# Radicalization as a Source of Danger to Safety

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**Abstract.** The article discusses the phenomenon of radicalization, which becomes a source of danger for the individual and the security of the state. At the beginning the article discusses the essence and causes of the phenomenon, and then refers to the Polish and German strategies in the field of security. The documents identify radicalization and extremism as a contemporary threat to national security, which is confirmed by numerous attacks in Europe. Examples of attacks involving radicalized individuals are discussed in this paper in the article. The discussion ends with conclusions emphasizing that in the process of radicalization the information provided to individuals and communication between government institutions and society are extremely important.

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### Introduction

Radicalization is a phenomenon that is developing in modern society and in various European countries. It permeates both social and political life, causing negative effects. Progressive radicalization may be a source of threats to the safety of an individual or entire social groups. This phenomenon is increasingly often analyzed in the context of threats to national security.

# The essence of the phenomenon

According to the Dictionary of the Polish language, radicalization means 'becoming firm and uncompromising in views and methods of action', 'making something radical and extreme'. The German Criminal Investigation unit (Bundeskriminalamt, BKA) define it as a process of individuals or persons towards extremism and therefor accept the use of illegal means up to the use of violence<sup>2</sup>. The European Commission defines this as the phenomenon of acquiring opinions, assessments

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Electronic source: https://sjp.pl/radykalizacja, accessed: 08.10.2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Bundeskriminalamt, *Radikalisierung, Electronic source:* https://www.bka.de/DE/lhreSich erheit/RichtigesVerhalten/Radikalisierung/radikalisierung\_node.html, *accessed:* 21.10.2019.

and views that could lead to terrorist acts<sup>3</sup>. The essence of radicalization is the denial of fundamental democratic values and the growing tendency to use violence to achieve ideological ends, and this process may culminate in hate crimes and acts of terrorism<sup>4</sup>. The study by the NYPD Intelligence Division & Counter-Terrorism Bureau, dedicated to Islamic extremism, defines radicalization as 'the process of internalization of an extremist system of views and thus the assimilation of an extremist religious and political ideology that legitimizes terrorism as a means of making social change happen. Terrorism is the ultimate stage in the process of radicalization'<sup>5</sup>.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks the New York Police Department identified four stages of radicalization: the pre-radicalization phase (initial), the self-identification phase with radical movement, the indoctrination phase with a group of extremists and the jihadization phase, during which one participates in training courses or is supplied with explosives<sup>6</sup>. This model is not without doubt or criticism in the academic world. Therefor there are other models, like the Neumann's approach, which is more generic and not limited to jihadization. He is reflecting to three components of radicalization: mobilization, ideology and grievance<sup>7</sup>. If all three come together, a (mostly) young vulnerable individual is more likely to join the path of radicalization and end up as an extremist using violence to fight for his believe against the injustice from whatever ideological perspective<sup>8</sup>. This Religious radicalization, on the other hand, appears as: 'the process of adopting an extremist system of values combined with the acceptance, support or use of violence and intimidation as a means of achieving change in society or encouraging others to do so. The ultimate, most extreme stage of radicalization is when an individual or group undertakes terrorist activities'9. It follows from the definitions given that the phenomenon is dangerous because an individual, under the influence of a given ideology which is attractive to him/her for various reasons, may engage in activities threatening the health and life of others, including even terrorism.

