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THESES

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PATTERNS OF RADICALISATION WITHIN JIHADI SALAFISM

IN WESTERN EUROPE 2014-2020

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SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM

Jihadist-inspired radicalisation in Europe has been on the agenda since the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005. It was then that it became apparent to politicians and law enforcement that the Islamist-motivated threat no longer came from distant lands, but took on a concrete form in the person of people who had lived in Europe for years and in some cases for generations.[1] The process of radicalisation has grown into a separate area of research, and many researchers have sought to find an appropriate answer to the question of why some adults in Europe are susceptible to the use of radical Islamist ideology – and violence in their name. As discussed in the subsequent chapters, research has sought to explain the growing phenomenon from a variety of disciplines, using different conceptual models and theories explaining how an interplay between factors on different levels may eventually lead to acts of terrorism, but also as a phenomenon adversely affecting social cohesion, as the acquisition of an extreme worldview also may lead to a kind of "intolerant isolation" among certain immigrant groups.[2] Part of this isolation is, at an ideological level, a move away from Western democratic values and human rights, which also makes social integration significantly more difficult. Studies have discussed the combination of an almost institutionalised lack of belonging, the search for lofty goals, and a subjective interpretation of individual religious obligations, while others claim that individual traumas and grievances, feelings of perceived or actual discrimination, and inadequacy of personal conflict management mechanisms may be contributing factors to the radicalisation process. Analysing these explanatory factors as presented in the most frequently used conceptual models of radicalisation, it is my aim to explore how they convey the role of religion, and it is my endeavour to demonstrate how many of the explanatory factors and root causes presented in these models in fact are very much linked to religion through the narrative of militant Islamist organisations.

When it comes to Europe and what is often referred to as the "Western" part of the world (including for instance the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), there is no lack of empirical data demonstrating the role of the (mostly Sunni Muslim) immigrant background in relation to radicalisation into Salafi Jihadism. The supply in terms of radicalisation and

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[1] VELDHUIS, Tinka – STAUN, Jørgen (2009): *Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model*. Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague, Netherlands. Available at: https://www.diis.dk/files/media/publications/import/islamist_radicalisation.veldhuis_and_staun.pdf (accessed on 7 September 2016), p. 1.

[2] AIVD (2008a): Annual Report 2008. The Hague. Available at: https://english.aivd.nl/publications/annual-report/2009/05/25/annual-report-2008 (accessed on 7 September 2016), p. 85

recruitment is continuous; Europol (based on the information received from the Member States) regularly confirms that recruitment of militant Islamist groups among Muslim immigrants in Western countries is an on-going issue.[3] In recent years, a number of studies and research have sought to answer the question of why the ideology and creed of radical Islamism may be attractive to individuals born, grown, and socialised in Europe. In this context, I seek to explore characteristics of the second and third generation of (Muslim) immigrants as well as (in line with the aspects of the underlying ideology) to explore correlation between potential vulnerabilities within this target group and elements of the extremist narrative exploiting these. In this regard, I wish to explore the question of religious identity as a potential barrier to integration as well as a potential (but not necessary) factor impacting the process of radicalisation. Continuing along the line of identity-related issues, I wish to examine the correlation between social identity (i.e., the knowledge that a person is a member of a particular social group together with the emotional and value importance of this group membership) and violent extremism within the context of jihadist-inspired radicalisation.

An ideological movement within Sunni Islam that has grown in significance for scholars and those responsible for formulating anti-terrorism and anti-radicalisation policies is Salafism. Both the so-called Islamic State and al-Qaeda can be characterised as global jihadist ideological movements with roots in Salafism, accompanied by local and regional idiosyncrasies. Research has suggested that there is evidence on one hand for (Western) attacks and civil suffering in the Middle East serving as individual motivational factors in selecting Western targets.[4] Hence, in this regard I am to explore the ideology behind the jihadist-inspired terrorism, including the narrative element of how the West has subjugated and humiliated the Muslim world throughout history.[5] Understanding this literalist activist Salafi view of Sunni Islam – and the justifications of indiscriminate violence against civilians – is essential for dealing with the contemporary jihadist threat. This part also relates to the question of social identity referred to previously and becomes important when violence is committed with reference to the perceived grievances of a group that may very well be geographically distant.

