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National Security Risks of Religious Extremism

Abstract

In the present study the author examines how and why religious extremism can be linked to radical trends in Islam. What solutions should the national security and law enforcement services of developed countries seek and find for these religious extremist trends. Their goal is to ensure the safety of their own citizens, to detect in time the circle of persons who may commit an assassination attempt, and to prevent attempts to commit terrorist acts. The study also presents what solutions are available for dealing with and suppressing religious extremism from a security policy perspective.

Keywords: Islam, radicalism, national security

Introduction of the subject of religious extremism and its presentation from a security risk perspective

When looking into the matter of religious extremism, we find almost exclusively Islam-themed literature due to the fact that Islamic extremism is one of the causes of the greatest national security challenges, i.e. terrorism, today. It is impossible to fight religious extremism if we disregard the psychological background.² All the national security and law enforcement bodies of developed countries are forced to seek and find a solution to this complex problem. The primary aim of these bodies is to ensure the security of their citizens, to identify the potential perpetrators of terrorist attacks in time, and prevent attempts of terrorist acts.

In today's security policy more and more stress is laid on religious extremism and its effects. From a sociological point of view, religion is a set of systemised, expressed and thus made cognizable dogmas, and the binding rules of behaviour

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² TABASHEV et al. 2020: 350.

aligned with them, and their process of realisation.³ On this basis, we can speak of religious extremism when these principles, rules of behaviour or process of realisation significantly deviate from the norms and value system of a society or a community.

The formulation shows that extremism must always be examined from the point of view of the value system of a certain group, since "extremist" persons or groups usually regard their own manifestations as positive. That is why religious extremism can manifest itself in several ways, and it is not limited exclusively to one religion. To an average European citizen, an ultra-conservative Catholic priest⁴ burning populist books or a person performing a terrorist attack on religious ground may equally seem extremists; still, we rank here extensive and generalisable practices and phenomena.⁵ The most often mentioned religious extremism in the past two decades has been Islamic fundamentalism, whose most extreme form has been manifested in terrorist attacks.

Islamic extremism has different causes. The past tribal wars of Muslim countries, the *suwar*,⁶ which basically define the religion, the low literacy skills, low standards of living, social segregation, exclusion from mass media or the civil wars inside these countries can equally make Muslim population turn to religion. And some of them see violence as the way out.

Dozens of studies could be written about the investigation of the evolutionary psychological background of the phenomenon, since in the majority of the cases of violent perpetrators of extremist acts the sense of identity, which basically defines human consciousness, is wounded, and very often there is an emotion of being contaminated or offended.⁷ But considering that in many cases the perpetrators come from crisis zones where death, violence or livelihood problems occur in the families on a daily basis, not to mention other horrible things, it can be more understandable why these persons become prone to commit extremely violent acts.

At the same time, in the case of religious extremism, it is worth examining the phenomenon called by psychology conformism: a tendency of the individual to obey the governing authority, to adopt to the values of the community. The peculiarity of this examination is, however, that the authority which demands obedience is *ab ovo* God himself, whose will equals the law or destiny in every monotheistic religion, and humans cannot defy it.

The question of religious extremism has become an issue of social security today not just because of terrorist attacks. Its relevance is underlined by the spread of Islamic religion, the cultural and life-standard differences of Islamic and Christian states, the global environmental issues which afflict Islamic countries definitely more,⁸ and the mass migration as a consequence of all the aforementioned.⁹

³ RIXER 2011.

⁴ A reference to the book burning in Koszalin, Poland, 30 March 2019.

⁵ RIXER 2018: 17.

⁶ Surah 9:123. O you who have believed, fight against those adjacent to you of the disbelievers and let them find in you harshness. And know that Allāh is with the righteous.

⁷ HAMER 2019: 339.

⁸ To this belong states of North Africa and the Sahara, the Middle East, South Asia because of desertification, lack of drinking water; seaside countries because of rising sea level.

⁹ FÖLDI-PADÁNYI 2015: 32.

