PREVENTIVE WORK OF THE POLICE
IN THE PROCESS OF DERADICALIZATION[1]

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Abstract: The process of radicalization has been perceived as a significant problem in many countries, especially in developed Western democracies that have faced with homegrown terrorism. At the same time, the police are expected to take action to prevent this process as successfully as possible. The police have been committed to strengthening their preventive activities for several decades, so the question inevitably arises as to how much their activities have achieved the desired goals and whether such activities can be expected to contribute to the process of deradicalization. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to point out to the achieved results in strengthening the preventive role of the police and in terms of the possibility of using the acquired experiences to prevent the process of radicalization. Experiences gained by police in developed countries can be useful for the police in the Republic of Serbia, provided that the specifics of their application in the domestic environment are taken into account.

Keywords: police, prevention, deradicalization, effects

INTRODUCTION

Prevention of radicalization leading to violence, i.e. the process of deradicalization, attracts great attention not only of practitioners, but also of researchers and the general public. This is evidenced by a large number of scientific papers that deal with the topic of radicalization. Nevertheless, it seems that there is always space to look again and again in the light of new research for examples of good practice that can improve the engagement of certain services whose competence includes the prevention of

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radicalization. Therefore, this paper will first review the assessments of the current state of the problem in the countries of the European Union and Serbia and the characteristics of the radicalization process, and then in the second part special attention will be paid to current forms of preventive action in the deradicalization process, viewed from the angle of the possibility of improving the role of the police. It has long been clear that traditional repressive policing in terms of detecting, and providing evidence of terrorism-related crimes and locating and apprehending their perpetrators is not enough to protect modern society from the dangers of radicalized violence. On the other hand, the preventive action of the police in the phase of expressing attitudes and beliefs that can lead to violence must not be neglected, because not all the features of a crime have been realized in order to take legally prescribed repressive measures and actions. It is becoming increasingly clear that precise procedures can be established for the competent state authorities to act in these cases in order to adequately assess the risk and determine the necessary preventive activities. In many cases, these procedures have already been established and work needs to be done to improve them.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RADICALIZATION PROCESS OF IMPORTANCE FOR POLICE ACTION

According to the Europol report on terrorism situation in Europe in 2018, a total of 129 foiled, failed and completed attacks were reported by the EU Member States (EUROPOL, 2019). In the same year 1056 individuals were arrested on suspicion of terrorism-related offences, with the highest number in France (310) and in the UK (273). Ethno-nationalist and separatist attacks continued to represent the largest proportion, but all fatalities were the result of jihadist attacks: 13 people lost their lives and 46 people were injured. The EU Member States reported 16 thwarted jihadist terrorist plots. All jihadist terrorist attacks were committed by individuals acting alone and targeted civilians and symbols of authority. The motivation of the perpetrator and the links to other radicalised individuals or terrorist groups remained often unclear. Mental health issues contributed to the complexity of the phenomenon. IS maintain an online presence largely because unofficial supporter networks and proIS media outlets. There is a risk that individuals with criminal background and those imprisoned are vulnerable to radicalisation. The number of European foreign terrorist fighters was very low, and also the number of individuals returning to the EU. The abuse of migration flows by terrorists to enter the EU does not seem to be systematic (EUROPOL, 2019).

According to the assessment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Republic of Serbia may be endangered by terrorist activities directly, and there is a danger that its territory will be used for transit, preparation and execution of terrorist attacks in other countries. Nationalist and extremist activities of individuals and groups, threats of radical Islamism and ethnically motivated terrorism have been identified as a threat to its security, and it is estimated that there is a danger of various forms of extremism. There is a constant danger of terrorist activity in the area of the Land Security Zone, although in the period from 2014-2016 no terrorist attacks were recorded (MoI, 2017). The expansion of terrorist activities in the Middle East and North Africa and the movement of migrants through the territory of Serbia on the way to developed European countries affects the perception of the presence of a potential danger from terrorist activities. Sources of potential threats include persons (domestic and foreign) who have participated in armed conflicts in the Middle East and other areas covered by similar conflicts, members of terrorist organizations known to the police, especially ethnically motivated terrorist organizations, individuals prone to violent extremism who are not registered as security interesting persons.

