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Radicalization in the Armed Forces: Lessons from the Czech Republic and Germany in the Central European Context

Radikalizace v ozbrojených silách: poznatky z České republiky a z Německa ve středoevropském kontextu

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Abstract

The paper deals with the process of radicalization in the armed forces in Central Europe, with specific focus on the Czech Armed Forces and the Bundeswehr. The author conceptualizes radicalization as a recent security threat and explains the specifics of the use of this concept in the armed forces. The most important historical legacies are identified and the current development cases and trends are analyzed and compared, including the specifics of various streams of extremism. Possible recommendations how to counter radicalization are included in the paper.

Abstrakt

Článek se zabývá procesem radikalizace v ozbrojených silách ve střední Evropě, se specifickým zaměřením na ozbrojené síly ČR a na Bundeswehr. Autor konceptualizuje radikalizaci jakožto soudobou bezpečnostní hrozbu a vysvětluje specifika užití tohoto konceptu v ozbrojených silách. V článku jsou identifikovány nejvýznamnější historické odkazy a jsou v něm analyzovány a srovnány případy a trendy soudobého vývoje včetně specifík různých proudů extremismu. V závěru článku jsou obsažena možná doporučení, jak bojovat proti radikalizaci.

Keywords:

Radicalization; Extremism; Armed Forces; Central Europe.

Klíčová slova:

Radikalizace; extremismus; ozbrojené síly; střední Evropa.

INTRODUCTION

Radicalization and countering are considered a serious contemporary security challenge in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),¹ in the European Union (EU)² and in other international organizations as well as at national level in many countries. Radicalization in the armed forces has a specific dimension, due to the important role of the armed forces in the governmental security systems. Any instance of radicalization in the military environment is a very sensitive issue and it is usually connected with strong media attention and with political reactions. However, the current interest in radicalization is rarely focused on this process in the armed forces.³ This article tries to reduce this research gap, at least at the conceptual level and at the level of a regional analysis. It deals with radicalization in the armed forces in Central European area, mostly in Germany and in the Czech Republic (these two countries were chosen, inter alia, due to the accessibility of data and due to their most developed counter-radicalization policy in the region). However, it starts with - a relatively undeveloped - general conceptualization of radicalization in the armed forces. The historical legacies and current development trends are analyzed (with help of topical cases of radicalization). The main goal of the article is to identify the most serious threats and risks connected with radicalization in the armed forces in the Czech Republic and Germany as well as in broader Central Europe and to suggest possible ways and instruments of counter-radicalization. Historical method, threat and risk analysis and a prescriptive approach will be used.

1 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF RADICALIZATION IN THE ARMED FORCES

Radicalization is a frequently used term in contemporary scientific and political discussions. It is not only a “buzzword”, it can be a useful concept for detection, prevention and elimination of violent extremism and the interconnected phenomena. A generally respected definition of radicalization has not been elaborated yet. However, radicalization is mostly understood as a process of change from moderate politics towards violent extremism or terrorism.⁴

1 PAGE, Jaqueline. 2014. The “Home Game” - Countering Violent Extremism within NATO. Rome: NATO Defense College, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/184000/rp_104.pdf

2 BAKKER, Edwin. 2015. EU Counter-radicalisation Policies: A Comprehensive and Consistent Approach?, *Intelligence and National Security*, 30:2-3, 281-305, DOI: 10.1080/02684527.2014.988442

3 QUIVOOIJ, Romain. 2016. Radicalisation of Soldiers: Growing Threat from Within? Singapore: Nanyang Technological University, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CO16140.pdf>

4 SCHMID, Alex P. 2013. Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review. The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf>

Radicalization was defined within the project of European survey of youth mobilization from 2011 as “the acceptance of the use of violent or undemocratic means to reach specific goals”; more specifically, Jeffrey Murer stated: “Radicalization seems best understood not as the collection of particular positions or opinions on matters, but rather as a social process, dependent on individuals and the specific background situations of all involved.”⁵

Radicalization is a result of various influences and it can be analytically (and in a very simplified way) carried out at micro- (individual), meso- (milieu/group) and macro- (societal/political) levels.⁶ It means that individual pre-dispositions are interconnected with peer-groups, family milieu, study and working collectives, etc., and with the political development at national and international level.

