in order to increase their resistance to such slogans;
- the re-insertion of those individuals who have in an ideological sense “crossed the line,” but have not yet committed a crime (development of the so-called “exit strategy”);
- spreading innovative projects on an international/national/local level, developed by the network of international multidisciplinary experts (e.g. RAN) in order to inhibit the scale of success of violent extreme propaganda in electronic media.

It requires emphasising that the coexistence of various communities, ethnic groups or national groups on one territory seems possible and advantageous from the point of view of socio-cultural values and economic benefits (e.g. new human resources for the “aging population” of the EU member states). However, peaceful coexistence may become real exclusive in case of inhibiting radicalisation of opinions on both sides (first of all Muslims and also

⁶ De-radicalisation signifies both external intervention in the radicalisation process aiming at individual's withdrawing from the path leading to transformation of extreme ideology into a terrorist act and the process of internal transformation of the individual experiencing radicalisation or after the completion of the process which is noticeable first of all in questioning the righteousness or purposefulness of undertaking actions of extreme nature.

indigenous inhabitants of the western countries). A proper diagnosis of factors influencing dangerous radicalisation of opinions would enable to identify and undertake countermeasures for potential terrorist threat from individual perpetrators or a group.

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