

RADICALISATION – SECURITY THEORY APPROACH

GRZEGORZ FUCHS, KATARZYNA HUCZEK

ABSTRACT

The issue of identity and the modifications occurring within it encourages reflection on the issue of radicalisation and its relation with broadly understood security. Radicalisation can be expressed both in non-violent pressure and coercion and in actions which depart from the norm and show contempt for life, freedom and human rights. The main aim of this study is to identify the conceptual framework of the phenomenon of radicalisation, to describe its selected mechanisms, and to refer the issue in question to security issues, including specialised agencies whose role is to identify and eliminate it.

KEY WORDS

Security, radicalization, terrorism.

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GRZEGORZ FUCHS, PHD

e-mail: grzegorzfuchs@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-4632-6017
Remand Centre Mysłowice,
WSB University

KATARZYNA HUCZEK, PHD

e-mail: katarzynahuczek@interia.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-2555-2173
Katarzyna Huczek LegalPol

Introduction

The contemporary approach to the essence of values and the ideological baggage, used by people within the framework of functioning in anaxiologically decentralised reality provides a starting point for a consideration of the essence of changes in the world-view and culture, and a modification of the currents of thought that affect the social existence of man within specific social structures. The rationale for an in-depth reflection on their essence is the reference to identity as a specific category that allows for explanation of the phenomena leading to the emergence of new lifestyles and world views, and also political orientations or forms of life in particular social groups. In the general approach, identity can be understood as 'awareness of self'¹. It denotes a relatively permanent

identification with the accepted canon of values, as well as a stabilised system of an individual's self-definitions confirmed by their social environment². In the opinion of Jerzy Nikitorowicz, identity emphasises the uniqueness of an individual or a group in relation to others and determines the values and orientations of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours³. Two separate meanings are included in the scope of 'identity'. One of them emphasises the invariability and continuation of certain subjective traits (*sameness*) and is related first of all to expressing one's own values and remaining 'oneself' while the other indicates distinctiveness and the essence of distinguishing one-

Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, p. 30.

² Ibid., p. 33.

³ J. Nikitorowicz, *Edukacja regionalna i międzykulturowa*, Warszawa 2009, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, pp. 334-335.

¹ Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Warszawa 2006,

self from others (*distinctiveness*), which manifests itself in perceiving oneself as different from other subjects and exposing one's own distinctiveness⁴. These elements of Jacobson-Widding's concept encourage reflection on the form of relations between the identity of subjects and the world of social reality, especially in relation to constituting social order understood as 'the state of functioning of institutions and the course of behaviour of individuals ensuring the existence, sustainability and development of the community as a whole'⁵.

The issue of identity and the modifications occurring within it under the influence of external and internal factors encourage reflection on the issue of radicalism and its relations with the broadly understood security. The literature of the subject indicates that radicalisation in its essence concerns many areas of social life. This phenomenon is associated with negative attitudes towards all diversity, whether national, religious, philosophical or sexual⁶. The elements indicated attest to the processes occurring in the area of identity. Therefore, the basic aim of this study is to identify the conceptual framework of the phenomenon of radicalisation, to describe its selected mechanisms, and also to refer the issue under discussion to the issue of security.

The study is propaedeutic in its nature, i.e. it does not exhaust the issues raised in a comprehensive manner but only provides an introduction to an in-depth reflection on the essence of the mechanisms of radicalisation. When observing and analysing the current security en-

vironment at both national and international level, the authors notice not only the need for theoretical analyses in this area but also the utilitarian character of science aimed at transforming reality according to people's needs.

Radicalisation – theory, mechanisms and examples

As indicated in the introduction to this study, radicalisation affects many areas of human functioning, which is reflected in the numerous definition approaches present in science. The PWN Dictionary of the Polish Language (*Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN*) describes the essence of the problem as 'becoming an advocate of political radicalism';⁷ on the other hand, however, it shows a functional approach relating to 'making something radical, extreme'⁸. In the literature, radicalism is often closely associated with the concept of extremism;⁹ this is reflected in the definitions proposed by John Horgan and Kurt Braddock as well as Simona Trip and her research team. The former consider radicalisation to be a 'social and psychological process of gradually experiencing a commitment to political extremism or a religious ideology'¹⁰. This phenomenon is perceived in a similar manner by the aforementioned research team, who indicate that radicalisation is an unfolding process that fosters the development of extremist beliefs, activities or emotions

⁷ <https://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/radykalizacja;2513918.html>, retrieved on: 20.11.2020.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ There is also a political orientation of radicalisation and extremism, combining these concepts with political references; radicalisation in this sense is associated with the extreme left, while extremism with the extreme right, with accents of political mechanisms such as nationalist or racist beliefs, and religious mechanisms associated with fanaticism.; patrz: U. Jakubowska, *Ekstremizm polityczny. Studium psychologiczne*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 187.