Researching radicalisation is an interdisciplinary field. Numerous theories and models that purport to explain terrorism have been developed by various disciplines and sub-disciplines,

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[3] Eg. EUROPOL (2018): Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018, pp. 5-8.
[4] See for instance the pschological theory of humiliation hypothesised as a driver of terrorist violence by JUERGENSMEYER, Mark (2000): *Terror in the mind of God. Global rise of religious violence.* Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press.
[5] BESENYŐ, János *et al* (2016): *Terrorizmus 2.0 - Az Iszlám Állam.* Budapest, Kossuth Kiadó, pp. 101, 51.

mostly in the social sciences. Undoubtedly, every academic discipline could possess crucial components of the analytical jigsaw, making a significant contribution to the comprehensive comprehension of the "nature" of terrorism and violent extremism. Theoretical frameworks that concentrate on rational choice or cost-benefit analyses, power dynamics or balance of power, economic utility, organisational concerns, community strain, ideological affiliation, individual psychology, and other topics may, depending on the situation, highlight significant facets of violent extremism and terrorism. Agreeing with all this, I find it relevant to explore the usefulness a dynamic, nonlinear model of radicalisation as a synthesis of the different theories presented, which seeks to explore religion as a component interconnecting other underlying factors and key elements in the radicalisation process.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In my dissertation I wish to explore the radicalisation process leading to acts of jihadist-inspired violence in the European Union, focusing on the countries most affected by the phenomenon and in the target group most affected by the phenomenon. With a benchmark in collecting, analysing, and systemising existing national and international literature related to violent radicalisation among second and third generation Muslim immigrants in Europe, as well as with a case study of my own, present thesis aims to:

1. To examine how conceptual models of radicalisation convey the role of religion;

2. To explore the correlation between religion, group identity, masculinities and violence in the context of radicalisation and jihadi Salafism;

3. To – based on the two former aims – examine the radicalisation process of the perpetrators of completed jihadist-inspired attacks and foreign terrorist fighters in Europe between 2014-2020 through process-tracing to explore the religious component;

4. To explore the question of religious identity as a factor relevant to violent radicalisation in relation to second and third generation Muslims immigrants in Western Europe;

5. To investigate why second and third generations of Muslim immigrants in Europe are actively targeted by militant Islamist organisations and why the narrative of these organisations might resonate within this particular group;

6. To present a concrete case study examining questions on religious identity and self-identification among adolescent immigrants, where, in the course of this analysis I will argue for the importance on including the question of religious identity as a potential contributing factor in the radicalisation process.

Based on the findings, present research also aims to suggest policy responses in line with the problematisation above, especially considering the role of the Hungarian Armed Forces in multinational operations in third countries where members of the Force may encounter persons susceptible to violent radicalisation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In terms of the jihadist-radicalisation of persons in Western Europe between the years 2014 and 2020, this dissertation seeks to answer following three questions:

1. What are the most relevant social, religious, and psychological factors according to current state of research in the radicalisation process of the Western European recruits of jihadi Salafism?

2. How do these factors interplay and form a mosaic of radical identities and in what way is the question of religion and identity interrelated to these factors?

3. Why are second and third generation young Muslims targets of jihadi Salafist radicalisation and recruitment?

The first question examines the process of violent radicalisation process within the jihadist context from a comprehensive approach, while and the second and third questions are answered mainly through the analysis of case studies. The chapter on methodology will detail the approach taken to address each question.

HYPOTHESES

My hypotheses are as follows:

H1:   The question of why certain individuals engage in jihadist-related activities, particularly young people, cannot be answered through monocausal explanatory theories, but rather through a dynamic model illustrating how these factors, which are all important, can be managed in relation to each other. The mosaic theory, as a synthesis of existing conceptual models of radicalisation, presents a complementing model to interpret the radicalisation process, in which identity – both as a religious and as a social construction – is the factor interconnecting all other underlying root causes.

