

**Radicals in Uniforms:**  
Case studies of Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Slovakia

Adam Potočňák, Radka Vicenová (eds.)

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**RADICALS IN UNIFORMS:**

CASE STUDIES OF AUSTRIA, CZECH REPUBLIC,  
GERMANY, POLAND AND SLOVAKIA



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Recently, growing tensions between majority population and minority groups, including immigrants and refugees, have been increasingly taking place throughout Europe. These developments are creating fertile ground not only for the increasing success of right-wing extremist parties in their effort to attract more supporters, but also in terms of increasing the risk of potential clashes between the two groups. Ultimately, the higher the frequency of such clashes, the higher the public's tolerance threshold for violent action as a legitimate strategy for dealing with social issues.

This publication is a reaction to the development on the right-wing extremist scene in the region of Central Europe, which is characterized not only by the increasing electoral support for right-wing extremist political parties, but also by the penetration of right-wing extremist ideas into the political mainstream. What's more, we are witnessing also a growing activity of so-called paramilitary groups. Such groups are eager to provide combat and military training for their members and it is not uncommon that these activities are justified by "protecting" the local residents (most often the majority population) against the minorities. More recently, immigrants became the target of extremist attacks. In cases such as in Slovak Republic, their activities remain confined to military trainings, but in other countries in the region, namely Hungary, such groups were and continue to be directly involved in violent

conflicts and clashes between the majority and minority population, mainly the Roma. Of particular importance is the issue of contacts and inter-linkages between paramilitary groups and the state security apparatus (the military, police, etc.).

These important questions remain largely under-researched. This is not because this would be a new topic, but because the issue of extremism in the armed forces tends to get overlooked. Past experience with researching the issue of extremism vis-à-vis the armed forces has shown serious complications, especially when it comes to gathering accurate data and difficult access to members of these groups as for instance respondents to a survey. This has also been an issue and the main catalyst for the research project spear-headed by the Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA). We wanted to open expert-level discussion on this important topic of extremism. This publication, which is part of this project, hopes to have contributed to this effort by putting together a comprehensive overview of the situation in five countries of the region of Central Europe: Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Slovakia.

It does not only aim to compare the main challenges among all the different countries included in facing very similar challenges, but it also has the ambition to serve as a source of inspiration for finding solutions and strategies for addressing this important issue. The publication was prepared as part of the project “*Mitigating the Radicalization of Slovak Society: Research and Shaping of Counter-Extremist Strategies*” which was made possible thanks to the support of Open Society Foundations.



**Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA)** is an independent non-governmental organization dealing with foreign policy and security issues. We pursue a range of projects, including research, events and publications with partners from Slovakia and abroad. Other important activities include transition projects with the countries and regions not only neighboring the EU and NATO. CENAA aims to contribute to the strategic level discussion in Slovakia and the Euro-Atlantic area, to shape policies, and to bring new ideas and recommendations to decision-makers. In addition, we actively engage with the younger generation through education projects to prepare them for a career in the area of foreign affairs and security. Our key activities are divided into four programmes: Transatlantic Security Programme, Transition Programme, Emerging Threats Programme, Publications and Education.

The project “Mitigating the Radicalization of Slovak Society: Research and Shaping of Counter-Extremist Strategies” is implemented within the Emerging Threats Programme and with the support of Open Society Foundations. Extremism as the new security threat is one of the main research topics of CENAA and is a response to new trends in security policy and growing interconnection between external and internal security of states. Within the program, several topics are addressed, including international cooperation and mutual influences of extremist groups in the region of Central Europe, experiences of addressing extremism in neighboring countries or extremist tendencies among former members of security forces, etc.

# MITIGATING RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN THE AUSTRIAN ARMED FORCES – THE CASE OF MUSLIM INTEGRATION

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## INTRODUCTION

In July 2015, several Austrian newspapers<sup>1</sup> reported evidence on Islamic tendencies in the Austrian Armed Forces. Photos were published showing Muslim conscripts with wagging their forefingers, a gesture related to the Islamic State. Although the allegations were immediately contradicted by army officials, all of a sudden, the topic of radicalisation trends in the Austrian Armed Forces became an issue of debate again. Already in 2010, the former Austrian Minister of Defence, Norbert Darabos, publicly stated his willingness to fight radical tendencies in the Armed Forces, but contrary in that case the allegations were linked to right-wing nationalism.

Why can such trends be witnessed in the Austrian Armed Forces? One of the reasons might be found in the fact that Austria – contrary to the majority of other Western countries still adheres to compulsory military service for all male Austrians. Since conscription mirrors the demographic composition of

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1 See e.g. “Islamismus-Alarm im Bundesheer” in Profil, 18. 07. 2015, “Aufregung um muslimische Grundwehriener beim Bundesheer”, in Vorarlberg Online, 21. 07. 2015, “Rekrut posiert mit islamistischer Geste”, wien.orf.at, 21. 07. 2015.

the male population of a country, people with a migrant background are also affected (Krainz 2015, 59) and thus opening a possible door for such allegations in both directions, political and religious radicalisation.

This paper focuses on the issue of religious extremism in the AAF and is not tackling the issue of political radicalisation and extremism. In order to assess measures to mitigate religious extremism in its Armed Forces, the paper starts by analyzing the Austrian military system and structure, explains the relationship between Islam and Austria and analyses in particular the integration of Muslim conscripts in the Austrian Armed Forces.

## THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUSTRIAN MILITARY SYSTEM

Austria's military system as it is known today has to be seen with respect to the historical development of Austria as a sovereign state. Thus, historical facts have to be considered regarding the Austrian system of recruitment and retention. Basically, the conscription system in Austria dates back to the Battle of Königgrätz in 1866, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire was defeated by Prussia. The need to have a solid basis for mobilization in case of war had become obvious. Königgrätz therefore marked the starting point for a far-reaching reform of the Austrian military system (Callaghan and Kernic 2001, 191). After the end of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the subsequent dissolution of the AAF, an Army of the Austrian Republic, the so-called peoples' army (*Volkswehr*), was set up which existed from November 1918 to late 1919. The Treaty of Saint-Germain of 1919 allowed the small remaining country Austria to build up a regular army with manpower of 30,000, but with drastically reduced armaments. Art. 119 and 125 of the State Treaty called for a military system to be based on the principle of all-volunteer and Austria was prohibited from maintaining universal conscription (Pernthaler 1964, 41). The Defence Act (*Wehrgesetz*) of 1920 implemented these provisions resulting from the State Treaty.

The Armed Forces of the First Republic played a decisive role in the civil war of 1934 by fighting against the paramilitary groups of the Social Democrats and the National Socialists. In 1936, the Western Powers tacitly accepted the reintroduction of universal conscription, and the Armed Forces were reorganised. Again it opened the gate to a new world war conducted by mass armies (Callaghan and Kernic 2001, 193). With the Anschluss of Austria to the German Reich in the spring of 1938, the AAF were integrated into the German Wehrmacht and mainly used for its mountaineer troops capability serving the Reich. The breakdown of the Third Reich in 1945 resulted in a ten years' period of military occupation for Austria.

After World War II, the Allied powers prohibited Austria and Germany from maintaining Armed Forces. Only in the decades to come did Germany (FRG in 1950; GDR in 1962) and Austria (1955) again establish defence forces based on the principle of conscription. Under the State Treaty of 1955, a number of restrictions were imposed that affected the build-up of the AAF, the so-called *Bundesheer*. Under Article 13 of the Treaty, Austria was prohibited from possessing “*any self-propelled or guided missiles or guns with a range of more than thirty kilometres.*” On 26 October 1955, the government passed a law in which Austria declared of its own free will its permanent neutrality. The law further specified that “*Austria will never in the future accede to any military alliances nor permit the establishment of military bases by foreign states on her territory*” (Article 1 paragraph 2). The Austrian government asserted that it alone was competent to define Austrian neutrality (Kernic 2005: 63). At the beginning of the 1990s the AAF were restructured, from a force intended to defend Austria's territorial integrity against threats arising from hostilities between the two blocs, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Warsaw Pact, to a force able to react rapidly to crises in the surrounding neighbourhood. Therefore, both the standing army and the reserve forces were scaled back but individual units in a rapid-response status remained, enabling the army to intervene quickly with appropriate forces to prevent instability in Austria's border areas. The Yugoslav wars of independence and the intervention of the Yugoslav armed forces in Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 prompted the largest mobilization of the AAF since its reconstituting in 1956.

The commitment to armed neutrality is one of the main reasons for holding onto the conscription system to be explained later on. However, due to the fact that Austria is actively taking part, and even increasing its participation in missions and peace-keeping operations within the framework of the EU and UN as well as within NATO, extending its contingent of volunteers and, in the meantime, reducing the term of service, the system of conscription has been under discussion for several years. However, in a public referendum on 20 January 2013, the Austrian population voted in favor of the system of conscription which is still seen as less costly and more beneficiary for Austrian purposes than changing it for a professional army.

## THE CONSCRIPTION SYSTEM AND THE CIVILIAN ALTERNATIVE SERVICE

With respect to conscription treated in Article 9a paragraph 3 B-VG, the obligation for male citizens starts at the age of 17 and continues through the age of 50. Female citizens are in general not drafted for the AAF, but since January 1998, they have been allowed to join the military. Male citizens may be drafted for basic training up to the age of 35, after which they cannot be called up. Officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and, under specific circumstances, other ranks may serve until the age of 65. In general, around 30,000 men are drafted into the Austrian Armed Forces each year. Exemptions from the Austrian military services can take place under certain legal circumstances, such as compelling economic or family considerations. This also applies if an employer proves that a potential draftee already works in a position that serves the general public or economic interests (Kernic and Callaghan 2003, 28). Besides, dual nationals “who fulfil the requirements of the Hague Protocol” are required to supply proof that they have already performed obligatory military service in another applicable state. Previously convicted persons are also exempt from the draft. Special rules and regulations apply with respect to Jewish and Islamic recruits as will be demonstrated in the chapters to follow.

Moreover, there is a steadily growing number of young men who are exempted from both the military and civilian service due to health problems. Already every 7<sup>th</sup> potential draftee is exempted from conscription due to psychological or other type of health problems.

