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Psychological and social aspects of terrorism menace

Psychologiczne i społeczne aspekty zagrożenia terroryzmem

W pracy scharakteryzowano działania o charakterze międzynarodowym podejmowane przez ONZ oraz UE na rzecz zapobiegania terroryzmowi oraz przeciwdziałania jego przyczynom i skutkom. Zwrócono także uwagę na złożone czynniki społeczne, ekonomiczne oraz psychologiczne sprzyjające radykalizmowi poglądów oraz uaktywnieniu struktur terrorystycznych.

Terrorism is such a serious threat that there is necessary to develop effective methods of prevention & counteraction for its reasons and results[1,2,3,4]. In year 2006 there was developed united platform of strategic, antiterrorist international cooperation named – The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It has attached a plan of action in which there is included: set of preventive actions and factors conducive to development of terrorism such as – no observance of the law for basic freedom, national, ethnic and religion discrimination, as well as bad government and lack of influence on politics. Initiation of Counter-Terrorism Strategy within the various UN institutions is assigned to special unit - Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF). One of the tasks of CTITF is to create vast discussion platform on the subject of Internet usage by terrorists, promotion of intercultural dialogue, reduction of social-economic diversities, creation of conditions favourable to development for countries and regions characterized by low economic rate. Particularly essential is counteraction to so-called radicalization, it means, such changes of attitude and behaviour of individuals and social groups, which show a danger that might go in the direction for planning, organizing and taking part in terrorist actions. Priority to this operations is given by European Union which has published a number of documents showing threats resulting from, among others, radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations, including

In this work there are characterized UN and EU international actions taken in order to prevent terrorism, its causes and results. Also, complex social, economic and psychological factors, conducive to radical views and terrorism structures, are taken into consideration.

principles on prevention for these threats. Established guidelines encompass two groups of precautionary actions: one is so-called soft measures (e.g. cultural and educationl collaboration), the second – hard measures (e.g. no distribution of contents propagating terrorism in mass media and in public).

European Union also worked out special integrative programs, in particular for youth, especially exposed to propagandist actions of extremist groups. These programs indicate on integration, intercultural and interdenominational dialogue as measures which should act counter to recruitment of terrorists. Attention was given to fact of weak immigrant's intergration, especially lack of it, what may lead to rise or radical behaviour and attitudes, and feeling of alienation can induce to search for contacts and support in extremist ideology circles. Creating the method of communication which would weaken or eliminate hindrance and allow to understand intercultural differences, also religious, should be key issue in dialogue between state and citizens, particularly immigrants [3,4]. Crucial is to put emphasis on prevention of terrorism in each EU countries, inter alia, by close international cooperation of special forces, intelligence service on various levels of political contacts. Foundation of actions preventing from extreme views (radicalisation) and terrorist recruitment is The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism)[4].

Useful methods for implementation of these intentions are action of neutralization of functioning individuals and groups linked with terrorist structures which try to recruit new people, as well as intensification of actions concerning promotion of security, justice, democracy and equality for everyone. There have been identified and defined factors which can help radicalization. We can list: weak or authoritative rule, governments which don't obey the rules of democracy, wrong implementation of reforms and modernization, political and economic crises, no perspectives for improvement of economic situation, difficult or lengthy outer and inner conflicts, cultural, educational and employment offer which is inadequate to social needs and expectations[5]. In modern, global world which allows us to move fast, exchange information, instantly transfer legal tenders, the possibility to exchange information of radical type and recruitment to terrorism groups is made a lot easier. It means that in a short period of time, terrorism groups and organisations may be equipped with essential material to propagate radical banners and theories, also be prepared to train recruited candidates. Proven methods to identify such actions connected with radicalization going towards the acts of violence are polls of social moods, permanent monitoring of Internet and comprehensive evaluation of situation in the areas of armed conflicts. People who travel to these areas should be specially supervised, as well as prisons, school and academic centers, places of prayers and religious activity and also places of residence of people suspected or allegedly influential for raising extreme attitudes and behaviour. We should also pay regard to psychological aspect of factors underlying in radicalization phenomenon and in propaganda of attitudes that justify violence and incline to accept violence as most effective method of operation.

It is believed that the source of problem lies in propaganda with the aim of presenting current conflicts and crises in order to claim that their main cause is western-civilization's drive for domination of the whole world and enslavement of other cultures, counting in islam world. Putting accent on showing a destructive character and pernicious influence on future of western society, particularly american cultural model among people from other cultures, may give rise to feeling of alienation and frustration because it is conducive to perceive oneself as a victim subjected to foreign domination

and inequitable partition of world on better and worse part.