¹⁰ J. Horgan, K. Braddock, 'Rehabilitating the Terrorists? Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of Deradicalisation Programs', "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 22 (2010), p. 279.

⁴ Identity: Personal and Sociocultural, Uppsala 1983, Uppsala University, p. 13.

⁵ <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/lad-spoleczny;3934776.html>, retrieved on: 17.11.2020.

⁶ S. Florek, B. Gulla, P. Piotrowski, *Radykalizacja. Konteksty psychologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2019, p. 13.

that are in opposition to the fundamental values of society, democratic rights and human rights and freedoms, where they can be expressed both through pressure and coercion and through certain actions aimed at displaying contempt for certain values and freedoms¹¹. In this approach, radicalisation refers to the supremacy of a particular group of influence of a diverse nature (e.g. political, racial or religious).

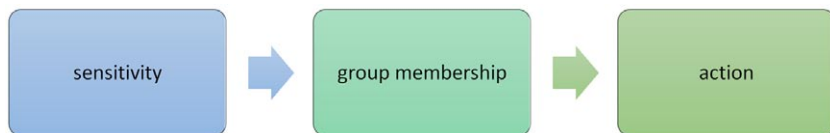
Many definitions of the concept discussed make reference to political mechanisms. A cognitively interesting approach in this context is a definition that defines radicalisation as a process of delegitimisation of values recognised in a particular system, a reduction in the level of trust manifested by the withdrawal of individuals deep into smaller alternative groups due to the lack of the sense of belonging to a national community¹². On the other hand, however, radicalisation within the aforementioned smaller interest groups may appear as a process in which people are inclined to use physical and symbolic violence, under

the influence of increasingly strong motives and motivations, in order to achieve certain political goals or modify their behaviour¹³.

In short terms, the problem of radicalisation can be considered in a horizontal approach. And then we are talking about the spiritual dimension, in which radicalisation can be perceived as an individually internal intellectual attitude, about the already mentioned socio-political context referring to the foundations and views and the mechanisms of their expression, and then the consequences of the actions taken, as well as a psychological approach defining the factors connected with the human psyche, either reinforcing or indifferent relative to personality-related determinants¹⁴.

Regardless of the context, radicalisation is an extremely complex process. Depending on the approach, the successive phases of the process of radicalisation can be distinguished. The figure below shows the approach proposed by Bertjan Doosje:

Figure 1. Phases of the process of radicalisation



Source: B. Doosje et al., *Terrorism, radicalization and de-radicalization*, https://nvvb.nl/media/cms_page_media/694/Terrorism%2C%20radicalization%20and%20de-radicalization.pdf; retrieved on: 25.11.2020.

As can be seen from the figure above, it is sensitivity that becomes the starting point of the process of radicalisation in this perspective. In this phase, the men-

tal factors of the individual are of great importance, and these can manifest themselves in the need to seek mean-

¹¹ S. Trip., C.H. Bora, M. Marian, A. Halmajan, and M.I Drugas, *Psychological Mechanisms Involved in Radicalization and Extremism. A Rational Emotive Behavioral Conceptualization*; <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00437/full>; retrieved on: 21.11.2020.

¹² F. Demant, M. Sloopman, F. Buijs, J.Tillie, *Decline, Disengagement: An Analysis of Processes of De-radicalisation*, Amsterdam, p. 12.

¹³ S. Florek, B. Gulla, P. Piotrowski, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁴ M. Rakusa-Suszczewski, *Cień radykalizmu. Pojęcie radykalizmu w świetle teorii ruchów społecznych*, Wydawnictwo ASPRA, Warszawa 2016, pp. 53-55.

ing. Sensitivity to radicalisation also stems from the sense of uncertainty that increases the need to be accepted and to belong to a group. Of crucial importance in this approach might be a sense of insignificance that is further reinforced by participation in social life. Sensitivity as a phase of radicalisation can also be determined by identification with a sense of social injustice. Particularly noteworthy are also the macrofactors, which include the progressive globalisation and the expansion of 'foreign patterns and social and cultural norms'¹⁵. The second phase, i.e. group membership, is characterised by the acceptance of the norms and values adopted in the group, as well as by mutual confidence-building¹⁶. The third phase manifests itself in the readiness to manifest the position of the group and take the actions planned¹⁷.