As it follows from the circumstances listed above, Muslim extremism, according to Buzan's sector theory, affects not only the military, but also the political, economic, societal, environmental and more and more the IT sectors. Accordingly, it must be also treated in all sectors. Consequently, I find the approach which speaks about action or fight against religious radicalism mistaken, as this idea suggests in itself that we want to reach a solution by emphasising the military sector while including the other sectors minimally or not at all.

When speaking about Islamic extremism, we can draw a parallel with the misinterpretation of jihad mentioned in everyday language as Holy War. But jihad means struggle, effort, action against human iniquity and social ills, which must and can be fought in the fields of politics, economy and society, and not on physical battlefields. For this, every human's effort, action, one's own inner jihad is needed, as the problems can be remedied where they are, i.e. in the Islamic world, and by the people concerned, whose majority are true believer Muslims. But a possible question is, what western civilisation can do. It can give support, help and counsel—where it is really needed.

Though terror organisations—with the Islamic State among them—singled out countries they consider enemies, no country can feel safe that takes/took part in the activity of the coalition forces mainly in Iraq and Afghanistan. This fact is confirmed by the terrorist attacks of the past years.

We cannot forget that the Islamic State named Hungary as one of its targets in March 2016, and there is evidence that there were several persons with malicious intent (new cases appear from time to time), who arrived in Hungary with the refugee wave or via legal channels. These support the opinions that our country is still not an expressed target of terrorist organisations. They could have carried out a massacre in Hungary instead of e.g. the Paris Bataclan,¹⁰ but they did not. To this greatly contributes that terrorist organisations aim at performing acts that have as great resonance as possible, which is more likely, for example, in Brussels, as it is regarded as the capital city of Europe. In the course of risk assessment, it is worth mentioning that we cannot exclude the possibility that in Hungary there may stay persons (foreign nationals, Hungarian citizens of foreign origin, or Hungarian citizens by origin) who have become radicalised by the Islamic State through the Internet. We have seen examples of this in the case of two recently convicted Hungarian men, one of whom had set out to join the organisation.¹¹

The problem is aggravated further by the fact that, although in order of magnitude the terrorist organisations in the case of the Islamic State are located in the area of the Caliphate as it is called by the ISIS, its threat spans continents. The terrorists of the Islamic State carry out attacks in the crisis zones as well as in Europe, which is far beyond the scope of its activity. The Islamic State makes a long-term activity plan not just as a terrorist organisation but also as a well-functioning group. As analysers, we can identify among its levels of planning the major strategic planning (political level) and the military objectives and tactical applications, methods and policies of the military strategic level.¹² Today's biggest terrorist organisations (with the exception of just

¹⁰ Euronews 2015.

¹¹ ALBERT 2017.

¹² RESPERGER 2016: 89.

a few) seek to spread in a religious disguise. Some aim to exercise influence regionally, while others plan to spread their power in a wider sense. Another common trait of theirs is that they ideologise the brutality represented by them on religious grounds.

In 2019, media reported that the coalition forces conquered the Islamic State as the greatest terrorist organisation active at the time.¹³ In connection with this, an important question arose. The organisation has regressed territorially, but does it really need the territory it dominates for the methods it uses? Or is it sufficient to continue its struggle through secret propaganda activity, underground recruitment and conspiracy? Does the recapturing of the territory dominated by the Islamic State really mean the organisation's termination, or does it merely break up its territorial unity? Is it possible that due to the territorial losses its warriors were merely scattered in the neighbouring and/or in the western countries, and they can reorganise themselves, even in another country, in order to realise their main aim, the Caliphate? Because the warriors of the Islamic State proclaim a radical ideology, which does not cease to exist with the diminishing or the termination of the organisation. The convictions of the warriors returning back to their countries do not cease with the termination of the so-called Caliphate, they bring them to their European countries. And, as the Islamic State had called its warriors to spread their faith, we cannot exclude the possibility that these extremist religious views will be spread further on in European countries. It was early, however, to bury the Islamic State. The sleeper cells of the Islamic State have carried out smaller or larger-scale raids ever since, with the jihadists averaging 87 operations per month in 2021 in Iraq and 31 in Syria, a drop from the previous year. Their fighting style has changed in the meantime, they do not even try to control bigger, contiguous areas. They act rather like guerrillas: hiding in the desert, they strike military or energy installations, and then quickly disappear.¹⁴