H2:   Second and third generations of young Muslims constitute and will continue to constitute a preferred target group for radicalisation and recruitment to jihadi Salafist organisations due to underlying factors on both individual and group levels, whereby the question of religious identity as a form of self-isolation must be considered.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The thesis focuses on cases of radicalisation into jihadi Salafism in the most affected Western European states during the period between 2014 and 2020, which correlates with the rise and fall of the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. It begins by placing the topic within the wider framework of terrorism and asymmetric warfare research, including the closely related area of political violence. Moving from the overall framework to the more specific theoretical foundation, the research seeks to explore conceptual frameworks of violent radicalisation, including experiences from social psychology, social network theory and radicalisation and terrorism research in general. Considering the specific nature of jihadi Salafism, the underlying ideology is examined in depth for the sake of broadening the understanding of how the theories above might resonate with a powerful narrative that is seemingly responding to factors on the individual level. When collecting, analysing, and systematising literature I used sources in English, Hungarian, German, French and Swedish.

After having explored the theoretical framework, present work aims to move from the deductive level to the individual level by presenting three case studies and by the method of comparison seek commonalities and differences in the radicalisation processes analysed. The aim of the case studies is further to apply a selected conceptual model on the individual cases, and, by analysing a number of profiles of jihadist-inspired terrorism in Europe between 2014 and 2020 along with the background of persons known as foreign terrorist fighters (in this context: persons who travelled from Europe to conflict zones with the purpose of joining militant Islamist organisations), seek to complement existing theories with a synthesis on my own. The profiles included in this part are examined through the method of process-tracing, and where selected not only because the large-scale attack they committed, but also due to the vast number of reliable sources related to their personal backgrounds, which gives a satisfactory (although not perfect) insight in their radicalisation processes. Process tracing is a qualitative research method in which particular events, processes, or phenomena are tracked across time to see how they grow and progress, hence, when evaluating patterns of radicalisation, process tracing is a useful methodological tool. This method allows researchers to investigate causal linkages between different elements that contribute to radicalisation, and it may offer a complex and situation-specific explanation of radicalisation. Nevertheless, its use is contingent upon the research setting, goals, and data accessibility. As process tracing relies heavily on interpretation, the analysis may be influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher. Hence, preventing bias and upholding process integrity were crucial points throughout my research. Further, the efficacy of process tracing is dependent on the availability of pertinent data, which might be scarce, especially when researching delicate subjects like radicalisation. Because the radicalisation process is intricate and multidimensional, it can be difficult to properly identify and track down all pertinent aspects and circumstances.

Narrowing down the subject matter further, present research singles out the question of religious identity as a crucial factor within the process of radicalisation among second generation (Muslim) immigrants. To this end, the study uses structured, in-depth interviews conducted with 34 adolescents of immigrant background in Austria, one of the Member States of the European Union most heavily affected by the phenomenon of jihadist-inspired violent radicalisation. The purpose of the study was to seek to explore the question of religious identity as a potential barrier to integration among a target group of significance for the dissertation (the second generation of immigrants).

Regarding the methodological limits it needs to be noted that higher level qualitative scholarship in the social and human sciences necessitates competent interaction with primary sources, including the actual research subjects. The primary research subject of this research would be the persons behind jihadist-inspired terrorist attacks in Western Europe as well as the foreign terrorist fighters analysed, but who – for obvious reasons – could not be approached. Even with this obvious obstacle, still holding that original knowledge and insight can only be produced by engagement with primary sources, I sought to mitigate this methodological difficulty by engaging with a different type of primary sources also relevant for the context of radicalisation (detailed below). Hence, other parts of my research rely on secondary or tertiary sources, which synthesises preexisting knowledge and which – complemented with a theory of my own – are applied and tested on the profiles behind jihadist-inspired acts of terror.