This situation and trends in the countries of the European Union inevitably stimulate the interest of professionals, researchers and the public in the process of radicalization and the possibility of its prevention. Although there is no single definition of violent radicalization, it seems that the definition from the handbook of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2016) is acceptable in which it is defined as the process by which people acquire radical or extremist beliefs and attitudes involving the use of violent measures to achieve objectives from ideological, political, religious, social, economic and/or personal reasons. At the same time, it defines deradicalization as the process of changing the belief system, rejecting the extremist ideology, and embracing mainstream values, which refers primarily to a cognitive rejection of certain values, attitudes and views resulting from activities intended to help individuals to renounce radical or extreme ideas, beliefs and groups. Thereby, disengagement from using, or supporting the use of, violence does not necessarily mean a change in an individual's commitment to a radical or extremist cause, and his fundamental beliefs (UNODC, 2016).

In particular, the research of the process of radicalization and the possibility of its prevention is directed towards individuals who have suddenly decided to carry out violent activities and who in an earlier period of life did not indicate to people around them that they could become terrorists. The term "lone wolf" is often used for them, because they have radicalized themselves. However, Antinori (2017) indicates that it is useful deleting the word "lone" because the jihadi wolf is not alone. In his opinion, he is a product of the "cultural" and (cyber-) globalized dimension of terrorist narratives which inspire and promote the "Lone Jihad" against the West. He is completely mobile connected and immersed into interacting and (cyber-) socializing jihadisphere (the terrorist infosphere) produced by the massive uploading of 'open' jihadist multimedia products. It is this specificity that imposes the need to engage more public and private entities, including the police, in order to reduce the opportunities for self-radicalization via the Internet. There is no doubt that the Internet provides significant opportunities for inciting terrorist activities, but to what extent its impact is more dominant than other environmental factors is a question that captures the attention of a large number of researchers.

Undoubtedly important in the process of radicalization are internal risk factors, which are largely formed under inadequate upbringing influence of parents in childhood, starting with the formation of guilt (own or potential victims), low self-esteem, narcissism, paranoia and various other mental problems. However, studies have been conducted throughout the previous decades and almost all of them emphasized that most of the terrorists were rational individuals and not victims of psychological or mental diseases (Zahra, 2019). Therefore, special attention should be paid to external factors that may encourage the process of radicalization, such as the already mentioned impact of terrorist organizations propaganda through the media (especially via the Internet), life in a violent environment, easy access to illegal firearms and narcotics, social exclusion, environmental influences that can cause deprivation and frustration and others. When it comes to persons who are in prisons for committing a crime, whether it is a crime related to terrorism or not, there is a growing indication of the possible negative impact of radicalized persons in prisons. The activities undertaken by the police with the aim of preventing radicalization should be based on the analysis of the impact of these negative environmental factors in order for its preventive activities to be successful in the process of deradicalization.

THE SCOPE OF POSSIBILITIES OF PREVENTIVE ACTION IN THE PROCESS OF DERADICALIZATION

The range of possibilities for police action in the process of deradicalization is very wide. It ranges from the broadest educational activities aimed at strengthening the security culture of citizens and

especially vulnerable categories such as youth, through other activities to strengthen trust and cooperation between police and citizens, especially through the model of community policing, combating actions that encourage and enable radicalization with the aim of terrorism (inciting national, racial and religious hate and intolerance, public incitement to commit terrorist acts and similar crimes), to participate in the process of resocialization and reintegration of persons released from prisons. The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) Secretariat has selected a variety of practices and has classified them under seven different approaches: 1) Training for first line practitioners working with individuals or groups at risk of radicalisation through raising awareness; 2) Exit strategies: deradicalization programmes to reintegrate violent extremists and disengagement programmes to at least dissuade them from violence; 3) Community engagement and empowerment establishing a trust in authorities; 4) Educating young people on citizenship, political, religious and ethnic tolerance, non-prejudiced thinking, extremism, democratic values, cultural diversity, and the historical consequences of ethnically and politically motivated violence; 5) Family support for those vulnerable to radicalization and those who have become radicalized; 6) Delivering alternative narratives to extremist propaganda and worldviews either online or offline; and 7) Creating counter violent extremism institutional infrastructures to ensure that people at risk are given multi-agency support at an early stage (RAN, 2016).