As far as the activity of the Islamic State is concerned, we find that they carry out their violent activities under the banner of religion. It is important to underline, however, that Islam itself does not equal terrorism, because terrorists interpret their religion's teachings in a specific way and thus gain the power to inflict bloodshed and take innocent lives. This is why it is very important for the average—primarily European—citizens to be aware of the difference between the two, and to accept and respect Islamic religion free from extremism.

The primary aim of extremist religious groups representing a form of terrorism is to spread religious ideologies, and carry out certain activities through which they can exert pressure on the target nation's political governance and the functioning of the administrative, economic and energetic institutions.¹⁵ From it follows that religious extremism poses a risk in all the above-mentioned sectors.

The ideas spread by extremist religious groups find an excellent breeding ground in countries riddled with wars, poverty, maladies and corruption, which lack the democratic rule of law and are unable to provide a vision for their inhabitants.

The occurrences of the past years have proven that no state is able to deal with the new type of terrorism individually, and neither is broad international cooperation

¹³ Infostart 2019.

¹⁴ LÁSZLÓ 2022.

¹⁵ DEZSŐ 2019: 8.

always effective as the national security agencies have to/should be monitoring thousands of potential threats on a continuous basis, which may not always be possible. For the above reasons it would be appropriate to "sensitise" citizens for this issue, as it would greatly contribute to the successful struggle of the national security services against terrorism. If the civilian population is appropriately informed (without being unnecessarily panicked) about the signs of radicalisation or about suspicious activities, they can contribute to successful detection.

In addition, it is of crucial importance to internationally exchange information about religious extremist groups, which can be a key to the detection of extremist elements and the prevention of terrorist acts.

Another important factor can be the prevention of the spread of extremist ideas, the elimination of the harmful work of extremist imams. It can be effective if the already radicalised persons are taught to Islam by imams free of extremism, pointing out its peaceful nature and the correct interpretation of the Quran.

We must also fight against radical online propaganda¹⁶ by discovering extremist Islamic contents and preventing their spread. One way of it can be the removal of websites propagating extremist contents together with the identification of the persons behind them and the elimination of their activities.

Causes of Islamic fundamentalism and ways to tackle it

A phenomenon, however negative and inexplicable it may seem, must first be met not with indignation or condemnation, but with the intention to understand it. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the western world has been shocked by the terrorist attacks carried out against them in the name of Islam.¹⁷ And in many cases, their reactions did not mitigate but increased tensions as they did not seek to understand the causes, and made rash statements lumping together the diverse Islamic world.¹⁸

The development of the West, the crystallisation of its values and institutions took place primarily through inner factors and immanent processes. This possibility was not given to the other parts of the world, as the West, following the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, exercised a strong influence on other cultures, including the Islamic world. To this day, the West sets expectations and criticises. It is enough to think of the "democracy export" or "democracy building", which gives a framework to introduce western-type constitutions or elections in tribal (!) societies. These obviously are not suitable for the given culture or world view; it took the West centuries of civil development and the foundation of a strong middle class to generate all these. For lack of fundamentals it is not only pointless, but also harmful to force these from above.

The strong influence exerted by the West can trigger two kinds of reactions: there are some who receive it as positive and want to change their world likewise, while others reject it, seeing a threat to their traditional values and circumstances—and this

¹⁶ European Parliament 2016.

¹⁷ BAR 2004.