There are many factors that contribute to the increase of radicalization in society. Among them are those directly related to the individual and his or her socialization in the family environment. For example, loneliness, humiliation, violation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Borkowski R, Radykalizacja jako kategoria analityczna w profilowaniu terrorystów, *Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i praktyka*, 2014, Vol. 4 (XVII), p. 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Problem radykalizacji prowadzącej do przemocowego ekstremizmu, prewencja i przeciwdziałanie, rozwiązania systemowe, Międzynarodowy Instytut Społeczeństwa Obywatelskiego i Instytut Bezpieczeństwa Społecznego. *Electronic source*: https://miso.org. pl/dzialalnosc/aktualnosci/article/problem-radykalizacji-prowadzacej-do-przemocowego-ekstremizmu-prewencja-i-przeciwdzialanie-rozwiaz/, *accessed*: 11.10.2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Borkowski R, Radykalizacja..., op. cit., p. 78. Quote from: Silber M.D, Bhatt A, Radicalization in the West: the homegrown threat. New York, 2007, p. 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Neumann P, Wie radikalisieren sich gewaltbereite Islamisten, Präsentation auf der BKA Herbsttagung, Wiesbaden 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Borkowski R, *op. cit.,* p. 79. Quote from: Radykalizacja poglądów religijnych w społecznościach muzułmańskich wybranych państwa Unii Europejskiej (Polska-Holandia-Wielka Brytania). Szlachter D (Ed.) et. al. Szczytno, 2010.

of dignity or hostility towards ethnic minorities contribute to susceptibility to radicalization. According to research, 'radicalism as a personality trait is concentrated in categories of people with a lower status, while it is correspondingly weaker in categories of better educated people, occupying higher positions'10. Among the factors not directly related to the individual, the progressive globalization should be mentioned. It ensures openness and allows us to 'forget' different kinds of borders, which increases our possibilities in different areas of life. However, this is a phenomenon that we cannot control, and it can therefore also be a source of danger. Globalization, for example, means that certain ideologies and religions are no longer confined to a particular region, but are gaining support in various parts of the world. H. Domański notes that globalization is conducive to 'the growth of anomia, that is to say a sense of social uncertainty caused by the crisis of the current system of values and norms. The criteria for assessing reality suddenly change. People are beginning to lack clear rules that order their everyday behaviors and life strategies. The lack of these guidelines is a magnet for radical parties'11. The Polish sociologist notes that 'the feature of the current radicalism is the reference to nationalistic tendencies resulting from the fear of migrants, the ineptitude of the European Union, the weakness of the European economy and the conviction of the importance of national interests'12. Another factor linked to globalization that can have an impact on the development of radicalization in society is free access to various types of information. The ease of communication in the modern world and the possibility of exchanging information in a very short time make it possible to manipulate the content and the way of transmitting information without the will and knowledge of the human being, to shape his views, attitudes and behavior. 90% of the population in Europe and Northern Americans are using the internet, but also 50% of the people in Asia and 40% in Africa<sup>13</sup>. In this way, it is possible to influence society and, for example, create a sense of vulnerability when a given phenomenon is not really a major problem. In relation to globalization and the way in which information is conveyed, it is also impossible to mention social media, which play an increasingly important role in social life. For network users, they are increasingly the main source of information and can be used as a tool for shaping public opinion.

# Radicalisation as a source of danger

Progressive radicalization may be a source of threats, as stated in the Polish and German strategy policy on state security. The 2014 National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland diagnosed that 'different forms of extremism based on political, religious, ethnic, socio-economic and other grounds become a significant challenge

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Domański H, Pojawieniu się radykalizacji sprzyja kilka czynników, *Electronic source*: https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/opinie/artykuly/538741,henryk-domanski-spoleczenstwo-radykalizm-polityka-polska.html, *accessed*: 06.10.2019.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ihid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Internet Worlds Stats (2019), Usage and population statistics. *Electronic source:* https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm, *accessed:* 12.09.2019.

for international security. They are particularly dangerous when they use terrorism as an instrument of action. The phenomenon of extremism can be organized as well as resulting from the actions of individuals'14. The strategy does not explicitly mention radicalization, but draws attention to extremism, which is the axis of this process and which can, through radical measures such as terrorism or assassination attempts, put extreme views into practice. It should be stressed that 'there are many phenomena in public life which are referred to as extremism or political radicalism' and sometimes these terms are used interchangeably<sup>15</sup>. It is also worth noting that the Polish strategy considers the combination of extremism and terrorism to be particularly dangerous. Moreover, it was stressed that 'the international character of terrorism and the intensity of its manifestations make Poland not free from such threats. Particularly dangerous may be individuals or small groups of individuals who use terrorist methods as tools to achieve their own political, social, economic or religious goals'16. In this way, attention was drawn to the significant danger posed by individuals who, under the influence of religion or ideology, may commit an unannounced attack.