Successful countering radicalization should take all three dimensions into account. It is also important to distinguish between disengagement and de-radicalization. According to Horgan, disengagement means to stop terrorist/violent extremist activities, while de-radicalization is related to rejection of extremist values and principles.⁷

With respect to the above-mentioned general conceptualization of radicalization, radicalization in the armed forces should be understood as a process in which the military staff tends to violent extremism or has become part of the violent extremist spectrum. Radicalization before joining the armed forces, during the service in the armed forces and after leaving the armed forces must be distinguished. All these phases can be interconnected (for example, if radicalized veterans try to influence soldiers during military service).

Radicalization within the armed forces can be caused dominantly by external factors (in relation to the military environment), inter alia, due to the reaction of radicalized soldiers to general political issues (as the Fort Hood shooting in 2009).⁸ It can also be the result of processes within the army (of course, also these processes are influenced by the external environment). Inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations in the current

⁵ MURER, Jeffrey S. 2011. The European Study of Youth Mobilization Report. Listening to Radicals: Attitudes and Motivations of Young People Engaged in Political and Social Movements Outside of the Mainstream in Central and Nordic Europe. St. Andrew: University of St. Andrew, https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/1838/British_Council_ESYM_Report_March_2011_.pdf?sequence=1

⁶ MALTHANER, Stefan. 2017. Radicalisation: The Evolution of an Analytical Paradigm. *European Journal of Sociology*, 58 (3), 369-401, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975617000182>

⁷ HORGAN, John. 2008. Deradicalisation or Disengagement? A Process in Need of Clarity and a Counterterrorism Initiative in Need of Evaluation. *Perspectives on Terrorism*. Vol. 2, No. 4, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/32/html>

⁸ This case is an example of Islamist radicalization within the armed forces. On November 5, 2009, self-radicalized US Army psychiatrist Nidal Hasan “walked into the deployment center and fired 200 rounds, killing thirteen Defense Department employees”. ZEGART, Amy. 2015. *Insider Threats and Organizational Root Causes: The 2009 Fort Hood Terrorist Attack*. The US Army War College Parameters, Vol. 45, No. 2, 35-46.

Western armed forces are discussed as a driving factor of possible radicalization.⁹ However, also older cases can be found, such as the clash at Camp Pendelton in 1976.¹⁰

Radicalization can be an issue of individuals or small cells or it can be characteristic of a large part of the army (as the research on radicalization of the Pakistani army has shown).¹¹ In this sense, the scope of radicalization within the army can reflect the situation in the whole society. Infiltration into important institutions is one of important criteria of the strength of extremism as such.¹² Radicalized representatives of various forms of extremism can be active in the army. In the most extreme cases, the army can be divided into two or more extremist and/or democratic factions and this situation can be a warning signal of an incoming civil war (as in Spain in the mid-1930s).

Radicalization of professional soldiers has a specific dimension in comparison with radicalization of conscripts, because conscripts usually have stronger ties to young scenes, including young subcultures with extremist streams. The abolition of military service can weaken this interaction between the extremist scenes and the army, however, this problem remains important in societies with professional armies (as the recent case of British neo-Nazi soldiers from 2017 shows).¹³ An interconnection of conscripts with the army is temporarily limited in individual cases, while individually radicalized professional soldiers can have a longer and more dangerous impact on the army structures (even more if they are in the command structures).

Soldiers can be radicalized towards various forms of violent extremism - right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism, religious extremism, ethnic extremism or single-issue extremism. Of course, each form of extremism has its specific features and national varieties. Radicalization towards right-wing extremism has been usually connected with the use of neo-Nazi traditions or with the tradition of domestic fascist legacies, however, in recent era we can also observe ideologically not very precisely conceptualized authoritarianism. Individual preferences of right-wing extremists are aimed at a strong state with a strong army. This should serve in a dictatorship regime. Left-wing extremists with communist background usually use the legacies of the communist armies and regimes with the goal of their restoration. Anarchist extremists in the army are rare (they can be mostly among conscripts). Due to their anti-militarist self-perception they reject "capi-

⁹ TAUSCH, Arno. 2009. Multikulturalität und die Armee der Zukunft in Europa - ein erster Datenbefund basierend auf dem „World Values Survey“ und dem „European Social Survey“. Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift, Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift, 201 (5), 13-20, www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/omz/oemz2009_05.pdf

¹⁰ As Matt Kennard stated, "a group of black marines attacked white marines they mistakenly believed to be in Ku Klux Klan. The resulting investigation uncovered a KKK chapter at the base and led to the jailing or transfer of sixteen Klansmen." KENNARD, Matt. *Irregular Army. How the US Militars Recruited Neo-Nazis, Gang Members, and Criminals to Fight the War on Terror*. London, New York: Verso, 17.