¹⁸ FISCHL 2015: 137.

has brought us to the birth of fundamentalism. Consequently, fundamentalism is a response to western dominance, a return to the roots and the rejection of new and alien things.¹⁹ This, of course, does not necessarily manifest itself in violence, but, in extreme cases, it can appear in the form of violence. In case of Muslims, it is natural that when they seek to respond to a new situation, they go back to their religion, to its fundamentals and sources, which encompass the whole life. But, as professor Oliver Ray aptly said, the key question is not what the Quran says, but what the Muslims say about what the Quran says. So, there is a wide field for interpretation, and if the Muslim world is frustrated, then the intolerant and violent interpretation of Quran gains ground.

The frustration of the Islamic world has many causes. One of them is that their traditional worldview is in crisis. According to Islamic worldview, they possess, through the Quran, the ultimate and perfect divine revelation. According to their faith, Noah, Abraham, David and Jesus were Muslims, as it is the oldest and natural faith paying reverence to the only God.

God is with the believers, and the three-part world (Muslims, people of the Book, others) will sooner or later unite in a world Caliphate. This idea, though, have strongly been challenged by the experience of the past two centuries, in the course of which the West have clearly overgrown the Muslim world in the technological, financial, economic, political and military fields, which have been manifested in colonisation and the military occupation of territories.

Apart from that, the West is also offensive in ideological and cultural terms. The immorality of the "Christian" West helps Muslims adhere to fundamentals and picture an idealised world about the ancestors who exemplify the pure form of Islam (Salafism).²⁰

The series of failures inflicted by the West bring about defiance and radicalisation. One of its graphic manifestations is the Holy Land, a symbolically prominent place. The establishment of Israel, the termination of Palestine, the threat to Jerusalem, which is a holy place also for the Muslims, is a radicalising factor. And all this with the West (mainly the USA) conspicuously behind Israel.

If all these were not enough, there is the problem of the immigrants of Muslim background living in the suburbs of Western European cities. Their integration is broken, they do not belong to either of the two worlds. The third generation struggles with identity crisis, rediscovers its Muslim identity, which is simultaneously accompanied with sharp anti-western attitude.

Radicalisation generated by frustration and failure is amplified by the religious ideology as a catalyst. It approves the justification of wrath, its rightness before God, and it simultaneously opens a transcendent perspective for the "heroes", the suicide terrorists. And this has brought us to unbridled terrorism.

What can be done? We must implement the tools of CIMIC with knowledge, respect and cooperation. This attitude should pervade all levels of decision-making in order to give tension-reducing answers to the emerging problems.

¹⁹ ROSTOVÁNYI 1983: 46.

²⁰ KIS-BENEDEK 2016: 44.

It is as if we were a military unit serving in an area of operation of the Muslim world. In a sense, in the global village we are everywhere in an area of operation. We have to be respectful and have to behave in the way to be worthy of being respected. We can think through what is unhelpful, e.g. visions of a "crusade", racist manifestations, caricatures of Mohammed, propagation of immoral lifestyles, etc.

We must bear in mind that the majority of the Muslims is moderate and does not support terrorism. They are to fight the struggle of interpretation with their extremists within the Islamic world. We can support them if we discourage our side as much as possible from gestures and practices that rightly offend the whole Muslim world, thus preventing the radicalisation of moderate Muslims.

Examination of the relationship of Islam and terrorism

In order to understand the relationship of terrorism and Islam, we first have to examine the basic causes which lie behind religiously motivated terrorism. Islamic religion in itself cannot serve as reason for any kind of violence as the Quran clearly forbids the killing or slaughtering of innocent people even during a war. But people in the western world (the USA, the European civilisation) obviously connect Islamic religion and terrorism, and thus have developed resistance, stereotypes and prejudices against the religion. As for me, I, of course, cannot identify with this viewpoint, as aggression is not an Islamic phenomenon; the religion and its holy book, the Quran forbids the use of violence.