The Federal Republic of Germany's 2016 White Paper on Security Policy also states that 'terrorist attacks pose a direct challenge to our security'<sup>17</sup>. Special attention was paid to the activities of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, which is transferring its ideology and terror to Europe. The German strategy notes that it is precisely because of radicalized supporters of the Islamic State who are returning to Europe from conflict regions (the so-called Foreign Fighters) that the risk of terrorist attacks in Germany and the European Union is increasing<sup>18</sup>. This has been identified as one of the major threats to Germany's internal security in the near future. The assessment of the problem of progressive radicalization is similar in the Polish and German strategies. This phenomenon is seen as a contemporary threat to European societies and states, particularly in connection with terrorism or extremism. The diagnosis of the problem in the analyzed documents seems to be accurate, which is confirmed by numerous attacks in Europe in recent years. Examples of these will be discussed below.

The analysis should start with Anders Behring Breivik's assassination attempt, which was 'spectacular and tragic' and initiated a series of attacks with the participation of individuals. A 32-year-old man with political and religious motives carried out attacks in Norway on 22 July 2011, resulting in a total of 77 deaths and serious injuries to 33 people<sup>19</sup>. The extreme right-wing fanatic acted alone and long planned the crime on the island of Utoya. He was becoming more and more radical in his views over the years. Even as a young man, he manifested extreme views by cooperating with the right-wing party, which he eventually considered to be insufficiently extreme. Before the attack on the island of Utoya, the man published

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego RP z 2014. Warsaw 2014, p. 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Jakubowska U, Ekstremizm polityczny, Studium psychologiczne. Gdansk 2005, p. 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego RP..., op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Weissbuch 2016. Zur Sicherheitspolitik und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr, Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, *Electronic source*: www.bmvg.de, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Ihid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Anders Behring Breivik. *Electronic source*: https://www.biography.com/people/anders-behring-breivik-20617893, *accessed*: 13.10.2019.

the '2083 European Declaration of Independence' in which he admitted that he was planning to halt Islamic colonization in Europe and the growth of cultural Marxism and multiculturalism<sup>20</sup>. He claimed that Muslims were conquering Norway for which he blamed the Norwegian Social Democratic Party. Breivik is an example of an individual who radicalized his views until he decided to commit a terror attack. The man was and is very determined, as evidenced by the fact that during his detention he stood passively with his hands over his head and declared that he was ready to fight even from prison<sup>21</sup>.

Another example worth mentioning are the tragic events in Gdansk. On 3 February 2019, during the finale of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, a 27-year-old man entered the stage and mortally stabbed the city's president, Paweł Adamowicz, with a knife. Right after the attack Stefan W. shouted 'I was sitting innocently in prison, the Civic Platform tortured me, that's why Adamowicz died (...)'22. In December 2018, the man left the penal institution after being sentenced to 5 years and 6 months of imprisonment for four bank robberies<sup>23</sup>. Less than two months later, motivated by a desire for political revenge, he attacked the President of Gdansk. As the spokesperson of the District Prosecutor's Office in Gdansk, prok. Grażyna Wawryniuk, stressed, the crime 'was committed under conditions of return to crime, after serving an absolute sentence of imprisonment, as a result of motives deserving special condemnation'<sup>24</sup>. In this case, it seems that the politically motivated desire for revenge was of key importance in the conduct of the offender, while it cannot be ruled out that imprisonment may also have had an impact on the radicalization of the individual.