¹¹ OAKLEY, Robert B. - GADY, Franz-Stefan. 2015. *Radicalisation by Choice: ISI and the Pakistani Army* Washington: Institute for National Strategic Studies National Defense University.

¹² BACKES, Uwe - JESSE, Eckhard: *Vergleichende Extremismusforschung*. Baden Baden: Nomos Verlag., 2005.

¹³ In September 2017, three soldiers appeared in court charged under terror laws with being members of a banned neo-Nazi group called the National Action., BBC. 2017. Neo-Nazi charges: UK soldiers appear in court, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41241153>

talist armies". The growing number of Islamic extremists in western armies is connected with radicalization in the Muslim diaspora communities. In Muslim countries, radicalization towards Islamic extremism can be caused by dissatisfaction with the domestic political situation and with political cooperation of many Muslim countries with the USA and their allies.

As mentioned above, extremism is usually defined as a rejection of values and principles of a democratic constitutional state. Respect to various legitimate political and religious ideas and beliefs is necessary and, for example, the patriotic conviction should not be blamed as extremist from the radical leftist point of view. Verbal or physical attacks against the army and soldiers due to their profession or strong ties to their national interests (in media, politics, etc.) can even become cause of their radicalization (in reaction to such attacks).

Radicalization towards violent extremism can result in various forms of behaviour. Soldiers can be, individually or in groups, involved in violent clashes, in hate crimes and terrorist activities (with targets outside and/or inside army), they can cause incidents (including war crimes) during military missions or they can be traitors of their countries (espionage, sabotage, disloyalty, etc.), or they can even participate in coup d'états.¹⁴

2 LEGACIES OF RADICALIZATION IN THE ARMED FORCES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND GERMANY IN THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Radicalization within the armies in Central European area can be found in many historical periods. However, modern concepts of a democratic constitutional state and extremism determine the use of the concept of radicalization in the recent sense. Revolutionary and patriotic rebellions against the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and against non-democratic regimes in the 20th century cannot be understood as cases of radicalization.¹⁵ On the other hand, subversion of armies in democratic countries in Central Europe by fascist or communist forces in the interwar period, during the Second World War and in the post-war period can be considered as struggle for radicalization of a large part of the army with anti-democratic purposes.¹⁶ The use of traditions of the Wehrmacht in Bundeswehr and a limited use of tradition of the communist armies in East Central

¹⁴ MAREŠ, Miroslav. Hrozba politického extremismu z hlediska ozbrojených sil České republiky. *Vojenské rozhledy*, Vol. 18(50), No. 2, 138-151.

¹⁵ For example, the rebellion in Rumburk in 1918 against the Habsburg monarchy was connected with revolutionary and patriotic ideas, but it was a symptom of democratization, not radicalization in recent meaning. See PLASCHKA, Rudolf. 2000. *Avantgarde des Widerstands. Modellfälle militärischer Auflehnung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 216-228.

¹⁶ For example, Communist infiltration into the military sphere in the post-war Czechoslovakia with the aim, to support communist empowerment in the country. HANZLÍK, František - VONDRÁŠEK, Václav. 2006. *Armáda v zápase o politickou moc v letech 1945-1948*. Praha: Ministerstvo obrany: Agentura vojenských informací a služeb.

Europe was not connected with cases of violent extremism. However, individual cases of radicalization towards violent extremism by young soldiers and recruits using legacies of the Nazi regime and collaboration with it were typical of the Bundeswehr and after the fall of communism also of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. No cases of violent radicalization towards left-wing extremism (with relation to the communist past) are known.