Another important obstacle to bear in mind regarding the analysis of jihadist-inspired radicalisation is the limits of information retrieved through open sources, including the question of reliability of the sources and the issue of bias related to certain publications either overestimating or underestimating the phenomenon. I have sought to mitigate this obstacle using several independent sources for each and every one of the profiles examined as part of the fact-checking and – where possible – to verify the information obtained with the help of academic scholarship related to each case.

When preparing the interviews in the case study, I sought to map out the potential limits and pitfalls of the method chosen and mitigate these shortcomings in advance. Being aware of how social desirability bias can cause interviewees to give responses that are more likely to be accepted by others than their genuine feelings or thoughts, result in missing or erroneous data, or how the interviewer's communication style may have an effect on the interviewee, I sought to avoid errors such as the above described through meticulously planning the questions for the structured interviews one-on-one well in advance, and to frame them in a way that would not impact the willingness of the interviewee to share his or her thoughts and experiences.

SUMMARY OF THE ANALYTICAL CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 seeks to elaborate on the conceptualisation of radicalisation by placing the issue in a wider theoretical framework; firstly, within the wider context of terrorism and asymmetric warfare relevant to understand the *modus operandi* used in contemporary jihadist attacks on European soil and, secondly within the frame of political violence, to explore the relationship

between the individual and his ingroup as well as correlation between the individual's use of violence and the group in whose name the violence is committed. The case of foreign terrorist fighters will be discussed in this chapter as well as part of the framework related to terrorism, to highlight that this phenomenon is very much linked to my research topic, namely radicalisation leading to acts of terrorism.

Chapter 2 aims to describe the process of violent radicalisation in the context of jihadi Salafism from a multidisciplinary angle, presenting several conceptual models to describe different phases of the radicalisation process. To give a holistic description, the chapter also contains a literature review on models seeking to explore the interplay between factors of radicalisation on different levels (micro, meso and macro), structural factors and trigger events. Beyond describing the most frequently used conceptual models; this chapter seeks to explore how these models comvey the religious component in the radicalisation process. Although the socio-economic predictors of violent extremism are not a primary focus of the current dissertation, a summary of this literature is nonetheless important due to the fact that these reasons have frequently been cited by scholars in the past.

Chapter 3 contains a description of psychological factors on the level of the individual relevant to the process of violent radicalisation, thereby focusing especially on the theory of social group identity and the theory of masculinity in the context of extremism. Here it is important to note that although it has become more widely acknowledged that the construction of masculinity may play a significant role in radicalisation and violent extremism, with most violent extremists being men,[6] this dissertation did not directly take a gender perspective. However, from a psychology and societal standpoint, the overall findings of this dissertation may help to illuminate why men are more likely than women to engage in violent extremism.

Chapter 4 outlines the religious and ideological justifications through which Salafi-Jihadist organisations such as al-Qaeda and IS justify their use of violence against civilians – with an emphasis on European (and to further delimit: Christian) civilians. The sources used in this

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[6] For more information on how masculinity relates to violent extremism, see AGIUS, C. - BERGMAN ROSAMOND, A. - KINNVALL, C. (2020): Populism, ontological insecurity and gendered nationalism: Masculinity, climate denial and Covid19. *Politics, Religion, & Ideology,* 21(4), pp. 432–450 and DIER, A., & BALDWIN, G. (2022): *Masculinities and violent extremism*. United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED). International Peace Institute.

chapter are primary as well as secondary sources, the primary sources being mainly the propaganda magazines created and disseminated by IS.

Chapter 5 gives an in-depth description and analysis of some of the most recent jihadist-inspired terrorist profiles committing completed acts of terrorism in Europe between 2014 and 2020. For the sake of delimitation, the description of the perpetrators have been limited to completed attacks, hence, the persons behind foiled or failed attacks are not included. Piecing together their profiles, the information gathered is solely retrieved from open sources. The chapter attempts to map out common traits and factors significant in terms of the process towards violent radicalisation and uses process tracing to explore the religious component in particular. Some of the findings in this chapter have been published in two separate publications[7] and is especially recommended for professionals who in their daily work may encounter persons susceptible to violent radicalisation.