The knife strike also took place on 3 October 2019 in Paris. 45-year-old Mickael H. mortally wounded three police officers and an administrative employee in a police station where he had been employed as a civil computer scientist for 16 years with the help of a kitchen knife. Then the attacker left the building, where he was killed by a policeman after short negotiations. According to the French media, the man was deaf and a year and a half ago he converted to Islam<sup>25</sup>. His behavior was incomprehensible to his family and loved ones. A representative of the Muslim association

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Rayner G, Norway Shootings: Anders Behring Breivik surrendered with his hands above his head, The telegraph. *Electronic source*: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/norway/8666351/Norway-shootings-Anders-Behring-Breivik-surrendered-with-hishands-above-his-head.html, *accessed*: 11.03.2018; Walat T, Ostrowski M, Smoczyński W, Strach krąży po Europie. *Polityka*, 2011, Vol. 31 (2818), p. 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Sprawca ataku na prezydenta Adamowicza to przestępca z Gdańska. *Electronic source:* https://www.tvp.info/40841760/sprawca-ataku-na-prezydenta-adamowicza-to-przestep ca-z-gdanska, *accessed:* 12.10.2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Coraz więcej wiadomo o sprawcy ataku na Adamowicza. Nigdzie nie pracował, żył z pieniędzy ze spadku..., *Electronic source*: https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/wydarzenia/arty kuly/589067,adamowicz-wosp-nozownik-gdansk-atak-prezydent.html, *accessed*: 12.10.2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Paweł Adamowicz nie żyje, jego zabójca z zarzutem. *Electronic source*: https://www.rm f24.pl/fakty/news-pawel-adamowicz-nie-zyje-jego-zabojca-z-zarzutem-owsiak-rezy,nld,278 2436, *accessed*: 12.10.2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Atak nożownika w Paryżu: Śledztwo prowadzi prokuratura antyterrorystyczna. *Electronic source*: https://www.rmf24.pl/fakty/swiat/news-atak-nozownika-w-paryzu-sledzt-wo-prowadzi-prokuratura-antyte,nld,3260303, *accessed*: 12.10.2019.

Goness admitted that the man told him 'about his lack of professional development related to disability'<sup>26</sup>. The investigation is still in progress and it is difficult to clearly identify the motives of the knife holder. However, attention should be paid to male disability and the associated complexes and frustrations and the adoption of Islamic values that may have contributed to the radicalization of the individual. The Jihadist hypothesis was not rejected in the ongoing investigation, and without knowing the motives of the attacker, Islam should not be immediately pointed out as the ideology that encouraged the man to attack. This is also noted by the spokesman for the French government, Sibeth Ndiaye, who said: 'It is not that when you are a Muslim you are a terrorist, so the fact that we are converting to Islam is not an automatic sign of radicalization'<sup>27</sup>.

## **Conclusions**

These examples also show a relevant connection between the action and conspiracy theories. The access to these is nowadays much higher than ever before through the spreading of these theories in the internet and social media platforms.

Another aspect in the context of radicalization posing a threat to society is the fact that the media and social networks are reporting about the incidents live. A deeper analysis of the incidents is taking a while and the interest of the population is usually weeks after the incident much lower. Now the information would be more reliable and the facts are much better evaluated, but unfortunately, the demand for information in the wide public is low.

That misinformation, fake news and conspiracy theories have a strong nexus with the process of radicalization is shown in many examples.

In Salafy texts and videos the regional governments and the west are guilty at all the evil in the world. 9/11 was perpetrated by the CIA or the Mossad, depending which conspiracy ones follow.