Since 1975, there has also been the possibility open to draftees to perform an alternative civilian service, the so-called *Zivildienst*, for those refusing the compulsory military service based on conscientious objection. Since January 1997, conscientious objectors have been obliged to perform 12 months of alternative civil service which was shortened to nine months in 2006, being still three months longer than the military service. The *Zivildienst* is carried out under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior. Due to the fact that there is no compulsory military service for women in effect, they are not allowed to apply for the *Zivildienst*. Presently in Austria, about 12,000 men apply for the *Zivildienst* annually.

## ISLAM AND AUSTRIA

Austria's relationship to religions in general and to the Islam in particular dates back to the times of the empire when in 1867, in the so-called *Staatsgrundgesetz* (StGG) the Habsburg Monarchy granted Freedom of Belief and Conscience for Everybody. In fact, the StGG allowed free observance of faith in private and in public only for those religious communities, which had been recognized and had already been granted a status.

With the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1887, there was particular demand for a specific regulation for the inhabitants of to the Islamic faith and tradition. When Bosnia-Herzegovina became part of the Empire in 1908 a number of legal changes and adoptions had to be carried out (Krainz 2015, 61). In 1912, the so-called *Islamgesetz* (Law on Islam) granted Islam the status of an officially recognized religion "referring to the adherents of Islam practicing the Hanafi rite as a religious community". Article 1 states that "the

adherents of Islam shall be granted recognition as a religious community in the kingdoms and crown-lands represented in the Imperial Council” (Fußl 2011, 67). What was a historical necessity for the Austro-Hungarian government remained a law which still exists on the books today with an obvious relevance for the current Muslim community in Austria. The reason for the official recognition is thus strongly connected with the imperial past of the Austrian military and not a reaction to the increasing immigration of Gastarbeiter (foreign workers) from Muslim countries, especially as a consequence of the Balkan Wars in more recent decades (Krainz 2015, 61).

Both, the Law of Recognition and the Law on Islam remain in force today and have formed the basis of the governance of religious pluralism in the Second Republic (after 1945). Since 1998 the system of recognition of religious groups has been twofold. Religious communities can still be recognized according to the Law of Recognition if they fulfill a set of criteria. Communities that do not meet these criteria can be endowed with a legal personality, called state-registered confessional communities, the so-called *staatlich eingetragene Bekenntnisgemeinschaften* (Federal Chancellery 2011, 10). In 2013, 16 religious groups enjoy this legal status, among them two Islamic organizations (Mattes and Rosenberger 2015, 133).

The original Law on Islam was very much based on the already existing structures and the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church. Thus, similar to the Concordat, the Bosniak-Austrian Muslim community had to nominate an official representative as a counterpart for the state. The Mufti of Sarajevo was chosen as the official representative.

After the break-up of the Habsburg Empire, at the beginning, there was no real representation for Austrian Muslims. In 1979, the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture approved the establishment of the first Islamic Religious Community in Vienna and the Constitution submitted by the Islamic Religious Community of Austria. The Islamic Religious Community of Austria (Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich (IGGiÖ) can be considered as a church-like organisation, officially equal to the Christian churches and other religious communities officially recognized by the state.

Today, the IGGiÖ is a body in public law, the official representative of all adherents of Islam whose country of residence is the Republic of Austria (Heine et.al. 2012, 55). The Muslim community in Austria therefore enjoys the same rights and privileges as any other state-recognized religious community. The granted rights are manifold and include the selection and employment of religion teachers in state schools, the right to organize their own curricula for religious education (Krainz 2015) and the general right to pastoral care in national institutions like prisons, hospitals and the military. In February 2015, a new Law on Islam was passed in the Austrian Parliament replacing the outdated old version. The reformed version strengthens the system of protections for Muslims, giving official status to religious holidays, recognizing the status of Islamic graveyards and recognizes the right to Islamic pastoral care in public institutions, such as hospitals. The centerpiece of the legislation is a ban on foreign funding for Muslim organizations, imams or mosques, while the law also prohibits Islamic teachers funded by foreign nations from being active in Austria. Furthermore, the law prescribes a unified German-language version of the Quran.

In terms of numbers, the religion of Islam was first surveyed as a category in the 1971 census, when 0.3% of the population declared themselves Muslim. The 2001 census showed an increase to 4.2 %, with around 350,000 persons stating Islam as their religious belief. The religious denomination has been surveyed in a census only until 2001. The latest official statistics available as of 2009 show that the Muslim community has grown to 6.2% of the total population (Janda and Vogl 2010, 6).

As it has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, there have been well-established links and practices with the Bosnian Muslims already during the times of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which very often gets portrayed as a shining example of best practices of a well-established tradition of conscription of Muslim soldiers and as proof of the successful integration of Islam in Austria (see for example Khouja 2008). However, some scholars, like Krainz (2015, 61) referring also to Allmayer-Beck and Lessing 1989, argue that those times cannot be compared with the situation today as the Bosniak contingents formed a very homogeneous block within the Austrian contingents, having specific uniforms and functions. A reference in this context is made to the fez, a felt hat with a tassel attached at the top. Today, culturally homogeneous units and distinct uniforms would strongly contradict the official understanding of integration and diversity management that focuses more on heterogeneity and plurality than on separation and homogenization (Krainz 2015, 61).

A number of regulations for Muslim conscripts in Austria is in force today which can be found in the so-called Official Journal (Verlautbarungsblatt) Nr. I issued by the Austrian Ministry of Defence in 2006. In this publication which was jointly elaborated between the Ministry and representatives of various religious communities, several criteria for the conscription and assignments of religious minorities, such as Jews, Muslims, Seventh-Day Adventists and other religious communities are set-up (BMLV 2006). The measures include the provision of pork-free diet and the possibility of complying with Islamic prayer times and holidays. Pre-dating this official rule-book, as a result of an initiative by a civilian employee in the armed forces in 2004, an Islamic prayer room was established in the Maria-Theresien barracks in Vienna, attracting enormous international media attention (Krainz 2015, 65).

Regarding the *Verlautbarungsblatt*, special attention needs to be paid to the fact that this document determines a threefold differentiation within the Muslim group among ‘non-pious’ (*nicht strenggläubig*), ‘pious’ (*strenggläubig*) and ‘highly pious’ (*besonders strenggläubig*) Muslims, a distinction that

is not drawn for other religious communities. The IGGiÖ is the only religious community that demands such an explicit differentiation about strictness of observance. It issues a *Verpflichtungserklärung für Rekruten* (Declaration of Commitment for Recruits), which certifies that a future conscript has been well instructed by the faith community in religious duties and prohibitions such as daily prayer, Friday prayer, fasting during Ramadan, prohibition on the consumption of pork and alcohol. To be included in the categories of ‘pious’ and ‘highly pious’, Muslim conscripts must be in possession of the relevant document at the time of their medical and psychological examination for military service which normally takes place at the age of 17. Those conscripts without certificate are automatically classified as ‘non-pious’, regardless of their actual religious beliefs, needs, practices and overall religiosity (Krainz and Slunecko 2011, 106).

In the following sections, the rights of the different groups will be shown (information and translation of the *Verordnungsblatt* taken from *Fußl* 2011, 74-78). This section is of particular interest and importance as especially liberal Islamic groups are considering this differentiation as “blindness” and “deception” and opening the doors for infiltration (ILM 2015). The regulations are as follows:

## REGULATIONS CONCERNING PIOUS MEMBERS OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

1. *Conscription* to military service with the *Vienna Military Command* on certain *callup dates* to be determined by the Vienna Military Command. The Vienna Military Command will decide to which unit each conscript is assigned and will inform the Personnel Department at the Ministry of Defence accordingly.

(...)

Conscripts must *prove* that they are *pious members of the Islamic Community already during pre-induction examinations* by submitting a certificate of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Religious Community in Austria which is entitled “*confirmation of practicing of the Islamic religion*”.

2. *The conscription target will be exceeded.*

3. Training and further assignments:
 

Pious Muslim believers will receive a two-month basic training before being assigned to administrative or service functions in the territorial organization of the Vienna Military Command.
4. The Vienna Military Command or the units involved will make the necessary *arrangements* for special *religious requirements* including messing, dietary regulations as well as prayer facilities and times directly with the Supreme Council of the Islamic Religious Community in Austria (...) according to paragraph 4 above.
5. *Altered time schedule* for pious members of the Islamic Community and supporting measures:
  - a) *Pious Muslims* are *bound* by their religion to *pray five times a day*:
 

Soldiers performing basic training and military service normally do not have to hold the dawn, sunset and night prayers during duty hours. Constraints during training, the performance of duties in accordance with general service regulations in operations or during exercises under operational conditions cannot always be avoided. But under such circumstances, appropriate organizational measures are taken to guarantee that pious Muslim believers can perform their daily prayers. *On Fridays*, the midday prayer is replaced by the *Friday prayer*. Unlike the daily mandatory prayers, Friday prayers must be performed together with the community of believers. They are closely connected with instructions in religious duties, obligations and prohibitions. As the Friday prayers have special significance for pious members of the Islamic Community, Muslims are to be granted leave so that they can attend these prayers. However, this does not apply to missions of the Austrian Army in cases specified in Article 2, Paragraph 1, Letters a) and b) of the 2001 Defence Law.
  - b) Muslim holidays for which pious members of the Islamic Community are to be granted leave are as follows:
    - *Id-ul-Fitr* – holy day which marks the end of *Ramadan*, the Islamic holy month of fasting: three days
    - *Id-ul-Adha* – Festival of Sacrifice: four days
    - In return, pious Muslim soldiers should be assigned duty more frequently on Sundays and other Christian holidays.

6. Adapted to the Gregorian calendar, the Muslim holy days will be announced separately each year.
7. (...)
8. Soldiers who fail a drug test twice will automatically lose their status as pious Muslims. The provisions of Article IV of this directive will then apply in these cases.

## **REGULATIONS CONCERNING HIGHLY PIOUS MEMBERS OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY**

Highly pious members of the Islamic Community are persons who not only clearly profess their faith in Islam and abide strictly by its religious rules, but also try to conduct their lives in accordance with their religion and God's will. In addition to the traditional set of religious rules including obligations, prohibitions and the attendance of prayers, the individuals in question also have to obey special standards of behavior which they consider indispensable for their religious life. They act in line with the traditional codes of conduct established by the Prophet Muhammad and great Islamic scholars.

Their strict religious attitude is seen in a very positive light, not only by themselves but also by the other members of the Islamic Community.