The problem of 'sensitivity' to radicalisation, pointed out above, was recognised in science. The starting point in the process of radicalisation may be the 'crisis in which some individuals find themselves, which may cause a "cognitive opening" which shakes an individual's certitude in previously held beliefs and leaves them receptive to alternative world views. The triggers of interest in extremist movements cannot therefore be limited to economic, social, cultural or political aspects. For personal qualities based on an individual's specific experiences, such as a death in the family, victimisation or family conflicts, can cause 'cognitive opening'¹⁸.

The aforementioned 'cognitive opening' is a conceptual category introduced by Quintan Wiktorowicz, emphasising the individual's ability to be open to new concepts and views¹⁹. The proposed concept of the individual is closely correlated with the identity approach in the social field. It should be noted that the process of crystallisation of an individual's identity is related to the canon of specific types of identification expressing the relation of that individual with their environment. This plays a key role also in the context of the process of radicalisation. The elements that are of particular importance are: recognition and classification of objects in the environment, indication of expectations of the environment towards the individual, manifesting itself in their entry into specific social roles as well as the creation and shaping of the image of the Self²⁰. It is the concept of the 'Self' that is the sense of the subject's individuality and the juxtaposition of their expectations towards the group and the group towards them. Identity is always formed in a specific group within and under the influence of particular cultural norms and patterns; however, due to individual experience and reflection on the acceptance or disapproval of particular cultural elements, there may be a manifestation of distinctiveness and uniqueness, and thus changes in the identity which generate conflicts of values having the status of unsolvable.

Radicalisation of attitudes can and must be associated with security. It is correlated with fundamentalism linked to terrorism, often with a religious basis. Fundamentalism is described as a 'set of ideas... the core of which is a system

¹⁵ B. Doosje et al., *Terrorism, radicalization and de-radicalization*; https://nvvb.nl/media/cms_page_media/694/Terrorism%2C%20radicalization%20and%20de-radicalization.pdf; retrieved on: 25.11.2020.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Q. Wiktorowicz, "Joining the Cause: Al-Muhajiroun and Radical Islam", [in:] Paper presented at "The Roots of Islamic Radicalism" Conference, Yale University, 2004, p. 1.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ L. Witowski, *Tożsamość i zmiana. Wstęp do epistemologicznej analizy kontekstów edukacyjnych*, Wydawnictwo UMK, Toruń 1988, p. 116.

of values which by their very nature aspire to be unquestionably universal, the only right ones and necessary to achieve happiness in a describable space-time as well as containing a directive of self-fulfilment regardless of the determinants and at any cost²¹. In response to these current calls, the Council of the European Union distinguishes four pillars of the counter-terrorism strategy, i.e. 'prevent', 'protect', 'pursue' and 'respond'. The first of them concerns taking counteraction against 'turning people towards terrorism by tackling the factors or root causes that give rise to radicalisation of attitudes'²². The essence of the activities of radical circles is confrontation, the background of which is asymmetric conflict²³.

The process of radicalisation is also more pronounced within organised crime groups. It is worth highlighting the fact that this issue can be analysed not only from the perspective of identity-related changes within it but also by referring to the possibility of ensuring security at national, state and international levels.

A phenomenon that may cause organised crime to come closer to terrorism in Poland is the fact that members of radical organisations are joining the ranks of organised crime groups²⁴. Associations of organised crime with radical organisations can be found in people smuggling as well as in crimes committed by foreigners in the territory of Poland. Furthermore, the presence of immigrants from high-risk areas who are in contact with radical organisations there may increase the likeli-

hood of occurrence of terrorist acts. The perspective of further cooperation of the organised structures with those circles, e.g. in the field of smuggling weapons and explosives, also seems justified²⁵.

Radical circles must be brought under closer scrutiny by the relevant security agencies the purpose of which will be gaining information useful for detection and prevention activities²⁶. An important element in recognising radicalisation is the 'Check the Web' website used by all Europol national units²⁷.