One of the most significant cases of neo-Nazi radicalization with links to the military sphere is connected with the German activist Michael Kühnen. He was born in 1955 in Beuel. In the late 1960s he started his engagement in right-wing extremist milieu. In 1974 he joined the army and later was admitted to the University of Bundeswehr in Hamburg. During this service he intensified his contacts in the neo-Nazi scene and was able to establish a militant network.¹⁷ In 1977 he founded the organization called Action Front of National Socialists (Aktionsfront Nationaler Sozialisten - ANS) with several dozens of members. Some of them were involved in terrorist plots.¹⁸ Kühnen himself was accused of forming a terrorist organization and dismissed from the Bundeswehr in 1977, however, he was not found guilty of this criminal offence.¹⁹ He was sentenced only for propagandist crimes. In 1983, the ANS was banned. Kühnen played an important role in the neo-Nazi scene also after his release from prison. The end of his career was not very successful. He made a coming out of his homosexual orientation. This fact was strongly criticized by a large part of the right-wing extremist spectrum. Kühnen died of AIDS in 1991.²⁰ His case shows basic pre-radicalization before he joined the army, acceleration of radicalization during the military service and study (probably due to growing self-confidence) and continuous activity after leaving the armed forces.

In several Central European countries, young soldiers serving as conscripts participated in racist violence against migrants and minorities in the 1990s and in the first half of the 2000s. These conscripts had been usually radicalized before the start of their compulsory military service. An attack of a group of racist skinheads at a Roma wedding in České Budějovice in the Czech Republic on 20 November 1999 can be mentioned as an

¹⁷ PFAHL-TRAUGHER, Armin. 1997. Hitlers selbsternannte Erben. Die Neonazi-Szene. Zur Entwicklung einer rechtsextremistischen Subkultur. Texte zur Inneren Sicherheit, Vol. 1, No. 1, 81-106.

¹⁸ Two members of the group (from non-military milieu) were sentenced in 1979 due to theft explosions with the goal to attack the office of the West German Communist Union. One of these perpetrators had also the intention to liberate Rudolf Hess from the prison in Berlin-Spandau. He stole 670 grams of sodium cyanide in 1997 and he had a plan to poison the prison guards. Both plans were not realized. MAEGERLE, Anton - Röpke, Andrea - SPEIT, Andreas. 2013. Der Terror von Rechts 1945 bis 1990. In: Röpke, Andrea - SPEIT, Andreas (ed.): Blut und Ehre. Geschichte und Gegenwart rechter Gewalt in Deutschland. Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 23-60.

¹⁹ HERB, Hartmut. 1980. Neonazismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und staatliche Reaktionen. Wiesbaden: Verlag das Junge Wort, 41-42.

²⁰ HUSELL, Kaj. 2006. Rechtsextremismus und männliche Homosexualität seit Beginn der achtziger Jahre. In: KLONINGER, Herbert (ed.): Aktuelle Aspekte des Rechtsextremismus: Internationalität, Paradigmenwechsel, Jugend- und Kampagnenarbeit, Homosexualität. Brühl / Rheinland: Fachhochschule des Bundes für öffentliche Verwaltung, Fachbereich Öffentliche Sicherheit, 241-273.

example of participation of conscripts in violent extremism. Two of eighteen perpetrators served in the Czech army at the time of judgement in 2002.²¹

As mentioned in the conceptual part of this paper, professional armies are also vulnerable to radicalization and extremism. Previous engagement in extremist scenes was characteristic of several cases in East Central Europe. A very specific case is the engagement of Istvan Csontos, a member of the Hungarian killer group, which murdered six Roma people in 2008-2009. He was a former soldier of the Hungarian army, inter alia, he served two years in Kosovo, and allegedly worked as an informant of the military intelligence.²² In the Czech Republic, professional soldier Lukáš Sedláček participated in the training of the militant neo-Nazi group White Justice and he was expelled due to this fact from the army in 2009²³ (however, during the process with the main part of the group he was only a witness²⁴). Historical criminal violent extremist organizations or contemporary terrorist groups were propagated by professional soldiers.²⁵

As follows from the above-mentioned facts, the Western German army has a tradition of right-wing extremist radicalization connected with the armed forces at least since 1970s. A wave of such events came also in East Central Europe after the fall of communism. It is difficult to identify a specific and clear legacy of radicalization in the Central European area. It seems better to focus on a stable and continuous presence of various cases. Radicalization towards violent right-wing extremism dominated in first two decades after the fall of communism in Central Europe.²⁶ It reflected the development of radicalization and extremism in the whole society. Many young men in these countries solved their frustrations (from real or imaginary problems) and fell into the racist militant milieu. On the other hand, the democratization of the armed forces in East Central Europe can be seen as a specific process of de-radicalization of former communist sol-

²¹ OKRESNÍ SOUD V ČESKÝCH BUĎĚJOVICÍCH. 2002. Rozsudek č. j. 27T 74/2000 – 3094.