Hostile moods created and intensified by propaganda are subject to difficult mechanisms which are known in psychology of personality and situations: a sense of threat can be easily transformed into a sense of anger and aggression through defense personality mechanisms and increased receptivity to suggestion and external manipulation [6]. In transmission and information created in centres of extreme propaganda it is emphasized that politics of western countries is duplicitous and under the cloak of democratic banners and ideas, it hides hostile contents and intentions, using double standards in international relations.

European Union's strategy to decrease indoctrination and radicalization of attitudes and recruitment of new extremists is – to establish new contacts and collaboration with these Islamic communities and organizations which, in their programs and assumptions, dissociate from distorted version of Islam propagated by radical organizations, e. g. Al-Qaida. Effectiveness of this strategy shows us interrelation between character and intensity of dialogue, starting international relations, through scientific, economic, cultural and sports contacts, ending private meeting with individualites of Muslim community. It is very crucial to enable public access to world literature and mass media which can represent moderate opinions and show harmfulness of radical views. Moreover, EU regards as necessary to intensify efforts to change perception of european and western politics by Muslim community, at the same time trying to eliminate unfair or inaccurate opinions about Islam and its believers – firstly, to eliminate conceptual and emotional associations like: islam = terrorism, abuse or use in improper context such designations as “Muslim”, “fundamentalism” or “jihad”. Term ‘jihad’ associated with terrorist attacks is considered by majority of Muslims as insulting and unfriendly because the word “jihad” is understood in their religions as a fight but a fight with inner, personal evil.

A new phenomenon in world and european terrorism in an increase of terrorist attacks made by Islamic extremists who are not formally connected with any of known terrorist organisations or any other organised group. These people use common access to the Internet, they acquaint themselves with instructions posted on the web and other sorts of propaganda materials, they train individually and radicalize opinions on their own.

Transmission of information by the Internet becomes more frequent way to get to wide circles of webusers, through centers of extremist Islam and separatistic movements. In this method, which uses modern technologies of wireless network, we can notice reason of growth of Islamic neophytes from other than Muslim countries, who are used by terrorist center to propaganda and recruitment purposes. In their native language, they create propaganda contents which justify the need for acts of terrors, they post it up on the web, in order to raise extremist's credibility and intensify radical social moods [7,8]. Islamic neophytes do not confine themselves only to radical movements – in recent years they run a number of terrorist attacks in Europe and other regions [9,10].

There is prevailing agreement that in the last year, Internet has become one of the main centers of radicalization and causes the biggest menace of radicalization for young Muslims. World wide web allows its users to feel safe as well as anonymous. Many of them, particularly beginner extremists, admit that outside the Internet they couldn't expand their activity due to fear of police, intelligence service and even friends. It is another component of set of psychological factors which determine the creation and functioning of radical attitudes and behaviours in specific circles of Muslim community. Nevertheless, it could not have been described – up to now – uniform and specific psychological-social profile of people receptive to radical banners, there have been created a scheme of the course of action of radicalization [5].

In a classic form, it consists of four phases:

1st - Initial phase (pre-radicalisation) – it is characterized by approval and interest in idea of Islamic salafi. It is noteworthy that a step aside or continuation on the path depends to a large extent on personality feature or current life situation of specific person.

2nd – Self-identification phase - relies on deepening the gained knowledge about radical ideology; searching for connections with groups and individuals well-known for their radical views. Often it links with change of lifestyle, quitting stimulant (cigarettes, alcohol) and various form of entertainment (gambling and other forms of games).

3rd – Indoctrination phase - is an advanced process of extremism: occurs when it comes to full approval and adoption of salafist ideology, especially these

principles which oblige to make compulsory actions defeding the faith threaten by western civilization. At this stage we can observe beginning of activity of people who start to operate on close and distant community, become energetically involved in propagation of their own ideology. Frequently, it happens under the wing of so-called spiritual leader.

4th – Jihadisation phase – It consist not only in full approval of radical Muslim ideology but first of all, the person believes he is a soldier at holy war, who has a duty to do. These task are often planning and execution of terrosit attack, indivudally or in collaboration with other fanatic followers of salafist ideology[9].

As you can easily notice, fundamental meaning for the initial process of radicalization and going through its next stages has the specific, individual predispostion which may be considered as inner base, conducive to acceptance and improvement the process of radicalization. Community-social factors can modify the pace of going through the next phases of radicalization: it is thought as very likely that people who completed all four phases of radicalization will take part in planning or execution of a terrorist act.

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