Chapter 6 follows the aim of the previous chapter and seeks to give an overview over the same processes of cognitive as well as behavioural radicalisation in the context of foreign terrorist fighters, along with a summary and systematisation of relevant literature dealing with the issue. While seeking to map out factors facilitating radicalisation and the decision of individuals to join terrorist organisations in conflict zones, the aim of the chapter is also to compare the findings to the previous chapter and to explore potential similarities and differences in the radicalisation process of persons who decide to commit jihadist-inspired attacks in their country of habitat and persons who leave to a remote area for similar reasons.

Chapter 7 contains a case study conducted in March 2016 investigating questions related to religious identity among second generation immigrants between 16-18 years in a public school in Vienna, Austria. Although the interviews were conducted among 34 adolescents of mixed religious background, the study is relevant for the discussion related to the second and third generation of Muslim immigrants as targets for jihadist-inspired radicalisation. Bearing this in mind, the study seeks to contribute to on-going debate on religious identity among second generation Muslim immigrants as well as to what extent and through which mechanisms religion may or may not present an obstacle to adaption to and/or integration in the host society. As a theoretical framework serving a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the second (and

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[7] HORVÁTH-SÁNTHA, Hanga (2017): Radicalisation into Salafi Jihadism – Some Patterns and Profiles in Europe between 2015-2017. *Defence Review*, Special Issue 2017/I. and HORVÁTH-SÁNTHA, Hanga (2018): Returning Forreign Terrorist Fighters, Their Wives and Children. *National Security Review*, Issue 2, pp. 4-32.

third) generation of immigrants, a complementing literature review is presented on questions related to religious identity and identification in general – and in peculiar related to the categories mentioned above.

Chapter 8 – the final chapter – contains a summary of the findings above and lists the conclusions and recommendations based on these, along with the new scientific results.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Through the above, I have sought to explore both the conceptual as well as theoretical frameworks addressing the question of why certain people, particularly young people, engage in jihadist-related activities. With the help of this systematic review of mainly international sources, I have found that the phenomenon cannot be answered through monocausal explanatory theories, but rather through a dynamic model illustrating how the underlying factors of radicalisation can be managed comprehensively and dynamically in relation to each other. The analysis of the profiles of jihadist-inspired terrorists shows that a variety of causes, many of which are intricately linked, can give rise to radicalisation. This intricacy, however, is often lost in divisive public discussions that either attribute all acts of terrorism to government policy, socio-economic marginalisation and/or feelings of discrimination or attribute all acts of terrorism to passages from Islamic religion.

Having tried above to define radicalisation and lay out conceptual models of violent radicalisation, I have analysed the theoretical foundations of intrinsic causal factors related to – among others – psychological propensities. As discussed in the analysis above, conceptual models of radicalisation building on an orderly sequence of events towards radicalisation may be misleading, I argue for the need of a complementing theory, in which radicalisation rather resembles a dynamic mosaic, in which key elements and additional elements may be identified, but where religious identity as well as social identity serve as an explanation of the interconnectedness of variables related to factors explored within the context of jihadist-inspired radicalisation (such as messages of grievances towards vulnerable audiences, forming relationships with like-minded people, exposure to extremist ideology, and a sense of belonging to a discriminated and oppressed group). By analysing the potential pathways to radicalisation of jihadist-inspired perpetrators over a period of 7 years, including foreign terrorist fighters from several EU Member States, with the help of process-tracing, I have shown that the reasons

of radicalisation are more similar to dynamic forces of interaction, rather than static, unchanging components that invariably produce the same result.

Process tracing allowed me to find several commonalities, firstly that the radicalisation of an individual is the result of a synergetic relationship with the immediate environment. Therefore, I believe that no significant analysis can be made without considering the person and the larger context in which he or she lives and acts. Although most studies on conflict drivers and/or radicalisation reasons use this type of cumulative inquiry, there is still a difference in emphasis. This is also underlined by the fact that neither the literature review nor the models presented above show that any single factor can be said to be the sole causal factor of the radicalisation process.