However, facts show that a great part of the grave terrorist attacks of the past decades have been carried out in the name of Islamic religion by terrorist organisations linked to the religion or by individuals who uncovered their connection with a terrorist organisation after the attack. An important quotation that highlights this fact is: "Surely most Muslims are not terrorists but most terrorists are Muslims." Religion scholar Abdel Rahman al-Rashed's words must be considered, because the past events greatly support his statement.²¹

When examining the motives, however, we must realise that terrorism and Islam cannot be directly linked because Muslim terrorist organisations or individual perpetrators, though religiously motivated, act in pursuit of rather political, ideological, economic, cultural or power purposes whenever they use violence against western civilisation or globalisation, which, as they see, poses immediate threat to the preservation of their culture and their pure Islamic religion.

But the violent attacks are not targeted only against the West. Islam identifies the West with Christianity in many cases.²² Most terrorist agencies act against the Western-friendly attitude of their governments, and commit their attacks mainly in the territory of the state or in an immediately neighbouring state, e.g. the Somali-based organisation Al-Shabaab, which have carried out attacks besides their base country in Kenya and other countries; it is in direct contact with one of the most radical terrorist organisations

²¹ SCHLEIFER 2005; cf. RESPERGER 2010: 69.

²² FISCHL 2015: 136.

today, Al-Qaeda. And we can also mention the Islamic State (ISIS), which is a state only in its name, but in fact it is a terrorist organisation. Or the terrorist organisation Boko Haram, which is particularly active in Africa. These organisations are concerned about the influx of western thoughts, democratic ideals, and the change or loss of their own culture which give them ground for strong resistance. The influx of foreign ideals, the loss of traditions pose a definite danger to them, which they have to combat. If they cannot otherwise, then by way of violence in order to return back to the original Islam, the pure Islam, which offers a solution to all of their problems that have occurred so far.

Terrorist organisations acting in the name of Islam against the western world and their own state system (e.g. Al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Islamic State) pose an enormous threat because they have their established recruitment, drill and action strategies, they plan their attacks with particular caution and perform them accordingly. This is why it is very difficult to combat them.

Many states and the EU itself have a strategy against terrorism, but these, as I see it, cannot be sufficient in the effective struggle against Islamic religion-based terrorism. In my view, the solution is possible first and foremost through the close and immediate cooperation between the West and the countries of Islamic religion. Islamic religion, and the Quran itself cannot be reconciled with violence. In the words of the Quran: "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loves not transgressors" (2:190). This verse clearly proves to me that Islamic religion rejects violence against the innocent. Thus, it is unacceptable that terrorist organisations kill masses of innocent people in the name of Islamic religion.

In my view, the war, the struggle against the West stems from false ground and poses danger not only to the safety of the countries but also to the religion. This is why such cooperations should be targeted which can effectively achieve that the Islamic religion itself should completely reject propagators of radical ideals, and must distance itself from all terrorist organisations and terrorist activities. This is only possible if, with the help of the West, important Muslim religious leaders back this initiative who are able to credibly convince persons planning to join that the prohibitions of the Quran apply to them, too, and after committing their ghastly deeds they will not get into "heaven" as a reward.

The concept of security and its influence on European societies with the appearance of extremist religious groups

In the theory of international relations, security has no single conceptual system, just because one of the fundamental differences, debates among the ruling trends in security studies comes from the different views on the basic concept. Security generally means a lack of threat. One can feel secure when he/she is free from the threat posed by different endangering factors.²³

²³ VIDA 2013: 89.

The question emerges: how should the EU and Hungary relate to the Arabic countries?²⁴ The terrorist attacks committed by Muslim radicals, unlike the other types of terrorism, did not threaten the security of Europe for a long time. Recently, however, European societies have also faced a new form of political violence unknown so far. The activities in the extremist religious groups and the trips taken to the conflict zones outside Europe significantly contributed to the radicalisation of the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks in Paris in January 2015, the serial terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 or the Brussels bombing in 2016.²⁵

Security is a state when its subject (in this case, Europe) is able to respond appropriately to a threat to it. It can be regarded real if the threat is equal to or less than the ability to protect.