As the percentage of highly pious Muslim believers within the Islamic Community is very small and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Religious Community in Austria handles the certification of their status as highly pious members of the Islamic Community very restrictively and only after a thorough examination of each individual case, the Supreme Council was authorized to grant permission, on a case by case basis, for highly pious Muslim believers to grow a beard.

However, the Austrian Ministry of Defence reserves the right to grant official permission for highly pious members of the Islamic Community to wear a beard on duty. If soldiers are granted such permission, they are exempted from wearing NBC protective masks and from gas seal testing.

If a highly pious member of the Islamic Community who has received the appropriate certification by the Supreme Council of the Islamic Religious Community is conscripted into the Austrian Army, the responsible unit must submit an application to the Ministry of Defence for the soldier to be granted permission to wear a beard when on duty.

The soldier is free to have a full beard until the ministry makes a decision.  
(...)

Soldiers who fail a drug test twice will automatically lose their status of highly pious Muslims. The provisions of Article IV of this directive will then apply.

## REGULATIONS CONCERNING NON-PIOUS MEMBERS OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

Due to the demographic development in Austria, an increasing number of conscripts are called up for service throughout Austria who are Muslim believers but do not meet the criteria for pious members of the Islamic Community.

The problem during their basic military service is that these soldiers refuse to consume pork (or pork containing products) for religious and/or cultural reasons but are not pious Muslims according to the strict criteria. With the intention of giving these conscripts and all the other soldiers who prefer non-pork diet the opportunity to receive this kind of special messing, the directive entitled “Alternative Messing in Troop Kitchens”, Reference No. 51590/7-4.11/99, was issued on 18 January 1999 and distributed down to the unit level.

This directive is to be seen as a measure that enables the Army to meet its obligation to care for its soldiers in compliance with Article 4, Paragraph 1 of the Austrian Army Service Regulations and is to be implemented within the scope of duty. It should be pointed out that no legal claims can be derived from the above-mentioned directive if supplying alternative non-pork diet is not possible in justified, exceptional cases.

Muslim soldiers performing basic military service are not granted any privileges as members of the Islamic Community excluding the provision of non-pork food.

However, in accordance with Article 45 of the 2001 Defence Law, the commanders in charge can, upon request and within the scope of duty, grant this group of persons holiday leave as is granted to pious members of the Islamic Community. The loss of duty hours must then be made up for by assuming more frequent duties on Sundays and/or other Christian holidays. The leave may not, however, result in a loss of training hours that cannot be made up.

To sum-up with Krainz (2015, 65) after a two-month basic training, 'pious' and 'highly pious' Muslims are assigned to indoor services (such as kitchen, office, administration), which is in line with their religious requirements such as the five obligatory daily prayers. The current state of affairs also grants 'highly pious' Muslims the right to wear a full beard during their military service on a case-by-case basis, since this is considered a sign of strict religious belief. 'Non-pious' Muslims, by contrast, are deployed in the full range of functions and services in the armed forces and are entitled only to a pork-free diet. If prayer times or attendance of Friday prayer are compatible with the working procedures for Muslims in this category, their direct superiors may allow them to pray or to attend a prayer.

However, 'non-pious' Muslims have no general legal right to do so. This differentiation provides the basis for intra-Muslim debates (IGGiÖ 2015) in Austria as the liberal Muslims are considering that fact as a possible source for radicalization within the AAF. However, interviews with different AAF commandants have shown that integration of Muslim recruits into the AAF is working on the proper basis. The Military Commander of Vienna, Kurt Wagner, pointed out in an interview for the Austrian Newspaper, Der Standard (Der Standard 2015), that the AAF are aware of possible radicalization. At every barrack, the commanding cadre personnel receives specific training on how to identify possible radicalization and there are two military counter-intelligence personnel posted at every barrack to detect and prevent such tendencies. Since 2008, the Austrian defence budget accounts for funding two

Muslim chaplaincy positions, one for the East and one for the West of Austria. The IGGiÖ welcomed this project, and nominated two candidates, but it was immediately emphasised by the IGGiÖ that this could be only a temporary solution (Khouja 2008, 32). It then took almost seven years since the position of the first chaplain was established in June 2015. This measure is also considered to help with eradicating radical tendencies within the AAF.

By closer examining the Verfassungsschutzbericht (Report on Constitutional Protection), it becomes clear that there are indications of “home grown” extremist and terrorist potentials. Less than 100 people have so far joined the war in Syria, however, there is a danger of foreign fighters infiltrating the countries via the Western Balkan routes (Verfassungsschutzbericht 2014: 49-51). In order to mitigate extremist or radical tendencies within the society, the Austrian Federal Agency for Counter-Terrorism and State Protection has in 2013, together with Germany, edited a handbook entitled “Violent radicalisation – recognition of and responses to the phenomenon by professional groups concerned” which serves as the basis for special training of security and justice personnel for countering such tendencies (Verfassungsschutzbericht 2014, 53). Also, close cooperation and information exchange between the Austrian security forces is envisaged.

Furthermore, Austria actively participates in the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) which serves as a platform for best practice-exchanges among member states.

To sum up, the main policy within the Austrian security forces is to observe radical and/or extremist tendencies and to eradicate them before their further spreading. The focus lies in prevention by providing adequate training to the respective security personnel and pursuit of a policy of real integration of the group potentially at risk within all echelons of society, including the security forces, and respecting the traditions in order to avoid the rise of radical or extremist tendencies.

Islam in Austria is in a rather exceptional position compared to other European Muslim communities, due to its long established legal status which grants equal rights to all legally acknowledged religions. Despite a highly politicized debate, strong resentment among the majority population and strong right-wing parties, this legal status was not affected (Mattes and Rosenberger 2015, 147). In fact, by analyzing the new Law on Islam, this special status was reaffirmed. It has also been made clear that due to distinct historic reasons that still apply today, addressing Islam across the society at large, including the armed forces, is not an unknown and therefore a less controversial issue.

In addition, so far only minor incidents took place in Austria, keeping this issue at the “observatory” level, even not regarding it as an actual issue. On the issue of integrating Muslim conscripts into the AAF, a set of very detailed rules and regulations has been put in place. However, the present situation has introduced a type of segregation of Muslims by recognizing three different categories. Instead of simplifying the Muslims soldiers’ right to freely practice their religion, it makes it more difficult. On the one hand it is not fair to permit only highly pious Muslims the right to hold their prayer times – especially the Friday prayer – because either you qualify as Muslim or you do not (like in the case of Christians or Protestants), and on the other hand this division is not made in any other religious community, so Muslims again get singled out (Krainz and Slunecko 2011, 102).

More than 50 years after the foundation of the military chaplaincy in 1956, the first Imam was appointed, following his Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox counterparts. This all shows that in theory, full integration of Muslims is taking place, respecting their religious duties and tradition along the way in order to mitigate any kind of extremist or radical tendencies within the AAF.

Nevertheless, as the events of summer 2015 have shown, all these measures do not necessarily have the effect of fully preventing extremist tendencies. It needs to be made clear that this is not a specific issue for the AAF, but the society as such. As long as extremist or radical tendencies exist within the

society, they will also by nature have an effect on the daily life, including the military and other security services. Nonetheless, integration can only work as a two-way street and there is also the need for the willingness by those to be integrated to contribute their part. Therefore, the Austrian approach of mitigating the possible negative occurrences seems to be well-suited as it provides Muslim conscripts with good integration chances into the AAF. And it still holds true despite all the differentiation, which is mainly based on inner differences of the Muslim faith, rather than Austrian regulations. The Austrian approach demonstrates a high level of respect by the country's public institutions for religious diversity, which forms an integral part of its tradition.

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# **SELECTED PROBLEMS OF THE ANTI-TERRORIST AGENDA IN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this contribution is to analyze the selected problems with regards to combatting the manifestations of political extremism in the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic and in the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic – in the past and in the present. The focus is on the period after 2004, when the compulsory military service was abandoned in the Czech Republic and the country established a fully-professional army. I will try to elucidate the process of the rise of a new, consistent policy with regard to the military, and to do so based on the media coverage of actual incidents. These were approached as a threat that requires a counter-action of the state. A parallel aim is to analyze the positive and the negative aspects of the steps, which were undertaken to counter the threat of extremism and radicalism. When it comes to the methodology employed, I will use the descriptive method coupled with expert analysis. The sources used will include primary and secondary ones in analyzing the selected problems, including the author's own experience, among other areas derived also from own involvement in the anti-extremist policy agenda of the Czech Republic.

## THE REASONS FOR INTRODUCING CONSISTENT POLICIES FOR COMBATTING EXTREMISM IN THE ARMED FORCES: REAL PROBLEMS, MEDIA ATTENTION AND THE STATE'S REACTION

The anti-extremist policies of the Czech Republic have embarked on the road to its transformation to its present state already in the 1990s. Anti-extremist activities were coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior and on the enforcement side for the most part by the Police of the Czech Republic and the Security and Information Service (as an intra-state intelligence agency). Extremism in relation to the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic (comprised of the Army of the Czech Republic, Presidential Guard, and the Military Office of the President) has also fallen under the competence of the Military Police and Military Intelligence (also throughout its transformation). The MoD was in charge of constituent anti-extremist activities and making them a part of regular reports on extremism, which it was preparing for the Ministry of Interior. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Interior began to pay closer attention on the problem of extremism only after several scandals, which received extensive coverage in the media.

The media attention was sparked by a headline published by the *Mladá Fronta Dnes* daily on November 30<sup>th</sup> 2007. The article described three individuals from the neo-Nazi scene, employed in the Czech Armed Forces (Gazdík and Eichler 2007). These individuals turned out to be members of *Národní Odpor*, a neo-Nazi organization, with one of them a leading representative of a regional ultra-right-wing association called *RadicalBoysBrüx* (Brüx being the German name of the Czech town of Most). Evidence showed these military personnel were taking part in public demonstrations organized by the right-wing extremists and attended white power concerts. What's more, the article mentioned that the two of the individuals served with the 4<sup>th</sup> rapid reaction brigade, and another one of them – Martin H. served with the artillery unit (Janoušek 2007).