²² VÁGVÖLGYI, András B. 2014. Diskopartisanen Eine Serie von Terroranschlägen und die Rolle von Justizwesen, Gesellschaft und Medien in Ungarn. Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, library.fes.de/pdf-files/dialog/10958.pdf

²³ HYMPL, Josef. 2012. Teroristé, nebo diletanti? White Justice míří před soud. Týden, https://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/domaci/teroriste-nebo-diletanti-white-justice-miri-pred-soud_228386.html

²⁴ KRAJSKÝ SOUD V ČESKÝCH BUĎĚJOVICÍCH – POBOČKA V TÁBOŘE. 2012. Rozsudek 14 To 49/2012 -5217

²⁵ For example, two Czech soldiers used symbols of SS divisions on their helmets in Afghanistan in 2009. NEČEJ, Elemír - STOJAR, Richard. 2013. Extremism vs. Armed Forces and Military Veterans in Slovakia and Czech Republic. Bratislava: Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs, 38. Slovak soldier wore T-Shirt with symbols of the terrorist group Combat 18 as a spectator at a football match. OKRESNÝ SÚD PREŠOV. 2011. 6Tv 1/11-226.

²⁶ As a possible case of separatist extremism, we can mention the failed bomb attack in Kolín in 1992 in connection with the activities of the Slovak Liberation Army (SOA) at that time. However, there is no clear evidence of such a background. The attack aimed at the authors of the book "The Slovak Airmen 1939-1945" due to alleged defamation of the Slovak history. One of suspicions was related to Slovak soldiers in Kolín barracks, however, the real perpetrator was never found. The bomb fortunately did not explode. MAREŠ, Miroslav. The Radicalisation of Slovak Separatism after the Fall of Communism and its Impact on Czech-Slovak Relations. In CORDELL, Karl - JAJECZNIK, Konrad: The Transformation of Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe. Ideas and Structures. Warsaw: University of Warsaw. Faculty of Journalism and Political Science, 2015. pp. 155-170.

diers, who expressed their preparedness to fight against anti-communists (or at least their disengagement in cases of dismissed “hard-line” communists from the army).

3 CONTEMPORARY TRENDS OF RADICALIZATION IN THE ARMED FORCES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND GERMANY IN THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Contemporary situation in East Central Europe is characterized by deep changes in the security environment with an impact on the extremist scene as well as on the armed forces. Mostly, the consequences of long term migration and the topic of migration crisis play a role in the Western part of Central Europe, while migration crisis and new Russian hybrid campaigns in Eastern Europe can cause a new wave of radicalization.

It is important to mention that the problem of violent extremism in the armies is higher in Germany and Austria than in Eastern European countries. However, comparable data are available only from Germany and the Czech Republic. According to sources of the German Ministry of Defence based on the data of the German Military Counterintelligence, between 2010 and 2017, 113 cases of extremism in the Bundeswehr were reported.²⁷ In the Czech Republic, in the same time period 22 cases of criminal behaviour with extremist background were reported, most of them (13 cases) in 2011 and 2012 as a result of growing interest in these issues after scandals from the end of the 2000s.²⁸ In both countries, all cases of extremism - non-violent and violent - are reported together. In Germany, there were 89 cases from the field of right-wing extremism and 24 from the field of Islamist extremism. In the Czech Republic, the majority of cases came from the right-wing extremist milieu, however, two cases are connected with provocative Islamist propaganda in discussions at military web-sites and one case with provocative non-violent behaviour of one professional soldier (however, this case cannot be clearly labelled as “Islamic extremism”).²⁹

In Germany and the Czech Republic, the term “extremism” is used in official documents, not in the law (in contrast to Slovakia, where it is included in the penal code in

²⁷ DIE WELT. 2018. 89 Rechtsextreme und 24 Islamisten in Bundeswehr aufgefliegen, <https://bit.ly/2vJTGta>

²⁸ MINISTERSTVO VNITRA ČR. 2017. Výroční zpráva o extremismu a koncepcie boje proti extremismu, <https://bit.ly/2LXyC6P>