As can be seen from the above, the question whether extremist religious groups pose a threat to Europe and to what extent is rather complex, and to answer it, it is appropriate to examine the different dimensions of security. When identifying security dimensions, we can mention a range of segments, e.g. the military, political, diplomatic, economic, financial, industrial, trade, human, social, environmental, health-epidemiological, legal, public security, national security and demographic dimensions. That is to say, all the subsystems of the society are elements of security.²⁶

To be able to handle the examination of security, it is appropriate to use Barry Buzan's theory of the five dimensions of security, which analyses the military, political, economic, societal and environmental aspects of security.²⁷

Barry Buzan defines the dimensions as follows:

1. military: "the two-level interplay of the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states, and states' perceptions of each other's intentions"
2. political: "the organizational stability of states, systems of government and the ideologies that give them legitimacy"
3. economic: "access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power"
4. societal: "the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and national identity and custom"
5. environmental: "the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend"²⁸

To promote the economic security (the maintenance of welfare and stability) and because of the labour shortage of Western Europe, the first guest workers arrived in Europe from the Middle East in the 1960s. The majority of the Muslim guest workers arrived from the previous colonies, from North African countries. Western European societal security (development, sustainability, heritage conservation, traditions, language, religion, culture, national identity) was significantly influenced by the gross inflation

²⁴ FISCHL 2019: 54.

²⁵ RÉPÁSI 2019: 62.

²⁶ VIDA 2013: 91.

²⁷ BALOGH 2013: 54.

²⁸ BUZAN et al. 1998: 8; cf. GÁBRI 2010: 113.

and unemployment caused by the rocketing oil prices following the Arab–Israeli war of October 1973, which afflicted primarily the unskilled foreign workforce. The countries concerned were trying to reduce guest work, but the majority of the guest workers did not return to their homelands. Despite the situation, it was more advantageous for them to remain in Europe than to go back to their countries of origin where there was worse economic situation and political instability.

In the newer wave of immigrants in the 1980s, we can find the representatives of extremist movements.²⁹ Although many of the first-generation immigrants could not fully integrate in the receiving country, the lack of integration and radicalisation became apparent not in their generation, but in the following one.

Extremist religious groups were (and are) a good breeding ground for the Muslim youth living in Europe who are unskilled, unemployed, unable to integrate and have no vision. One of the explanations to mention is Samuel P. Huntington's theory on the clash of civilisations,³⁰ and the fact that the central value of European culture is innovation and performance orientation, whereas that of Islamic culture is the preservation of tradition.

Young people with such a background are the most willing to join armies fighting wars in the Middle East, or commit terrorist attacks in Europe as well. A characteristic of their motif is an extremist political or religious stand. Communities that provide the breeding ground for such activities can be found in many Western European cities as well as in the Balkan. To them belong the Salafist communities, who play an inevitable role in the terrorist threat of Europe.

According to Salafism, Islam is declining, its followers have left the right path, and Islam can regain its old glory when it returns to the right, the ancient path. In their view, the modern Muslim traditions and practices are to blame for the deviation from the divine path and the decline that has followed. There have been and are several Salafi-controlled mosques in Europe which are connected in multiple ways to Islamist political violence. These communities support extremist organisations financially and recruit volunteers (who are later on encouraged to carry out a domestic terrorist attack or sent to fight in a war zone). Here we can mention the Finsbury Park mosque in London, or Al-Quds mosque in Hamburg, which had been visited by the perpetrators of the attack of 11 September 2001. In the earlier decades, imams disseminating extremist ideas in mosques played the most important role in recruiting young people prone to radical views. Their importance has declined recently as authorities have tried to isolate extremists from believers through frequent police raids. Another characteristic was that extremist Islamist religious groups extended their activity to universities, and since the 1990s they have had a significant role both in the dissemination of extremist ideology and in the recruitment.

The causes that turn Muslim youth to extreme ideals are complex. One of them is, for example, the lack of inclusion. As a matter of fact, in many countries the Muslim minorities can enjoy only limited rights of citizenship, as opposed to majority nationals. Many of them do not get the citizenship, and even those who do

²⁹ KIS-BENEDEK 2007: 78.