Starting with these high-profile cases, which have received attention from the political representatives, a more intensive activity has been pursued

by the respective bodies of the state security apparatus in order to counter manifestations of extremism in the army. Despite that, more cases appeared in 2009, attracting even more media attention. The first case was the publication of a finding that two commanding officers of Czech Army units deployed in Afghanistan, Jan Č. and Hynek M. sported wore Waffen SS symbols of Nazi Germany on their helmets, both during training and on missions. One of them displayed the symbol 9. SS-Panzer-Division “Hohenstaufen”, the other one symbols of the infamous Dirlewanger units, notorious for a number of war crimes. The information on these encroachments reached their commanding officer, who has issued an order to burn the helmet covers with the symbols. Nevertheless, the case was picked up by the media (Gazdík 2009) and sparked additional political reactions. Both of the individuals were discharged from the military, but their case has highlighted, among others, the problem of terminating their employment in accordance with the legal norms effective at that time (more on this below).

In 2009, Mladá Fronta Dnes featured an article on yet another case linking extremism and the armed forces. In this case, it did not bring any breakthrough information using secret information sources, compared to the two previous cases. It was rather based on information from the Organized Crime Unit of the Police of the Czech Republic, which also contains an anti-terrorism department. Its detectives have uncovered a neo-Nazi organization White Justice, which was in existence at least from 2006. The Police alleged that it was planning terrorist attacks against power stations, as well as other violent actions. What’s more, it has taken part in organizing training camps, with the participation of a professional soldier (Kroupa 2009).

The particular member of the Czech Armed Forces has instructed the camp’s participants in the use of weapons and military fighting methods. The training was also captured on the organization’s propaganda video. The case has resulted in the demotion of the soldier in question his dishonorable discharge from the service (Týden 2009). In this connection, we should also note that the members of White Justice were later convicted *only* of “spreading propaganda” in relation to neo-Nazism, nevertheless when the story broke, it was

portrayed by the media as terrorism, with a significant role, once again by a member of the Army of the Czech Republic.

It is necessary to put these cases in the context of rising right-wing extremism in the Czech Republic during 2005–2010. It was characterized by strong amalgamation of the militant neo-Nazi scene around the National Resistance organization and the Autonomous Nationalists affiliated with the Labor Party and by the establishment of para-military groupings, the likes of Protection Units of Labor Party and the National Guard affiliated with the National Party. What's more, this period witnessed sizable anti-Roma protests attended by the public in 2008 in northern Czech Republic, violent attacks (predominantly against the Roma, leaving one of the victims, a Roma girl in Vítkov, burnt on 80% of her body), as well as the initiation of intensive contacts with right-wing extremists abroad (Vejvodová 2014). Under this situation, any information about the connections of right-wing extremists and members of the armed forces was perceived especially sensitively (other variants of extremist behavior, were not, and still are not taken as seriously by the Czech society).

In connection with the above cases of extremism in the Czech Armed Forces, the security services have stepped up activity in the fight against this phenomenon, including introducing inter-departmental cooperation between civilian and military, as well as police intelligence services, as well as by involving the academics in finding solutions. The adopted measures can be divided into the following categories:

1. Improvement of security system to eliminate extremism in the armed forces
2. Adoption of new legislation to eliminate extremism in the armed forces
3. Prevention and education directed at all members of the armed forces

In part, a fourth category has appeared: the increased research interest about the issue of extremism in the armed forces, which as will be shown later, lacked a further stimulus from the state. In the following sections, I will individually subject each of these categories to analysis.

## IMPROVEMENT OF THE SECURITY SYSTEM TO ELIMINATE EXTREMISM IN THE ARMED FORCES

The above-mentioned cases of extremism in the Czech Army had the effect of increasing attention by the security and intelligence bodies, including the Ministry of Defense itself. First and foremost, it was necessary to improve the level of existing knowledge on extremism, the ability to gather information, and to fine-tune cooperation with other security services.

When it comes to extremism in the Army of the Czech Republic, it was shown that some of the knowledge about extremists in the ranks of the army is confined to specialized anti-extremist units of the Police of the Czech Republic, while for the Military Police, and partly the Military Intelligence, gaining information on the participation of military personnel in extremist structures remains difficult if this is taking place outside the Army premises. Thus, we have to understand any improvements in the security system when it comes to elimination of extremism in the armed forces as three, mutually interconnected dimensions, as follows:

1. Establishing the issue as a priority
2. Training specialists in this area,
3. Intensification of cooperation of military and other components of the security system

The Military Intelligence has previously established specialized anti-extremist units, and was involved in the education of its members on the issue of extremism. What's more, the aims in the area of combatting extremism were gradually fine-tuned. Of note is the year 2009, when the tasks were defined within the governmental priorities for its information activities. In the strategies' elaboration in terms of the government's priorities, the focus was placed on specific manifestations of extremism by the employees of the Ministry, namely the following:

- Contacts and establishing relations with extremist movements in the Czech Republic or abroad
- Participation in extremist activities

- Contacts by foreigners with long-term stay in the Czech Republic with connections to the Ministry of Defense (study, internship, training) and those coming from risk-prone states (Vojenské zpravodajství 2010).

These areas remain of importance for the Military Intelligence to date. The Military Police has earmarked capacities for the issue of extremism, having collected the necessary data in order to investigate potential extremist criminal activity. What's more, broad-based review of the state of knowledge about extremists in the army's ranks has been commenced (Antoš 2008). In addition, the Military Police has in 2012 dramatically re-organized its structure. The result is that investigation of extremist criminal activities now falls under the competence of the Department of Criminal Activities of the Main Command of the Military Police. It has begun to engage with the issue of extremism in the Czech Army, but also thanks to the MoD's engagement on social networks. They have uncovered cases of post-mortem trolling, when civilians have expressed approval of the 2014 killing of Czech soldiers by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The Military Police has cooperated on these cases with the Police of the Czech Republic (Čermák 2015). The MP, responsible for investigating any criminal activity of soldiers had to gain know-how for its increased involvement in the anti-extremist agenda. What's more, the Main Command of the Military Police has organized a series of expert seminars, with the participation of specialists from outside the Ministry in order to assist with better understanding of the phenomenon of extremism and its manifestations in the army. In 2008, among the institutions addressing the issue, we can mention the detectives from the Department of Extremism and Terrorism of the Organized Crime Unit, affiliated with Crime Investigation Unit of the Police Force, the investigation by the President of the Police Force of the Czech Republic, and the then only court examiner appointed by the Ministry of Justice responsible for this issue (this person was Miroslav Mareš) (Vojenská policie 2008).

The seminar was intended primarily for the members of the Military Police dealing with extremism, but invited were also other employees of the Ministry of Defense involved in the agenda related to this issue (Ministerstvo vnitra

2009). In 2010, a similar expert seminar was attended by the representatives from the Police Bureau of Crime Investigation and Internal Affairs of the Police of the Czech Republic, The Organized Crime Unit, The Union of State Attorneys (among others, the then Regional Attorney Lenka Bradáčová), as well as specialists from the MoD (including the then court examiner Ivo Svoboda from the Defense University) (Ministerstvo obrany 2012).

The Military Police has gained sufficient background and expertise to organize its own expert trainings and seminars. In 2001, a specialized applied course was organized titled The Problem of Extremism Vis-à-vis Activities of the Military Police [...] *“intended for the wide spectrum of members of the Military Police, who may come into contact with this specific type of criminal activity or the activities perpetrated by the active-duty military personnel. It is a basic training course, which is complemented by another, more advanced one, intended for those members of the MP who will be investigating this type of criminal activity or the activity of soldiers”* (Ministerstvo obrany 2012).

When it comes to intensifying cooperation with other security services, within the already mentioned vetting for extremists in the army, a considerable exchange of know-how has taken place with the Police of the Czech Republic, including the identification of soldiers on photos from private neo-Nazi events, and so forth (Antoš 2008). We already mentioned the participation of civilian anti-extremism police specialists in seminars organized by the Military Police. What's more, each year the members of MP attend tactical instructional seminars presented by specialists on extremism. This is a place to discuss, among other things, the current cases pertaining to extremism, which the Military Police is dealing with (Antoš 2008).

In 2009, based on agreement with the Army of the Czech Republic, a vetting procedure was agreed for the applicants introducing the cross-checking the Police records by the Organized Crime Unit of the Police, Crime Investigation Department of the Czech Police Force (Ministerstvo vnitra 2010). From the Anti-Extremist Concept, it follows that it should continue in the measures that have been set up against the infiltration of extremists into the security services (Police of the Czech Republic, Fire & Rescue of the Czech Republic,

Prison Guards of the Czech Republic, The Customs Bureau of the Czech Republic), as well as the Army of the Czech Republic itself. Specifically, these measures include vetting procedures for personnel, preventive, educational, organizational, legislative or similar activities. These, in turn fall under the competence of the Ministry of Interior, The Police Force of the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Finance (Ministerstvo vnitra 2014, 7).

## ADOPTION OF NEW LEGISLATION ON ELIMINATION OF EXTREMISM IN THE ARMED FORCES

The cases of extremism or the displaying of extremist symbols by the members of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic had also led to legislative changes, with the introduction of the basic framework by Law No. 221/1999 Sb on professional soldiers and criminal acts having to do with extremism contained in the Law No. 140/1960 Sb of the Criminal Code, and as of 2010, the Law No. 40/2009 Sb of the Criminal Code.

Before the changes in the legislation pertaining to the military, there was no specific “anti-terrorist” clause. According to Josef Antoš, a Military Police specialist, the customary *modus operandi* was that when a professional soldier committed a criminal act, the procedure is the same as for all criminal acts, without a difference. In practice, this means that in case of a reasonable suspicion that a crime has been committed (by pressing of charges) and if the act meets the legal merits (see the above examples), the suspect is temporarily suspended by his/her commanding officer (§ 9) and allowed to represent himself/herself in court in accordance with § 10, section. 2 letter. b) No.221/1999 Sb. And pursuant to receiving a sentence, he/she is discharged from service in accordance with § 19 section.1 letter. g) due to the fact that his/her remaining in the armed services would undermine the authority of these armed services (It states that the individual has to be suspended

from service if he/she was found guilty under law of committing a criminal act and continued service would threaten to undermine the good name for the armed services (Antoš 2008).