²⁹ The case was described in the governmental report on extremism: “professional soldier verbally assaulted police officers and repeatedly called out ‘Allah Akbar’ and ‘Islamic State’ and manifested sympathies for the given radical Islamic group during his escort to the local department of the Police of the Czech Republic following his detention for a disorderly conduct of in the city of Albrechtice on the night of 30 to 31 May. The Police of the Czech Republic, therefore, initiated criminal proceedings for reasonable suspicion of having committed an offence of expression of sympathy towards a movement aimed at suppressing human rights and freedoms. The aforementioned soldier was released from the service on 31st October 2015”. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. 2016. Report on Extremism in the territory of the Czech Republic in 2015. Praha: MVČR, 32

the set of specific criminal offences³⁰). In both of these countries, the term is defined - in a simplified way - as an anti-thesis of a democratic constitutional state.³¹ Crimes with extremist background are a sum of all crimes (various criminal offences) committed with extremist motivation. Radicalization is also not a legal term. However, the radicalization process in the armed forces can be observed by military intelligence services as a threat based on norms regulating this field, in particular Act No. 153/1994 Coll., on Intelligence Services of the Czech Republic (mostly §5(3b) - collecting information on "intentions and activities against securing the defence of the Czech Republic"³²) and §1(1) of the Act on the Military Counterintelligence Service in Germany (collection and evaluation of information about "activities aiming against the free democratic order of the Federal Republic of Germany, against the state or security of the federal union or the state"³³).

The recent topical German case of alleged right-wing extremist radicalization is connected with the activity of the Bundeswehr first lieutenant Franco A. (born 1989). He was originally suspected of planning a terrorist attack, probably under a "false flag", however, this suspicion was not confirmed. He was arrested on 3 February 2017 at the Vienna-Schwechat airport due to his attempt to hide his pistol. Between April and November 2017, he was in custody. His case has not been definitely decided by the court until the submission of this paper, however, in June 2018 the most serious charges were rejected by the Supreme Court (OLH) in Frankfurt. The original accusation against Franco A. included planning terrorist acts against the German Minister of Justice Heiko Maas, Vice-President of the German Bundestag Claudia Roth from the Green party and human right activists. This case was extraordinary due to the fact that Franco A. started an asylum process in Germany under a false identity of a Syrian Christian refugee in 2016. He played this role successfully for several months (despite the fact that he does not speak Arabian). However, the OLH stated that there is no clear evidence that Franco A. really had had the intention to commit the above-mentioned attacks. He is further prosecuted only due to delicts related to the possession of weapons.³⁴ According to German official sources, he was not part of a broader network. This case caused huge media and political interest regarding extremism in the armed forces.³⁵

³⁰ § 140a of Act No. 300/2005 Coll., Criminal Act.

³¹ SCHMID, Ina. 2017. Analysing the Strategy to Counter Extremism of the Federal Government of Germany. *Rexter*, vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 1-15. https://web.archive.org/web/20180422105834/http://casopis.rexter.cz/rexter_01_2017.pdf#page=4; VEGRICHTOVÁ, Barbora. 2013. *Extremismus a společnost*. Plzeň: Aleš Čeněk.

³² Act No.153/1994 Coll. intelligence services of the Czech Republic.

³³ MAD-Gesetz vom 20. Dezember 1990 (BGBl. I S. 2954, 2977), das zuletzt durch Artikel 3 des Gesetzes vom 30. Juni 2017 (BGBl. I S. 2097) geändert worden ist.

³⁴ OLG Frankfurt am Main. 2018. Strafverfahren gegen Franco A. wird vor dem Landgericht Darmstadt eröffnet, <https://bit.ly/2xRc8NT>

³⁵ DEUTSCHER BUNDESTAG. 2018. Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Rüdiger Lucassen, Jan Ralf Nolte, Berengar Elsner von Gronow, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der AfD - Drucksache 19/739 - Erkenntnisse und Neubewertung durch die Bundesregierung im Fall des Oberleutnants Franco A., <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/010/1901013.pdf>

The cases of radicalization of recent or former Muslim soldiers seem to be a new challenge for the German and Austrian armies. Preventive programs aimed at religious tolerance were adopted.³⁶ However, the topical case from Austria shows their limits. On 11 March 2018, 26-year-old Austrian Islamist Mohammed E. (with family roots in Egypt) stabbed an Austrian soldier who guarded the Iranian embassy in Vienna. The soldier survived thanks to the protection vest and shot the attacker, who died. In 2012, Mohammed E. served in an elite ceremonial unit of the Austrian president and he used benefits of pro-Muslim programs. Despite this fact, he became more radical.³⁷