Tore Bjørgo combined elements of three main schools of crime prevention, criminal justice-based prevention, social crime prevention and situational crime prevention, and form one holistic model of crime prevention which includes nine preventive mechanisms that can be applied to all forms of crime including violent extremism and terrorism. Those preventive mechanisms are: 1) establishing and maintaining normative barriers; 2) reducing recruitment; 3) deterrence; 4) disruption; 5) incapacitation; 6) protecting vulnerable targets; 7) reducing harm; 8) reducing rewards; and 9) desistance and rehabilitation (according to: Bjørgo & Smit, 2020). Many actors have important role in these mechanisms, such as parents, teachers, youth workers, staff of civil society organisations, social workers, prison and probation staff. In all these mechanisms the police have a greater or lesser role. Given that police role is significant, it is necessary that police strengthen trust and cooperation with these actors. Trust is the basis for cooperation between the police, citizens and public agencies and its basic forms such as information exchange and coordination of activities. Unlike cooperation between the police and local services, building trust between the police and citizens is a more complex process.

Murray, Mueller-Johnson & Sherman (2015) indicate that in Western democracies, targeting resources on local "hot spots" of low confidence in the police is essential for making strategies for countering terrorism evidence based. They carried out research to explore the relationship between police scoring of human intelligence data and public opinion surveys ($N = 30,412$) two kinds of evidence for targeting resources across 335 neighbourhoods in a large metropolitan area. The results suggest that while Muslim respondents have lower levels of confidence in the police than other ethnic minority groups, their confidence levels are even lower in areas where intelligence suggests the greatest risk of extremist violence. One of the most important models of police work that is encouraged with the aim of strengthening public trust and legitimacy of the police is community-oriented policing. That model of work emphasizes positive, non-enforcement contact with the public. To determine whether positive, non-enforcement interactions with uniformed patrol officers actually cause meaningful improvements in attitudes toward the police, Peyton, Sierra-Arévalo & Rand (2019) conducted a randomized field experiment in New Haven, CT. The obtained results showed that a single instance of positive contact with a uniformed police officer can substantially improve public attitudes toward police, including legitimacy and willingness to cooperate. These effects persisted for up to 21 day and were not limited to individuals inclined to trust and cooperate with the police prior to the intervention.

Such a conclusion is supported by the results of research conducted at the national level in the US, which were reached by Schanzer, Kurzman, Toliver & Miller (2016). They found out multiple obstacles to creating community partnerships focused on preventing acts of violent extremism. Among these obstacles, they pointed out the following: Muslim Americans see police outreach efforts as a double standard, because similar programs are not directed at non-Muslims; many of them have experienced trauma since 9/11 and link police outreach and engagement efforts with aggressive surveillance tactics they oppose; actions of federal government agencies affect Muslim Americans' attitudes toward the police; some believe that their public safety concerns are not being fully addressed; and police have limited resources for outreach and engagement. On the other hand, the same authors made the following recommendations: effective community partnerships require committed police leaders and a community open to engagement; community policing strategies should involve the whole community, not just Muslim Americans; community outreach and engagement programs should be separate from intelligence gathering and criminal investigation; law enforcement agencies should recruit and hire a workforce that reflects the composition of the community; successful outreach and engagement requires multiple types of training; law enforcement agencies should conduct a wide range of engagement activities designed to establish trusting relationships; and the police should work with communities to develop non-criminal law enforcement intervention models (Schanzer, Kurzman, Toliver & Miller, 2016).

The cooperation between the police and other local services in the prevention of violent extremism can be more effective if there are institutionalized forms of cooperation in crime prevention at the local community level that are established by appropriate legal regulations. Bjørgo and Smit (2020) remind that the Nordic countries have developed varieties of the so-called SSP model for collaboration between schools, social services and the police at the local level. They pointed out two models in multi-agency cooperation with the aim of preventing violent extremism: the Danish info-house model (the Aarhus model) and the United Kingdom approach. The Danish info-house model encourages cooperation between police, municipalities, social workers and other relevant professionals in protecting society against terrorists and providing social care for individuals at risk. Legislation allows practitioners from different agencies to share sensitive information about individual youths for preventive purposes but the police are not allowed to use this information in criminal investigations. Finland and Sweden have stricter legislation and practices making such collaboration less operational and person-oriented. On the other side, in the United Kingdom educational institutions, the health and welfare sector have a legal duty to report suspicious behaviour to local authorities. Police or security service then assess these reports and cases may be followed up by positive social interventions to redirect the young person towards a pro-social track, or to surveillance and criminal prosecution (Bjørgo & Smit, 2020).