What's more, the experts have pointed out the possibility to invoke the Directive of the MoD No. 14/2004 on serious negative phenomena and their elimination in the Ministry of Defense, as well as Directive No. 36/2002 on the conduct of service of military personnel. According to Article 3, of the Chief of General Staff Order No. 14/2004, serious transgression of duties is punishable by discharge for the support of, and public sympathizing with movements suppressing the individual's rights and freedoms or propagating hate towards the nationality and or race. Nevertheless, this directive coincided with § 260 of the Criminal Code, and was interpreted that a specific criminal act had to have been committed (Antoš, 2008). According to Chief of General Staff Order No. 36/2002, endangering the authority and reputability of the armed forces of the Czech Republic amounts to serious dereliction of duty, which warrants stripping of the rank of the individual involved. Especially serious dereliction of duty is punishable by § 21 of Law No. 221/1999 Sb, which can lead to stripping of the rank and also discharge from service (Antoš 2008).

Nevertheless, practice has uncovered problems with the interpretation of these directives. In 2009 as a response, Law No. 272/2009 Sb was adopted, amending the existing law No. 221/1999 Sb on professional service. Into this law, yet more changes were made through § 3 section. 1, letter c) that stipulate that a citizen can be accepted into military service, in addition to other conditions, if the individual does not support, promote or sympathize with a movement that has been proven to aim to suppress the rights and freedoms of an individual or expresses views marked by national, religious, or racial hatred or hatred directed toward another group of people (Zákon č. 278/2009; Ministerstvo vnitra 2009). Even though originally not expected to be needed for active-duty soldiers, in the end, it was included itself into the law as an amendment. The practice has shown that a soldier who has been discharged for the above-mentioned reasons does not lose pension entitlements, which has been corrected by stripping such individuals of retirement benefits in accordance with the Law No. 147/2010 Sb.

As was mentioned in the material on extremism published by the Ministry of Interior (Ministerstvo vnitra 2010), based on the effective legislation, each new applicant for the job in the military is obliged to sign a statement “proclaiming that he/she does not support, or as of the day of entering into service, does not publically sympathize with movements aiming to suppress the individual rights and freedoms and does not propagate hatred based on nationality or race.” In case the individual signs the document and any of the statements were found to be untrue, it could be a sufficient reason to end the employment (Ministerstvo vnitra 2010).

Needless to say, the formulations in the amended law on military personnel are problematic, because they are in effect the exact same as those of § 403 of the Criminal Code (Zákon č. 40/2009 Sb.). Thus, it remains unclear whether in order to prove criminal wrongdoing according to the Law on military personnel, an individual needs to be also lawfully convicted based on § 403 or § 404 of the Criminal Code. To sum up, the above-mentioned changes are only stirring up a controversy on this issue.

The Criminal Code, effective as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 brought with it also qualified merits for criminal acts according to § 403 or § 404 Insults between military personnel (Section 2), § 379 Insult among soldiers with the use of violence or threat of violence (Section 2, letter d), § 380 Insult of military personnel of the same rank with the use of threat or threatening (Section 2, letter c), § 382 Encroachment of the rights and protected interests of soldiers of the same rank (Section 2, letter c), and § 383 Encroachment of the rights and protected interests of subordinate or lower-rank military personnel (Section 2, letter c). In accordance with these legal norms, a more severe punishment will be applied “in case the person commits an act for the reasons of real or perceived race of an individual, of his/her ethnicity, nationality, political or religious affiliation, or for the actual or perceived lack of such religious affiliation.” (Zákon č. 40/2009 Sb.). Thus, the so-called military hate crimes were introduced to the Czech legal system, or crimes based on prejudice (Mareš 2012b).

## PREVENTION AMONG ALL MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES

Within the MoD extremism as an issue has been included under the broader area of the so-called socially undesirable phenomena (next to the issue of illicit drugs, gambling, and others). When in 2007, the above-mentioned serious cases of misconduct were uncovered, resulting in a more intensive adoption of anti-extremist measures, this issue could be subjugated under the more general category of “Concept of Prevention of Socially Undesirable Phenomena 2005–2009.” In 2009, the Government of the Czech Republic has adopted the Strategy for Combatting Extremism, prepared by the Ministry of Interior, with prevention becoming one of the main pillars of the anti-extremism agenda (Ministerstvo vnitra 2009).

The Ministry of Defense has also adopted the Concept for Prevention of Socially Undesirable Phenomena 2010–2014, which among other issues addressed the prevention of manifestations of support for, and propagation of extremist movements. What’s more, this issue became one of the priorities by the Ministry Commission for Socially Undesirable Phenomena. In addition to that, a declaration was made to ensure the coordination of tasks in the prevention of extremism within the Ministry (Ministerstvo vnitra 2010). Another noteworthy document that found it into the anti-extremist agenda was the Program of Social Prevention and Crime 2008–2011 (Ministerstvo vnitra 2008), and the related programs, which followed.

The issue of prevention of crime has been addressed by the MoD in the long-term perspective, covering a broad range of socially undesired phenomena. Particular attention has been paid to professional military personnel, students of military academies, civilian employees, and their family members. The primary area of prevention has focused on sporting and cultural activities, as well as education, in addition to diagnostic and other (free-time) activities (Ministerstvo vnitra 2009). Nevertheless, as was shown in the above-mentioned cases of extremism in the army, the success rate for these preventive measures has not always been sufficient.

The experts at the MoD have come to the conclusion that the success of prevention “depends on a range of factors, ranging from individual traits of military personnel to the conditions of service in military installations and units. Better prevention of extremism is to be aided by a range of hobbies and activities among the members of military units and places of work and the growing number of military personnel and civilian employees who are taking part in these activities organized by the Commissions for Prevention of Socially Undesired Phenomena affiliated with the military units and installations” (Ministerstvo vnitra 2010). More emphasis has begun to be placed on lecture and training activities on the topic of extremism.

Nevertheless, some activities that were referred to by the Ministry as preventive with regards to the socially undesired phenomena also carried with them elements of repression. To illustrate this, as part of prevention, the Chief of the General Staff of the Army of the Czech Republic has in 2009 issued instructions to all the units to “organize a series of discussion fora on how to uncover and mitigate the manifestations of extremism and to familiarize all military personnel and civilian employees with the organizational directive No. 80626-52/2006/DP-1618, which prohibits any tattoos that are offensive or defaming in nature (using extremist symbols and other inappropriate symbolism); to carry out checks of military premises, information technologies and other auxiliary equipment with the aim of uncovering potential manifestations of extremism or the sympathizers of extremist movements” (Ministerstvo vnitra 2010).

With regard to lectures, specialized Commissions for Prevention of Socially Undesired Phenomena have been established within the military units, and advisors appointed within the organizational structures of Czech MoD (Ministerstvo vnitra 2009; Ministerstvo vnitra 2010). In 2008, the members of these Commissions, mainly of the Military Police Central Command and the Inspection Bureau of the MoD, received training specifically on the issue of extremism.

As part of the specialized training for the chairmen and methodology specialists in the unit-level Commissions for Prevention of Socially Undesired

Phenomena and advisors, a workshop took place on the issue of prevention of movements propagating hatred based on nationality and ethnicity and aiming to suppress individual rights and freedoms. One of the participants of the workshop was, among others, Štefan Danisc, a specialist on the phenomenon of extremism from the Police Academy. The training has, “among other issues, also focused on the problem of countering extremism, respecting human rights and freedoms, communication and relations between the task groups within the MoD (Ministerstvo vnitra 2009).

Additional activities were intended for all members of the armed forces. Already in 2008, a series of lectures titled “Extremism in the Army of the Czech Republic” was held for the selected units of the Czech Army, as well as other constituent parts of the armed forces. This was subsequently expanded to cover a considerable share of the armed forces. The seminar itself proved to be a complicated matter, because it was subcontracted to a civilian organization – based on agreement between MoD and Charles University in Prague on cooperation in the area of countering socially undesired phenomena. As the latter civilian entity did not possess sufficient expert capacity on the topic of extremism, experts from Masaryk University in Brno were invited, as well as from the Police Academy of the Czech Republic, the Defense University, and the Police Force of the Czech Republic (Univerzita Karlova 2010).

In terms of content, the main focus of the lecture series was on the clarification of the term “extremism” and the potential ties of extremists to the army. In addition, the curriculum covered the philosophical basis and individual characteristics of different extremist movements, including examples of their representation in the Czech Republic. Last but not least, the presentations covered anti-extremist policies and legal norms effective in the Czech Republic (Mareš 2010). There is no doubt that these aspects are of high importance to the armed forces, which was evidenced by positive responses from a number of participants and the presenters alike.

Over the course of the discussions, it was revealed that the military personnel in fact wanted to discuss more in depth the problems they find important, and which the extremists exploit for their aims, such as the Roma issue (espe-

cially relevant for the units serving in the north of the country) or issues of foreign policy such as the status of Kosovo – at the time very much a sensitive foreign policy issue (Mareš, Smolík and Vejvodová 2010a). On this occasion, it was shown that in addition to lectures by extremism experts, also suitable would be presentations by specialists on the selected political and societal issues facing the Czech Republic, or discussions with well-known personalities from culture, spiritual area or politics.

What's more, in 2012 former Minister of Defense Alexandr Vondra wanted to introduce history studies and social sciences at the Defense University to intensify the fight against extremism, (Gazdík 2012), nevertheless, this goal was never fulfilled. At the time of this writing, the phenomenon of extremism is included in the training courses for higher-ranking officers and members of the General Staff, which is offered by the Defense University.

## A STUDY: RESERVISTS AND NON-STATE PARAMILITARY

The Armed Forces of the Czech Republic have some competition in the form of non-state paramilitary groups, often with close ties to the radical and extremist political streams. These units are readily open to recruiting reserve military personnel (including military recruits who have completed basic military service or former professional soldiers). These individuals, due to their political views, refuse to become officially included in the Army Reserves of the Czech Republic.

Para-militarism outside of the official state control is registering a dynamic transformation. While back in the 1990s to approximately 2005, the paramilitary organizations could be classified predominantly as short-lived with close to the racist skinhead sub-culture, while other ones have continued in the tradition of the first Czechoslovak state, as well as the protectorate (e.g. Svatoplukovy Guardy [Svatopluk's Guards] affiliated with the National Alliance

during 1999-2000) (Mareš 2012a, 123-141). In addition, the establishment of the Hungarian Guard in 2007 in Hungary has provided inspiration for similarly-minded groups in the Czech Republic.