In the Central European area, the issue of Muslim soldiers is not a relevant topic. Paramilitary groupings organized by the right-wing extremist spectrum or by ideologically not clearly fixed pro-Kremlin groups pose a more serious challenge. They try to establish connection to the military and state security sphere. Some of them are closely linked to former soldiers.³⁸ Actual cases of radicalization of professional soldiers towards violent extremism associated with the activities of these groups are not known now, however, a threat of their possible impact on some soldiers should be not underestimated.³⁹ These groups can turn violent in various crisis situations, including the so-called hybrid war.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTERING RADICALIZATION IN THE ARMED FORCES

As the previous cases of the development and the recent situation of radicalization in the armed forces in Central Europe show, this issue should be taken carefully into account by policy-makers, military commanders and scholars. However, avoiding “alarmism” is a necessary condition for successful de-radicalization policy. In connection with individual cases of radicalization or extremism defaming the military forces as a whole should be avoided. Waiting for final results of investigation is an important part of planning further steps against radicalization (such as in the medialized case of Franco A.).

Prevention is a basic instrument against radicalization and preventive programs have been implemented in Central European armies. The Czech Ministry of Defence published

³⁶ KAMMEL, Arnold. 2015. Mitigating religious extremism in the Austrian armed forces the case of Muslim integration. In POTOČNÁK, Adam - VICENOVÁ, Radka (ed.): *Radicals in Uniforms: Case studies of Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Slovakia*. Bratislava: Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs, 10-27.

³⁷ KLEINE ZEITUNG. 2018. Messer-Angreifer sympathisierte mit politischem Islam, <https://bit.ly/2Og7dcY>

³⁸ LIEDERKERKE, Arthur de. 2016. The Paramilitary Phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe. *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 25-34.

³⁹ POTOČNÁK, Adam - VICENOVÁ, Radka. 2015. Introduction. In: POTOČNÁK, Adam - VICENOVÁ, Radka (ed.): *Radicals in Uniforms: Case studies of Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Slovakia*. Bratislava: Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs, pp. 6-7.

even a guideline against extremism in 2011.⁴⁰ Military intelligence and military police monitor the situation (in Poland, intelligence services report the situation in Sejm, for example⁴¹). Inter-agency cooperation (including cooperation between military and civilian bodies) is an important element of successful countering of extremism and radicalization. The harmonization of terminology and data collection and comparison seems to be a challenge at the international level.

It is important to focus on real extremism and real dangerous phenomena (not on unclear tattoos, for example⁴²). The border-line between patriotism (which is generally a welcomed part of soldier's identity) and intolerant nationalism (which can be the first step to right-wing or ethnic extremism) or between legitimate deep religious conviction and religious intolerance should be clearly defined and respected, despite the fact that some media or NGO activists can define this line more restrictively.

A flexible reaction of repressive as well as preventive institutions and actors is required. It means, that in sensitive situations (political crisis, media attacks, serious crimes with impact on broader public, etc.), special measures should be adopted (discussions with soldiers about topical issues, ad hoc communication with media and politics, special programs, etc.). Intensive work with military veterans seems to be a serious challenge for the future. It is also important to keep in mind that extremism and radicalization can be restricted in the whole society as well as in the army, however, not completely eliminated. Continuous countering of radicalization is necessary.

CONCLUSION

Radicalization in the armed forces is a result of an interaction between the societal and military spheres. In individual cases and in specific situations, soldiers can be influenced by extremist ideologies and behaviour. Radicalization to violent extremism is relatively rare in modern era in Central European armed forces, however, individual cases are also concern of responsible institutions. Islamism in the Western part and para-militarism in the Eastern part of Central Europe are topical issues for counter-radicalization efforts. Central European security systems continuously develop counter-extremist and counter-radicalization measures. An improvement of communication with media and policy makers on the one hand and with soldiers about sensitive issues on the other hand is a challenge for the future military policy in Central Europe.

⁴⁰ MAREŠ, Miroslav - SVOBODA, Ivo - STEHLÍK, Eduard. 2011. Extremismus jako bezpečnostní hrozba. Praha: Ministerstvo obrany České republiky, Odbor komunikace a propagace

⁴¹ Głównzewski, Aleksander. 2017. Opióła: Służby przedstawiły sejmowej komisji informacje o zagrożeniach ekstremistycznych. Gazeta Prawna, <https://bit.ly/2ORzFme>

⁴² SMOLÍK, Josef. 2010. Armáda České republiky a extremistická symbolika - kontext a konsekvence. Obrana a strategie, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 101-107.

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