The Aarhus model was created in 2007, when the municipality of Aarhus and the East Jutland Police (National Police) established a pilot project to prevent radicalization, inspired by a project carried out as early as 2004 in Amsterdam, *Wij Amsterdammers* (EFUS, 2016). The municipality of Aarhus considers that the prevention of radicalization is a specialised branch of the general crime prevention policy. The prevention of radicalization policy is based on Pyramidal Model, or three levels: 1) General level focused on awareness raising and capacity-building against radicalization through workshops, presentations and seminars; 2) Specific level focused on individuals or groups considered as extremist, for example because they are planning to travel to Syria or Iraq, and main activities are: family network, survey and risk assessment, and Info House; 3) Targeted level aiming at individuals already engaged in criminal acts or considered as being in "imminent risk" and includes The Info House and the multi-agency strategy (EFUS, 2016).

According to description of the Danish model by the European forum for urban security (2016), the Info House is composed of two part-time police assistants and a team of the Aarhus Municipality. It receives initial inquiries from citizens or public officials about an individual in risk of radicalization. After assessment, if a case is a threat to security, it is sent to the Danish Security and Intelligence Service Centre for Prevention, but if it is not the case, it is referred to the police or the municipality which might provide advice and guidance, social activities, or mentor support (participation is optional). The final decision regarding a mentor-based intervention is made by social services advisors. Returnees may be required to take part in debriefing sessions, psychological therapy, medical assistance, individual mentoring or tailored exit programmes depending on the risk assessment. In the case of mentoring, the case is referred to a person who the individual in question already knows and trusts, from a specially trained mentor to a football coach or a teacher, but no former extremists are involved as mentors. In the Aarhus model, local partners are Municipality Social Affairs and Employment department, Children and Youths department and East Jutland Police, while national partners are Danish Security and Intelligence Service Centre for Prevention, Ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing, and Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration. The traffic to Syria has been reduced from 31 individuals in 2013 to a couple in 2014 and 2015, and a dialogue has been established with communities and minority groups at risk of recruitment into violent extremism. It is not possible to demonstrate a causal relationship between this decrease and the prevention strategy. Specific parts of the programme has been evaluated separately, but no overall evaluation of the programme is conducted yet (EFUS, 2016).

The preventive role of the police is important not only in relation to the treatment of persons at risk who have not previously exhibited problematic behaviour, but also in relation to persons who have served a prison sentence. In relation to both categories of persons, the police are instructed to make security assessments, i.e. risk assessments, independently or in partnership with other services. The knowledge of the police should enable a special assessment of the reintegration needs of persons released in order to take into account which interventions should be undertaken. Cooperation between the police and penitentiary institutions is necessary before the release of persons from prison in order to consider the risk assessments of the prison service. The social reintegration requires a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, with strong coordination among many relevant actors, such as families, civil society organizations, public services, the private sector, and communities. If relevant, psychological and religious counselling, employment assistance and/or support to the family should continue. The assessment should include the family's willingness to participate in the reintegration process, as in some cases it may be part of the problem in the process (UNODC, 2016)

CONCLUSIONS

The state and trend of terrorist activities in the countries of the European Union inevitably stimulate the interest of professionals, researchers and the public in the process of radicalization and the possibilities of its prevention. In particular, the research of the process of radicalization and the possibility of its prevention is directed towards individuals who have suddenly decided to carry out violent activities and who in their earlier period of life did not indicate by their behaviour that they could become terrorists. Activities undertaken by the police to prevent radicalization should be based on an analysis of the impact of internal and external risk and protection factors. The scope of opportunities for police action in the deradicalization process includes educational activities to strengthen the security culture of citizens (especially vulnerable categories), strengthening trust and cooperation of citizens through community policing, combating actions that encourage and enable radicalization for terrorism and

participation in resocialization and reintegration of persons who have served a prison sentence. The preventive role of the police is important in relation to persons at risk who have not previously exhibited problematic behaviour and persons who have served a prison sentence. In relation to both categories of persons, the police should make security assessments, i.e. risk assessments in partnership with other relevant entities. Cooperation between the police and other local services in the prevention of violent extremism can be more effective if there are institutionalized forms of cooperation in crime prevention at the local community level that are established by appropriate legal regulations. The Danish Aarhus model encourages cooperation between police, municipalities, social workers and other relevant professionals in protecting society against terrorists and providing social care for individuals at risk and can be a good example for police work in Serbia.

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