The same year, (2007) National Guard was formed in the Czech Republic, affiliated with the National Party (one of its members on the so-called patrol duty in Karlovy Vary in 2008 was a former professional soldier). The following year (2008) Ochranné sbory Dělnické strany [Labor Party Protection Corps] were founded. These have played an important role during the anti-Roma unrests stirred up in the northern regions of the Czech Republic and were one of the reasons for the disbandment of the party by court order in 2010. The successor to Labor Party Protection Corps, called Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti (DSSS) [Labor Party of Social Justice] had established Občanské hlídky [Civic Patrols] (Mareš 2012a, 142-164). In 2013, the organization Čeští lvi [Czech Lions], which has branched off from DSSS established a para-military unit called Rodobrana [Heritage Defense], which was however short-lived. The above-mentioned groups were focusing on maintaining “public order” in line with their definition by organizing controversial activities focused on the anti-Roma theme.

In 2014, in the eastern part of the country, an organization appeared called Moravští branci [Morava Recruits], inspired by and with personal inter-linkages to Slovak Recruits (Moravští branci 2014). The crisis in Ukraine brought with it a significant change in the direction of Czech para-militarism outside of the state control. Several Czech citizens have joined the fight in the Ukraine (Mareš and Výborný 2015, 2). At the outset of 2015, a new group was established by the name of Czechoslovak reserve soldiers against war under the NATO command, which has come out against the official Czech policy in the Ukrainian crisis as a NATO member country. Later the group was re-named to the Czechoslovak reserve soldiers for peace.

Milan Obrtel, veteran of foreign missions of the Army of the Czech Republic became one of the leading representatives and at the same time the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovak battalion of reservists. This organization is involved in agitation activities across the Czech Republic using the so-called

“advisory bonfires”, bringing together individuals from the ranks of reservists across different locations throughout the country. This stage is followed by military training. The organization has made calls for boycotting the official government line, paying tribute to other historic oaths of service in the Armed Forces (Zelená 2015). After the breakout of the refugee crisis, the organization has volunteered its capacities, offering to take part in patrol duty to stem the refugee waves (Českolovenští vojáci v záloze pro mír 2015). We can estimate the number of members of this organization at 150.

Národní demokracie [National Democracy], a right-wing extremist party has in 2015 initiated the creation of the National Self-Defense of the Czech Republic, which in the words of its chairman, Adam Bartoš aims to “Ease the establishment of individual self-defense units and preside over those already in existence” (Tyršův prapor v Děčíně [Tyrsa Battalion in Decin], Jižní Haná na vyškovsku [South Haná in the Vyškov region, etc. (Bartoš 2015). In addition, there are also active associations in the Czech Republic of Domobrana [Self-Defense] and Domoobrana [Home-Defense], however, these focus on issues of street security, without any known connection to extremist or radical streams or the military scene (Domoobrana 2015; Kučera and Mareš 2014). Nevertheless, the recent development in the world affairs requires that the army communicates even more effectively with the reservists and tries to dissuade them from joining a range of controversial para-military groupings.

## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OF EXTREMISM IN THE ARMED FORCES – STATE’S (DIS)INTEREST?

A number of incidents involving extremism in the armed forces has on one hand spurred great interest on part of the MoD in cooperating with lecturers and specialist presenters, as well as on ad-hoc publications (see below). On the other hand, this has not led to increased support for longer-term research projects on this issue as part of defense or security research. Individual studies were elaborated by authors from the civilian sector, who were involved

with the above-mentioned lecture series, presenting their research findings (Mareš 2009), whether it was the basic evaluation of their experiences (Mareš, Smolík and Vejvodová 2010a) or analyzing the survey research conducted in military units (Mareš, Smolík, Vejvodová 2010b), or the discussion on the penalties for the display of extremist symbols in the army (Smolík 2010).

In some cases, the above-mentioned topics were incorporated into a broader context of other current challenges, such as publications about para-militarism in the Czech Republic, which was the outcome of a similar project supported by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic (Mareš 2012a).

The DoD has only published the basic concept studies (Svoboda and Vičar 2009; Svoboda a Hrbata 2014), however, a more in-depth specialized research was not undertaken. The Defense University has in 2010 allocated resources for the publication titled “Political extremism and terrorism as a threat to the internal security of the state”, which was for the most part based on contributions by authors outside the Ministry (with one exception of the main author, Ivo Svoboda) (Svoboda et al 2010). However, it lacked any deeper collaborative research by a team of authors. The work did not receive favorable reviews (Smolík 2011). After that, the Defense University has only published generally-focused presentations on extremism as part of other broader projects (Stojar 2013).

One of the examples highlighting the need for supporting long-term research on extremism in the army is the extremism handbook, published by the MoD in 2011 (Mareš, Stehlík and Svoboda 2011). The publisher has pinned great hopes on it and its preparation was initiated by the above-mentioned incident involving Nazi symbols emblazoned on the helmets of Czech soldiers in Afghanistan. That’s why originally, the publication was to focus only on extremist symbolism, and be an updated version of the 2006 manual on symbolism, intended for use by the Czech Police (Mareš 2006). An approval for such an update, however, was required by the Ministry of Interior.

Gradually, the scope of the publication became expanded, and in addition to the section on symbolism, it was to contain the general guidelines for

identifying extremists in the ranks of the army, and their aims inside the army, which was to aid officers in identifying manifestations of extremism. What's more, the complications grew with each new demand on the scope of the covered topics. Some of the calls were to include the legal issues connected to extremism, as well as the education aspect, with focus on presenting to military personnel the positive traditions of their homeland and its armed forces (and to dissuade them from leaning toward neo-Nazism). In the end, all these sections made it into the publication, even though it remains contentious whether the part on extremists' aims should not have been reserved for a more specialized publication intended for a smaller audience than is the part covering military traditions. Some in the military have even dubbed it "the guide to extremism" (Stratilík 2011).

Originally, a service manual was also to go hand-in-hand with the publication, which was criticized by the Military Police, because according to internal standards, for the MoD the term "service manual" carries executive force and for its intended audience constitutes a binding act. This kind of designation was not possible due to the structure and the content of the publication (Vojenská policie 2010). That is why the publication saw the day of light "only" as a standard educational resource and as such was distributed to individual units. On the occasion of its publication, a press conference was organized, during which the Minister of Defense Alexander Vondra has rejected criticism that it presented a "how to" manual (Ministerstvo obrany 2011).

A long-term research project would allow differentiating various types of materials on extremism in the army (analytical, advisory, educational, etc.) without having to include several different topics under one publication. Given the growth of para-militarism in the Czech Republic, a good solution to how to go about achieving that was presented by the Grant Agency project ČR GA407/09/0100 – Contemporary Para-Militarism in the Czech Republic in the Context of Trans-National Trends of Political Violence in Europe by the author of this text at the Masaryk University during 2009-2012 (Mareš 2012a).

## CONCLUSION

As was shown, a consistent policy for combatting political extremism in the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic saw its start in the period 2005–2010, effectively spurred by the media coverage of several incidents, which has generated increased political interest in the issue. What remains a question is how effective were the preventive and monitoring mechanisms up until the breaking of the stories of extremists in the midst of the Czech Army. Following that, some headway was made in standardizing cooperation between the security services, which is necessary given the shared interests between the Police, Military Police, and civilian and military intelligence services with regard to this issue.

What's more, the Czech legal system has also reacted to extremism in the armed forces, even though it was not always successful in covering for all of the consequences of the adopted legislation.

In an effort to prevent further radicalization of military personnel, a series of lectures on extremism took place across all the units of the military. Even though it arose some interest, the ensuing discussions have revealed how important it is to also discuss the core issues exploited by the extremists to set their agenda (including the Roma issue, foreign policy and others). The Ministry of Defense has attached considerable importance to the Extremism Handbook for the Military Personnel, which was accompanied by conflicts over its very nature. To add to that, its reception by the media was not overtly positive either. Nevertheless, it has brought greater level of knowledge about extremism into the military.

A more in-depth scientific research on extremism is very much still lacking, also due to the fact that the MoD or any of its departments have not required it. That said, it is important that it was possible to at least establish a basic framework for countering extremism in the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, which can be further built upon in response to present-day challenges (such as reservists being recruited by para-military groups).

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# COUNTER EXTREMISM AND DERADICALIZATION IN THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES AND POLICE

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## INTRODUCTION

When in May 2015 a nationwide scandal in Germany brought the public attention to possible racist violence within the German Federal Police (Bundespolizei – BP) after two policemen had tortured Muslim refugees in their holding cells (Spiegel 2015) only few commentators looked beyond that specific incident and asked about radicalization and counter-radicalization in regard to the German armed forces (Bundeswehr – BW) or police. And indeed only rarely clear cases of extremist radicalization (mostly right-wing, partially jihadist) become evident in Germany. Some however, are worth mentioning. After the detection of the right-wing extremist terror cell “National Socialist Underground” (NSU) in 2011 with more than 14 years of clandestine activities including 10 known assassination victims, many grave failures of the authorities preventing an earlier detection of the group became publically known. One of the trio’s members – Uwe Mundlos – served in the German military between 1994 and 1995. During his time of active service his extreme right-wing ideology became known to his superior officers and even the military intelligence (Militärischer Abschirmdienst MAD). Despite clear regulations, however Mundlos was not discharged and on the contrary even promoted

(Gebauer 2012b). In the process uncovering the networks of the NSU, it became publically known that the unit of one of the group's victims – the police officer Michelle Kiesewetter – contained several active-duty officers who were members of the local division of the Ku Klux Klan (Zeit 2012).

After some very mild disciplinary actions, these officers were not removed from active duty (Spiegel 2012). Other incidents involving right-wing propaganda or personal connections to the right-wing movement in the German police have become known from time to time. For example in 2014 when neo-Nazi stickers were found inside a police bus (Spiegel 2014) or in 2015 when four police officers in Brandenburg were involved in dubious roles to suppress charges against neo-Nazis, went to neo-Nazi rallies, and had personal connections to the movement (Metzner 2015).

In general, right-wing extremism statistically is a much more present threat for the armed forces. In 2013 alone the MAD investigated 309 right-wing extremist incidents resulting in the discharge of three soldiers (Schindler 2014). Naturally, fewer instances of Islamic extremist radicalization within the German armed forces and police are known. In May 2012 for example a Police Commissioner in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia was suspended because his ties to radical Salafist circles became known (dapd 2012). For a short period of time this officer also worked for the state intelligence service (Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz – LfV) in charge of observation of radical and extremist milieus. Islamic extremism has also caused some concern within the German armed forces. After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 and the massive surge in Western citizens travelling to Syria and joining radical jihadist fractions (i.e. foreign fighters), the German military intelligence (MAD) has identified at least 25 former soldiers who have joined the “Islamic State” organization (Gebauer and Schindler 2015). In comparison, in 2013 only seven Islamic extremists were identified in the German military, resulting in the discharge of four soldiers (Schindler 2014). In 2015 one case of an active service sergeant who allegedly deserted his unit to fight against the “Islamic State” on the Kurdish side was reported, but remains unclarified (Gebauer 2015).