Hence, as a synthesis of existing conceptual models of radicalisation, I have suggested radicalisation to be interpreted as a mosaic, building on the need for a dynamic model to develop behavioural patterns reliable to predict violent action, focusing on the connectivity between the factors not on a linear and a sequential basis, but rather on a nonlinear basis, where one event does not necessarily or clearly follow another. The analysis of the background of the terrorists behind jihadist-inspired attacks between 2015 and 2020 and foreign terrorist fighters during the same period also supports this hypothesis regarding the dynamic model focusing on the interaction between the different factors rather than one a line of sequences in the radicalisation process. I have argued that religion and identity constitute the components responsible for interconnecting the other individual root causes.

Regarding the second hypothesis, I firstly demonstrated how and why second and third generations of young Muslims constitute and will continue to constitute a preferred target group for radicalisation and recruitment to jihadi Salafist organisations due to underlying factors on both individual and group levels. Also, examining the background of jihadist-inspired terrorists, foreign terrorist fighters as well as young adolescents of immigrant background in Europe also gave support to the importance of the background as second and third generation (Sunni) Muslims. Secondly, by reviewing the history of contemporary Muslims immigrants in (Western) Europe and examining the characteristics of the different generations in terms of attitudes towards the host society, religiosity and self-identification, as well as analysing psychological factors and group-level factors specific to these groups relevant in the context of radicalisation, I have revealed important indicators to why certain members of these groups may be particularly susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment attempts. Thirdly, I have

proven why a focus on members of these particular groups is of pivotal importance, as militant Islamist/jihadi Salafist terrorist organisations have over the past decade actively targeted these very groups with their propaganda and recruitment. To this end, I have presented a thorough analysis of the underlying jihadi Salafist ideology as well as the narrative used in the propaganda of the so-called Islamic State aiming to resonate among members of Muslim diaspora communities based on the factors on individual and group levels mentioned above. I have shown in my analysis how the jihadi Salafi narrative interprets current world political events (e.g., the Iraq war, the war in Afghanistan, the Libyan intervention, the Syrian war) as a continuation of this ongoing subjugation, making it therefore the individual duty of every faithful Muslim, regardless of geography, to fight for Islam.[8] As examples of this interpretation, militant Islamist narrative often highlight policies to curb and tighten immigration in Europe aimed at reinforcing feelings of discrimination and dissatisfaction among Muslims in the West so that they can recruit more successfully.[9] The importance of the real or perceived experience of personal discrimination on ethnic or religious grounds as a contributing factor to violent radicalisation has also been demonstrated through several of the cases analysed above.[10]

To further explore the question of religious identity within the context of radicalisation as a potential psychological factor of importance, I conducted a case study examining the sense of belonging and religious identification among 34 adolescent immigrants in an immigrant-majority suburb of Vienna, Austria, in which I sought to explore how religious identity serves as an active (and influential) component of identity, and if or how this may or may not be considered as a barrier to integration. I found the results presented in the case study to be consistent with similar studies, regardless of the time (sometimes up to almost two decades) period between the different studies and the countries included, meaning that the question of a religious identity as a contributing factor to voluntary separation from the norms of the society at large remains an existing issue – even decades after the first studies related to the subject where conducted. The fact that these issues are here to stay is moreover illustrated by the demographic dynamics of the Muslim communities in Europe, implying that – compared to the

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[8] See for instance the arguments presented by Pape claiming that Islamic extremism results from the experience of direct exposure to Western-led military interventions/occupation/drone attacks and foreign policies in Muslim countries. PAPE, R. A. (2006): Suicide terrorism and democracy: What we've learned since 9/11. Policy Analysis, 2006 November, pp. 1–18.

[9] As examined under Chapter 4 discussing the underlying ideology.