Terrorism and Muslim radicalism threaten international security. Muslim radicalism can be seen e.g. among European young Muslims who are hostile to the principles of democracy which prevail there²⁸. There is no doubt that the process of radicalisation takes place in Quranic schools²⁹. However, it should be noted that breeding places of radicalisation can potentially be found in various places to which, in addition to the virtual world, include penal institutions³⁰. With regard to places of isolation where individuals spend an unlimited number of hours on uncontrolled conversations and spinning visions for the future, bearing in mind the findings of the world of science and security services so far, it is possible and reasonable to determine who may become a victim of radicalisation in prison after meeting specific criteria and under specific circumstances³¹.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 190-191.

²⁶ W. Zubrzycki, *Przez PZ do terroryzmu. Tom II. WSPol Szczytno 2015*, p. 149.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 158.

²⁸ K. Załęski, *Relacje i stosunki międzynarodowe w kształtowaniu bezpieczeństwa Europejskiego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe WSB, Dąbrowa Górnicza 2017, p. 251.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 253.

³⁰ M.D. Silber, A. Bhatt, *Radicalization in the west: the homegrown threat*, New York 2007, p. 11.

³¹ M.D. Silber, A. Bhatt, *op.cit.*, p. 20; A.S. Hemmingsen, *The Danish approach to countering and preventing extremism and radicalization*, Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen 2015, p. 30.

²¹ M. Marczevska-Ryto, *Religia i polityka w globalizującym się świecie*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2010, p. 198.

²² *Strategia Unii Europejskiej w dziedzinie walki z terroryzmem*, Bruksela 2005, p. 3.

²³ K. Jalożyński, A. Letkiewicz, *Edukacja antyterrorystyczna. Konieczność i obowiązki naszych czasów*, Szczytno 2010, p. 3, after: W. Zubrzycki, *Przez PZ do terroryzmu. Tom I. WSPol Szczytno 2015*, p. 62.

²⁴ W. Zubrzycki, *Przez PZ do terroryzmu. Tom I. WSPol Szczytno 2015*, p. 103

Radicalisation of attitudes is dealt with by various types of services which fall into the sociological category of availability groups. The findings made in areas specific to these groups are confirmed, and at the same time become a starting point for formulating conclusions and recommendations in relation to counteracting radicalisation. Jan Maciejewski indicates that 'availability groups are such deliberately combined social structures whose availability can be considered in the narrow sense due to their specialised and specific nature of activities in a relatively limited period of time'³². The availability of these groups in the narrow sense refers e.g. to the scope, speed or intensity of intervention, as opposed to the broad sense of the term, which would mean a 'generally accepted attitude towards typical activities for which the particular structure has been established'³³. It is the narrowed scope of activity of availability groups, i.e. specialisation, not comprehensiveness, as J. Maciejewski admits, that increases along with the level of civilisational and social development of the society in which they operate.

Summary

In the authors' evaluation, radicalisation of attitudes and its criminal manifestations pose threats that require a narrow range of specialisation in this area from the services counteracting them (availability groups), taking into account the individual security sectors (or areas of activity and competence of individual agencies) which are reached by radicalisation with its negative consequences. The versatility of availability groups (or their subsystems) dealing with radicalisation in any of the security sectors may

constitute an obstacle to its identification and liquidation. Due to the effects of radicalisation, it is considered necessary for its breeding places to be penetrated by highly specialised availability groups which have knowledge on the structures and relations within them. In the context of counteracting the causes and effects of radicalisation, it seems important to pay particular attention to possible mechanisms of identity-related changes occurring within the groups, and therefore to emphasise the role of 'soft' security elements, which play an increasingly important role in the perception of threats and in minimising their effects.

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³² Maciejewski J., *Grupy dyspozycyjne. Analiza socjologiczna*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, Wrocław 2014, p. 54.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

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About the Authors

Grzegorz Fuchs, PhD, prison officer, doctor of security sciences. He completed education among others in the Department of Execution of Judgements and Probation in the Ministry of Justice and in penitentiary units. Research areas are radicalisation in prisons, intuition in personal security.

Katarzyna Huczek, PhD, affiliation: Katarzyna HuczekLegalPol, research areas are cultural security, intercultural relations and migration processes. Practitioner in the field of Polish immigration policy – runs her own immigration office providing advisory services on legalization, deportation and refugee procedures.