In short, the topics of radicalization and counter-radicalization within the German armed forces and police have received only very limited academic attention and are only marginally discussed among the German public, except shortly during periods after certain incidents like the above-mentioned ones. This article will give a first-hand overview regarding extremist radicalization and counter-radicalization within the German armed forces and police, explain the vetting mechanisms employed during enlistment and departure of individuals from the armed forces, discuss examples of bad and good practices utilized for mitigating radicalization within the armed forces, suggest guidelines for preventing violent radicalization from entering the ranks of the armed forces. Finally, this article will give some recommendations for the future or propose measures for deradicalization efforts regarding extremist members in the armed forces and police.

## **RADICALIZATION IN THE ARMED FORCES AND IN THE POLICE**

Violent extremism within the German armed forces and police has only occasionally been a topic for academics and the press. Although highly problematic relationships between right-wing extremism (which arguably has an inherent attraction to militaristic organizations, weaponry and the German army especially) and the military regularly surfaced since the founding of the modern German army in 1955. Several cases of right-wing terrorism involving active servicemen have highlighted the potential threat of right-wing militancy within the armed forces.

One of the first right-wing terrorist groups to emerge after the Second World War for example – the “Nationalsozialistische Kampfgruppe Großdeutschland” (National Socialist Combat Group Greater Germany) – included at least three active non-commissioned officers and plotted to execute bomb attacks against government installations, communists and Jews in 1972 (Rosen 1989). One year later in 1973 another small group of six neo-Nazis – the so-called

“Gruppe Neumann” (Group Neumann) – carried out an arson attack and plotted to take hostages. One member of the group was an active sergeant of the German army and another one a police cadet and former officer candidate (Rosen 1989). In 1976 active private Dieter Epplen attempted to blow up the radio station of the Allied Forces AFN in Munich and the first right-wing group to be officially convicted of terrorism – the so-called “Wehr-sport-gruppe Wehrwolf” (Military Sports Group Werewolf) active between 1977 and 1978 – included at least one active corporal in its ranks. Several additional cases could be mentioned but probably one of the most prominent is the former lieutenant Michael Kühnen (1955–1991), one of the leading ideologues of the militant Far-Right in Germany in the late 1970s and 80s. Kühnen served as an officer between 1974 and 1977 and studied at the University of the Armed Forces in Hamburg. He was dishonourably discharged due to his extreme right-wing activities in 1977.

Perhaps due to the undeniable accumulation of right-wing incidents involving the armed forces in the 1970s, a first major study attempting to analyse the political opinions of officer candidates<sup>1</sup> was conducted in the late 1970s. The study found that a total of 10% of all candidates (classes of 1973–1975 with a total of 638 officers) had extreme right-wing political opinions (Gessenharter, Fröchling, and Krupp 1978). Another representative poll from 1993 revealed that 77% of those interested in joining the armed forces had permanent extreme right-wing worldviews (Kohr 1993). This relationship between right-wing opinions and favourable attitudes towards the military was largely confirmed by a subsequent study carried out eight years later (Gareis, Kozielski, and Kratschmar 2001). Although an inherent affinity towards military, weapons, uniforms and strict hierarchies might be essential to the Far-Right, problematic traditions and continuities between the modern German army – the Bundeswehr – and the Wehrmacht of the Third Reich might be

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1 This study focused on right-wing extremist opinions in the German Army’s officer corps. The following studies looked more broadly at political and social attitudes of officers, including right-wing and extremist tendencies.

another reason for that attraction (Klotz and Gerlach 1998). However, right-wing incidents involving enlisted men continued to happen almost every year. In January 1995 for example the convicted right-wing terrorist Manfred Roeder was allowed to give a lecture at the Leadership Academy (Führungs-akademie) of the Bundeswehr as part of the officers' education preceding a wave of right-wing incidents in the army in the late 1990s (Shpiro 2000). One of the more serious incidents took place in March 1997 when a group of nine soldiers attacked three immigrants in Detmold (Spiegel 1997; Shpiro 2000, 231) and in 2006 when members of the elite special forces KSK in Afghanistan painted a version of the Wehrmacht's Afrika Korps symbol on their vehicles (Spiegel 2006).

Right-wing convictions within the German army were commonly explained by the conscription model, which would automatically bring in recruits from every political and personal background to the military. However, the officers corps should not have been affected by this 'natural political turnover' and a similar study to the one from 1978, which has looked at the political views of German army officers (conducted in 2007 with 2,300 participants, all students of both armed forces universities) still revealed a strong political affinity to the 'New Right' for 13% of all future officers and a close right-wing extremist view in four percent (Bulmahn et al. 2010).

After the conscription was abolished in Germany in 2011 and the armed forces were transformed to a volunteer-based military, many experts expected more right-wing extremists trying to enlist because a career in the Bundeswehr would now become more attractive to those persons with few or none chances on the private job market (Wolffsohn 2013).

Another aspect regarding the threat of right-wing extremism for the armed forces is the widespread use of private security corporations to guard military installations such as barracks, and vehicle depots (Jungholt and Lutz 2014). Aiming to outsource expensive guard duties performed by enlisted personnel to cheaper private providers poses a much greater risk regarding extremism for the military. This is (not only) due to the fact that private security corporations are substantially less regulated and their personnel subject

to less scrutiny compared to soldiers and other members of the armed forces. In addition, the police and intelligence services have warned that right-wing extremists may seek private security corporations, finding them highly attractive and strategically try to get employment in this sector. In the German state of Brandenburg for example, about 10% of all right-wing extremists work for private security providers (dpa 2013) and from other states a number of violent hate crimes perpetrated by private security personnel became publicly known. In September 2014 for example, a group of private security guards at a refugee centre in North Rhine-Westphalia brutally tortured a refugee, which led to a nation-wide scandal (Sueddeutsche/dpa 2014).

Regarding right-wing extremism or xenophobia within the police ranks, there is only one study from 1996 so far, suggesting that right-wing opinions among police officers are not at all common but are also not all that rare either (Willem, Eckert, and Jungbauer 1996). Partially attributed to specific stress and experiences on the job, this study suggested that one-sided encounters with criminal immigrants might foster xenophobic tendencies amongst policemen. Although many experts have called for additional and updated studies on this matter, so far none have been commissioned by the Ministries of the Interior (federal and state level). After the above-mentioned torture incident which also involved police officers deliberately avoiding to report their colleagues for fear of stigmatization as whistle-blowers, experts have called for the development of a new culture regarding the handling of professional transgressions and misconduct within the police force (Diel 2015).

Although so far no academic study regarding Islamic extremism within the armed forces and police exists, the director of the military intelligence (MAD) Christof Gramm issued a warning that the Bundeswehr could be strategically infiltrated by Jihadists to receive training they could use in Syria and Iraq (Flade and Jungholt 2015). As the statistics cited above show however, only a very small number of Islamic extremists actually join the armed forces and are usually dismissed very early on. So far from what is publically known, there does not seem to be a strong move to infiltrate the armed forces or the police by German Salafists or Jihadists.

Germany has – partially as a consequence of exploitation of the police and armed forces by the National Socialists for political goals – implemented quite strict regulations and procedures regarding extremist and anti-democratic opinions and behaviour within the security agencies in general, and in the military in particular. All civil servants (including police officers and soldiers) have to take an oath before the German constitution and vow to uphold and defend the democratic and pluralistic foundations of the German state. Extremist behaviour and opinions are strong reasons for discharge and removal from office. However, the membership in a legally-registered party, such as the right-wing extreme NPD (which currently faces the second attempt to be banned) might not be reason enough to remove someone from any position. Nevertheless, higher standards are in place for the armed forces and police (in contrast to e.g. teachers or administration employees). All applicants for a job with the police or those seeking a career within the armed forces have to undergo a standard background screening and provide a clear criminal records certificate. However, all entries in the crime registry have – depending on to the sentence and type of crime – permanence and can only be expunged after five to 20 years. Petty crimes will be automatically erased once the individual turns legal age. This mechanism is the first line of defence for preventing extremists from entering the police or military. In addition, during the application procedures a series of interviews and personal assessments is also in place, intended to shed more light on the candidate's psychological and political profile. However, as the regulations are not always strictly enforced, additional institutions are tasked with detecting, monitoring and removal of these individuals from potentially high-ranking and sensitive positions.

Regarding the Bundeswehr, the military intelligence (MAD) has the responsibility to monitor and investigate all extremism-related incidents involving members of the armed forces (in addition to counter-terrorism and counter-intelligence). Military police (Feldjäger) does not however have responsibilities with regards to counter-extremism. On the civilian side, all German states run their own intelligence (Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz LfV – office for the

protection of the constitution) as does the federal government (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz BfV) and as do special divisions within the criminal police (polizeilicher Staatsschutz) responsible for politically motivated crimes (i.e. extremism and terrorism) as outlined by the German criminal code. While the criminal police Staatsschutz divisions are legally part of the police and thusly tasked with classical crime repression and law enforcement work, the intelligence is not subordinated to the executive branch and does not adhere to the principle of the mandatory prosecution of offenses (Legalitätsprinzip). Their main task however, lies in monitoring extremist and terrorist activities and in informing politicians and the police if necessary.

A strict organizational separation between intelligence and police was implemented after the Second World War to avoid the possibility of another “political” or “secret” police. In theory both – intelligence and police Staatsschutz – can collect information about extremists within the police (in case of the armed forces, only the MAD can do this) and inform the prosecutors or superiors in charge.