And unfortunately these messages do have a lot of follower. Luckily not all of them are getting violent extremists, but some are on the path of radicalization and do sympathy with these ideas, because they are simple and sound consent. Breivik has written his theory in his manifesto and produces in this his own theory about the good and the evil in the world and about the who is responsible that people are not progressing. The attacker of Christchurch, New Zealand was posting intensively on the platform 8chan, which was closed afterwards, because of the radical and extremist content. 8chan was not supported by Google, but was one of the 5.000 most visited sites worldwide<sup>28</sup>. Also the attacker of Halle, who tried to enter a Synagogue by shooting at the door, but did not succeed and then fired

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Kühl E, Wo weisse Terroristen posten, Zeit online. *Electronic source*: https://www.zeit.de/digital/internet/2019-08/8chan-plattform-forum-attentat-el-paso-cloudflare, last *accessed*: 04.06.2019.

at people just bypassing by incident, killing two, posted his act live with a camera including his comment.<sup>29</sup>

Especially the last two examples with a right-wing extremist background cannot be counted as very sophisticated extremists or terrorists. They never went deep down in the ideology. A phenomenon that can also be found with many foreign fighters going to Syria to try to support the so-called 'Islamic State'. The availability of a conspiracy theory and the easy explanation and solution of the problems might be enough for these individuals to radicalize. A critical thinking about the ideology might raise doubts, so it is not foreseen by the side of the manipulator, who provides the ideology and the manipulee, who adapt it to find someone guilty for his position of for some felt injustice.

It can be observed, that the same theories are present on different forums and websites and the closure of one site, will not have a great effect of the dissemination of the content. The information stays there and the banning will make the followers believe stronger that the state is trying to hide information.

The radicalization process itself does have an effect on the society. It can be observed in Europe and elsewhere that right-wing extremists and populists are spreading mistrust in the democratic governments, despite the fact that they do not support a democratic idea. Unfortunately, the number is growing as mainly economic problems in some countries are rising or they feel that they are being left behind.

The governmental institutions have a communication problem with some parts of the society and these seek information from other sources.

Communication by itself is the main key to radicalization. Extremist ideas and ideologies are communicated to individuals by various means, but to a large part via the internet. They serve the demand of fast reporting and having a fast solution for problems. Government cannot do so, as they rely on proper and trustful information. But nevertheless, they have to take the challenge and counter the threat to a democratic society posed by radicalization and their perpetrators.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Strobl R, Halle-Video. Täter sttreamte live, Merkur.de. *Electronic source*: https://www.merkur.de/politik/halle-taeter-video-zeigt-anschlag-auf-synagoge-clip-noch-immer-imnetz-zr-13087270.html, last *accessed*: 10.12.2019.

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Streszczenie. W artykule podjęto rozważania na temat zjawiska radykalizacji, która staje się źródłem zagrożeń dla jednostki i bezpieczeństwa państwa. Na wstępie artykułu omówiono istotę i przyczyny zjawiska, a następnie odwołano się do polskiej i niemieckiej strategii z zakresu bezpieczeństwa. W dokumentach zidentyfikowano radykalizację i ekstremizm jako współczesne zagrożenie bezpieczeństwa państwa, co potwierdzają liczne ataki w Europie. Przykładowe zamachy z udziałem zradykalizowanych jednostek zostały omówione w artykule. Podjęte rozważania kończą konkluzje, w których podkreślono, że w procesie radykalizacji niezwykle ważne są m.in. informacje przekazywane jednostkom i komunikacja instytucji rządowych ze społeczeństwem.

**Резюме.** В статье рассматриваются вопросы, связанные с распространением радикализации, ставшей источником риска и угроз как для отдельных лиц, так и национальной безопасности. В начале статьи рассматривались сущность и причины данного явления, а затем обсуждалась польская и немецкая стратегия безопасности. Во многих документах радикализация и экстремизм определены как современная угроза государственной безопасности, что подтверждается многочисленными терактами в Европе. В статье приводятся примеры атак с участием радикально настроенных лиц. Авторы свои рассуждения завершают выводами, в которых подчеркивают, что в процессе радикализации чрезвычайно важна например информация, передаваемая отдельным лицам, а также взаимосвязь между государственными учреждениями и обществом.