³⁰ PÉRI 2013: 149.

are not regarded citizens in a societal or cultural sense. Besides the lack of education and unemployment, another negative impulse is racism from the majority society, which enhances the sense of exclusion. As follows from the above, for immigrants and their descendants it is much more difficult to enter the labour market than for members of the majority society. Yet another obstacle to integration and an incentive to radicalisation is the insufficient language knowledge, which greatly contributes to the formation of so-called parallel societies.

Immigrants' children, i.e. the second generation has played and continues to play to this day a pivotal role in the radicalisation of European Muslims since the failure of the integration attempts occurring with the second generation easily comes back in the third and fourth generations. This could be experienced in Western Europe still in the late 1980s, when there developed a poor urban youth of Muslim religion, which was more susceptible to radical ideals than the previous generation. The extremist Islamist religious groups strengthened in the meantime managed to find these excluded young people easily.

Contrary to the first generation of immigrants, who characteristically practiced Islam as it was embedded in their culture, and whose religious practice was in fact limited to daily prayers, the representatives of the next generations who joined extremist religious groups broke with the religious practice of their parents. Although many of them had not cared about religion earlier and lived a libertine life, on joining a religious group they identify with the new (e.g. Salafi) view.

We must mention those young people who were not born in a Muslim family, do not have such roots, but turned away from the majority society they consider empty, and think that, for example, the puritanical orientation of the Salafi movement is the way out of this crisis of values.

After getting into such a circle, the young people consider themselves chosen, and find spiritual or maybe physical refuge in these communities which have a simplified world view comprehensible to them. The sense of belonging to a group will affect their behaviour and personality intensely, and this sense will make them vulnerable in the course of time. In order to maintain objectivity, we must emphasise that a very small proportion of e.g. the Salafi movement—among whose views we can find separation, denunciation and rejection, which can provide an excellent breeding ground for a future terrorist attack—sympathise with terrorism.

From among the security dimensions, the relationship of military security, i.e. the offensive and defensive capability of states comes in the forefront in connection with extremist religious groups. An important key to the proper functioning of military systems is the human resources of the organisations (the staff). In this respect it is a matter of inner security, which falls within the remit of the counter intelligence unit of the given organisation (army). During the interview procedure extremists have to be filtered out. This of course does not mean that the issue of military security would be exhausted in this respect, but as I see it, it is not the level of development of the military security dimension which mainly decides the influence of extremist religious communities on security in Europe. We must, however, mention those far-right groups whose members want to solve social, economic, cultural and ideological questions

with radical tools instead of the state, and who encourage their members to this end to enter state law enforcement agencies.

If any extremist religious group—through the effective dissemination of its extremist views—becomes a political factor, it influences the political security dimension as described by Barry Buzan (the organisational stability of states), which can have a long-term influence on the societal dimension of security, with special view of European traditions and culture.

On examination of the fifth and last security dimension, the environmental security, i.e. “the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend”,³¹ we can ascertain that this one is not linked typically and directly to the activity of extremist religious groups.³²

Conclusions and results

In conclusion we can establish that the majority of the Muslim population living in Western Europe are peaceful citizens, but the terrorist attacks of recent years require them to help the work of the authorities and reject extremist views.³³ Simultaneously, the majority society has to advance the integration of people with a different cultural background. If this does not happen, it cannot be excluded that the impact of the increased (in many cases illegal) migration could lead to the strengthening of extremist views. In the absence of such societal dialogue we cannot rule out that far-right groups commit more and more assaults against immigrants in the future.³⁴ The ideals and motives of these groups are xenophobia, racist views and search for enemies. Through their actions they strengthen extremist religious groups in socially undesirable ways driving susceptible young people to their number, which threatens security in the short, the medium and long term.

“The question is not whether there is any point in dialogue, but rather how it can be filled with deeper and deeper content.”³⁵

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³¹ BUZAN et al. 1998: 8; cf. GÁBRI 2010: 113.

³² PADÁNYI 2022: 224.

³³ BÉRES 2016: 27.

³⁴ KEREZSI 2018: 137.

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