[10] See for instance the scientific results presented by Lyons-Padilla, who found that marginalisation and discrimination may lead to feelings of insignificance, which became stronger with the experience of more discrimination and would, in turn, predict an attraction to fundamentalist groups and their extreme behavior.

native populations – these groups will continue to grow exponentially. Moreover, through the case study as well as the in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the second and third generation of Muslim immigrants in Western Europe, I found support for my hypothesis that within the context of jihadist-inspired radicalisation the question of religion and identity are significant, especially if they are considered as opposing to the loyalty towards the state. The systematic analysis of pathways towards violent radicalisation in the case studies regarding the profiles of jihadist terrorist and foreign terrorist fighters also confirmed that identity and religion may be – and has been - largely exploited by charismatic leaders in order to radicalise and recruit new members for the cause. This underlines that this particular target group is and will most probably remain subjected to radicalisation and recruitment by militant Islamists. Raising awareness on questions related to religious identity among second (and third) generation Muslim immigrants as well as to what extent and through which mechanisms religion may or may not present an obstacle to adaption to and/or integration in the host society may help to increase the understanding of certain risk factors of violent radicalisation.

NEW SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

Through the above findings I have:

1. Systematised the theoretical framework of violent radicalisation in the field of jihadi Salafism focusing on conceptual models, complementing it with relevant (but in some cases potentially overlooked) sociological as well as psychological theories, and, based on process tracing analysis of over 20 terrorist profiles acting in Western Europe between 2014 and 2020 suggested an own model synthetising previous theories, emphasising the nature of radicalisation as a nonlinear dynamic mosaic, with no necessary hierarchy between the different components and where the sequences or steps in the radicalisations process may not come orderly but where the interplay of different components might indicate the occurrence of violent action.

2. With the help of a thorough analysis of factors on different levels (micro, meso and macro) as well as an in-depth description of the underlying ideology of jihadi Salafism found significant support for why the religious component of the radicalisation process in this context should not to be neglected.

3. Explored social identity theory in the context of contemporary radicalisation, and by applying it in the context of second and third generation immigrants in Europe and jihadi Salafist radicalisation, found support for how how identity serves as an interconnecting factor of variables related to messages of grievances towards vulnerable audiences, forming relationships with like-minded people, exposure to extremist ideology, and a sense of belonging to a discriminated and oppressed group.

4. Addressed an explored an issue important in the context of early prevention of jihadist-inspired radicalisation by conducting a case study aimed at investigating the questions of self-identification and religious identity, i.e. how religious identity is shaped by social factors among a group of adolescent immigrants in Vienna, concluding that the perception of religious authority may serve as a barrier to integration and constitute a base of voluntary segregation, where loyalty towards the own group precedes loyalty of the state of residence.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and new scientific results, present thesis contains the following three recommendations for policymakers, stakeholders, and key actors relevant to the preventative work:

1. Violent radicalisation is a social process as well as an interplay between a variety of factors on three different levels (micro, meso and macro), hence awareness-rising measures on the indicators and early signals need to reach a wider range of actors to be efficient. This includes members of the armed forces who – through their deployment in third countries – may encounter the phenomenon of violent radicalisation.

2. When dealing with the question of militant Islamist and jihadi Salafism, an analysis of the underlying religious and ideological justification behind the attacks needs to be disseminated to a wider range of key actors relevant to prevent.

3. The question of religious identity, self-identification and how charismatic leaders (in many cases religious leaders) are using these in their radicalisation and recruitment

activities is of pivotal importance, as it is of significance for the question of integration and continued irregular migration towards Europe.

4. Exploring factors impacting the process of violent radicalisation and thereby identifying potential early signals of radicalisation contribute to raise awareness on the importance of decoding these at an early stage – something that may be of use in the context of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), civil-military coordination (CMCO) or the Hungarian defence Forces Civil-Military Cooperation and Psychological Operations Centre (HDF CMCPOC)[11].

LIST OF THE AUTHOR'S RELATED PUBLICATIONS

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[11] As of 31 December 2021 the unit is integrated in the Hungarian Defence Forces Cyber and Information Operation Center (HDF CIOC).

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