All government institutions can make use of administrative assistance of other intelligence and police units and request information about certain individuals to check if they have been known as extremist offenders previously in another state. Sometimes, intelligence and police also proactively warn other institutions about well-known offenders trying to get into the police or armed forces. In general, the German clearing mechanisms are well designed with interlinked specialized institutions built on clear-cut legal regulations regarding the duties and responsibilities of police officers and military personnel. As in fact every year incidents (mostly right-wing extremist) involving members of the armed forces and police officers become public, the question can be raised if the whole mechanism is faulty or if it is simply not used adequately and consequently enough. In these cases of failure that became publically known, the reason was mostly inadequate communication between the agencies or deliberately slack implementation of regulations already on the books. Regularly civil society watchdogs, journalists and left-wing opposition parties criticize the approach of police and military towards potential and known extremists as too weak and not consequent

enough, which can be backed by some extraordinary cases of failure to respond to individual extremists according to the regulations in place. However, from what is known about counter-extremism work within the police and military, the main reason for these shortcomings is not anything like institutional racism or turning a blind eye on the problem, but simply a lack of awareness and knowledge about the options open for the authorities in combatting extremism and its manifestations.

## GOOD AND BAD EXAMPLES

Two bad examples of handling extremists within the armed forces and police have already been mentioned but are worth exploring in detail. Uwe Mundlos (1973–2011) was one member of the so-called “National Socialist Underground” (NSU) terror cell consisting of three members. During their clandestine activities between 1998 and 2011 the group allegedly assassinated nine immigrant shopkeepers, one police officer, carried out three explosives attacks and 14 armed robberies. Between April 1994 and March 1995 Uwe Mundlos served in the Bundeswehr in an armoured infantry battalion. During his time of active service, Mundlos did not hide his extreme right-wing ideology and his superior officer requested disciplinary actions and a seven day detention because he was found singing right-wing songs, carrying pictures of Adolf Hitler and was in possession of illegal right-wing music (stored at his private apartment). The military court did not uphold the detention and disciplinary actions, however and Mundlos was not disciplined either (Gebauer 2012b). Also, during his active service in the military, the intelligence unit (MAD) investigated Mundlos as a potential right-wing extremist and interrogated him. During the interrogation, MAD agents tried to recruit Mundlos as an informant, which he refused. Afterwards no further actions were taken by the MAD (Gebauer 2012a). Against all regulations Mundlos was promoted to private first class (Obergefreiter), received training in heavy weaponry and a ‘satisfactory’ grade certificate for his military service (Gebauer 2012b).

Although Mundlos' neo-Nazi ideology was clear to his superior officers, the responsible military court and the military intelligence, no action was taken to remove him from the armed forces. On the contrary, he was promoted and trained in the use of heavy weaponry. It is not exactly clear why the military intelligence (after Mundlos' refusal to cooperate), did not request his discharge. In this case, no regulations regarding right-wing extremists in the armed forces were followed and even forbidden actions were taken (i.e. promotion).

The second bad example is also taken out of the NSU complex and was mentioned earlier. Michèle Kiesewetter – a police officer in Heilbronn – is the last known assassination victim of the NSU, killed in April 2007. At least two of her colleagues – including her squad leader – were briefly members of the local Ku Klux Klan division (Gathmann 2012). In 2003, their superior officer learned about the two officers' involvement in the Klan and started disciplinary investigation, which however has only led to formal reprimand (lowest possible disciplinary action). One of the reasons for this was – according to the ministry in charge – that legal deadlines for more substantial punishment were missed. Another reason was that the two officers claimed they would not have known about the racist nature of the Klan (Spiegel 2012).

It is not known why exactly the investigations took so long, which has led to the missing of deadlines for harsher disciplinary actions to be taken. At least one of the officers in question was still in his probation period during the time of his involvement in the Klan and could have been discharged easily. Both officers remain in service by the time of this writing.

Although the incidents and cases above might indicate a number of disasters regarding prevention of radicalism within the police and armed forces, there are also examples of how effectively the German clearing mechanisms can work. After a wave of right-wing incidents in the Bundeswehr in the late 1990s, reported widely in the German press – which incidentally underscores the importance of independent journalism – the German Parliament (Bundestag, editor's note) established an investigation committee tasked to look into the extend and root causes of right-wing extremism in the military led by the opposition parties (Shapiro 2000). Active between January and June

1998, the committee members visited military installations, heard witness testimonies, and extensively studied internal records. In its final report, the committee identified a number of isolated right-wing groups of soldiers, but could at the same time dispel fears of a broad right-wing radical infiltration into the German military. Pointing to a number of problems in recruitment, training and reporting mechanisms, and the committee was a highly effective tool for assessment and identification of problems in the vetting mechanism against radical and extreme ideologies in the Bundeswehr. A similar tool for use in the German Police has not been developed so far.

## GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXTREMISM'S PREVENTION

Preventing violent extremist ideologies from entering the armed forces or police is no easy task. As freedom of speech, political and religious views are equally valid fundamental rights for police officers and military personnel, any form of counter-extremism within these agencies must constantly and carefully balance these fundamental rights against possible threats and security risks. On the other hand, violent extremist ideologies might be very hard to detect within an environment that naturally includes weapons, violence, uniforms, strict hierarchies and even strong codes of honour, masculinity and patriotism. It seems that at least some forms of extremism do possess the potential to blend in with such an environment and stay undetected (especially right-wing extremism). In contrast, many generally-accepted norms, values and behavioural patterns in the police and the armed forces would seem radical, or even extremist in the civil society, when taken outside this context. This exemplifies that the threshold for identifying extremist ideologies and behaviour is different than outside of these institutions, which also makes it much more difficult.

Therefore, the first step to effective prevention regarding extremist infiltration of the armed forces and police is via gaining intimate knowledge of the

radical ideologies in question, in conjunction with special expertise in risk and threat assessment. While we should use caution and restraint in treating every applicant as a potential extremist, certain standardized procedures and background checks can help, as in the case of Germany. The difficulty lies in finding the right time during the lifecycle of military personnel or member of police to assess whether an applicant is in fact at risks and whether he or she meets (a set) threshold criteria regarding extremist ideologies and radicalization. If scrutinized already during the application process, while the recruit is still practically a civilian, this might be considered too harsh and off-putting. Assessing the candidate's potential threat too late in his/her life-cycle incurs a higher risk. Ideally, risk assessment protocol should be executed already during the first weeks of training and the probation period that follows. This could also be conducted by external experts or joint task force specialized in the issue.

Germany does not suffer from a lack of clear regulations and laws regarding extremist offences in the armed forces and the police, but lacks coherent (partially due to the federal structure) implementation from time to time. At the same time, it has to be taken into consideration that still, with all known cases of extremism in the Bundeswehr and the police, the numbers are comparatively negligible when compared with the actual total number of employees working in these institutions.

Some additional specific recommendations can be made here nonetheless. Currently, the military intelligence (MAD) has no authority to investigate applicants before they are officially listed as military personnel. Any assessment (including potentially dangerous ideologies) is done by the 'career centres' of the armed forces and usually civilian employees and human resources officers. Technically, the application procedure only requires clean criminal record and puts more emphasis on the individual applicant's intelligence, health, physical and mental skills. If there is no obvious reason to suspect extremist ideology (e.g. through explicit tattoos revealed during medical examination), the matter is not investigated at all. Mandatory interviews with specialized agents from the MAD or other (maybe civilian) institutions could be made part of the application process as well so as to increase its efficiency.

Another very important issue relates to the difference between military and civilian counter-extremism measures. With the distinct exception of the German military, the country's repressive counter-extremism policy comprises two arms as described above: the intelligence, responsible for monitoring and assessment of groups and individuals, as well as the criminal police, responsible for law enforcement and sentencing for extremist crimes. This dual institutional approach – although far from perfect as the NSU case has shown – has failed to be adopted by the armed forces. Currently, the Bundeswehr includes only the military intelligence (MAD) component and entirely lacks independent criminal investigation service or law enforcement agency (as is the case for example with the United States Military). The German military police (Feldjäger) does not represent a classic law enforcement agency, but is rather responsible for upholding military discipline and standards, and has no recourse in criminal investigation. These newly proposed criminal investigation services should be based on civil-military-cooperation (CMC) and include also civilian experts on the issues at hand.

Compared with the current counter-extremism structure of the German police, the Bundeswehr does have one structural advantage: the position of an umpire („Wehrbeauftragter des Deutschen Bundestages“) who can be contacted by soldiers directly with any complaint about misconduct or even criminal behaviour. This umpire is independent and stands outside the military hierarchy. He/she reports directly the parliament and its defence committee, can visit military installations at will, and request access to information and data at any time. Only after the above-mentioned torture incident involving federal police officers and the subsequent public outcry, did the responsible authorities start to plan the implementation of such a mechanism within the federal police to give officers the opportunity to report misconduct without having to go through the chain of command. What's more, this police umpire will also most likely accept complaints from victims of police brutality or misconduct as well.

Besides this reform, which has taken place in Baden-Württemberg, only the state of Hessen implemented the institute of umpire for the police in 2010. As one consequence of the Ku Klux Klan scandal in Baden-Württemberg, the

Interior Ministry decided to build such a mechanism and to scrutinize applicants more rigorously. However, in the last ten years only 25 incidents with a right-wing or xenophobic background became evident in that state's police force (Spiegel 2012). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that of these only two officers had to pay a fine and the rest of the cases were dropped by the overseeing prosecutor's office (Spiegel 2012). In addition to implementing a umpire mechanism for all police forces across the board, mandatory trainings in inter-cultural dialogue and counter-extremism should be put in place for every officer as part of their basic training. Typically only those officers in specialized units (e.g. dealing with politically motivated crimes) have to undergo such trainings. What's more, as a lesson from past failures, after the discovery of the NSU terror cell, the parliamentary inquiry commission recommended a wide-reaching change in police training procedures and curriculum in order to reflect better on extremist ideologies (Schultz 2013).

One thing is clear – much more research is absolutely necessary to assess the extremist threat within the armed forces and the police. Only a handful of studies exist on the subject of political views of the German Bundeswehr officer corps, and only one such very limited study about xenophobia in the German police. Many experts blame this on political reluctance to look at this issue, with potentially very disturbing outcomes for the politicians who should be held accountable for the situation as it is today.

## RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING DERADICALIZATION

Deradicalization has been largely shunned by the German military and police, which is also reflected in the limited internal counter-terrorism efforts within the armed forces and police so far. Although several police agencies (e.g. in Baden-Württemberg) are running their own deradicalization programs, these are not targeting police officers or military personnel per se, but civilians who are extremists themselves and seek assistance in leaving radical groups and movements. Counter-extremism within the armed forces

and the police has traditionally only included identifying and removing (if possible) the suspect of such transgression. In case of the military, the MAD has also tried to recruit potential informants among the extremists in the Bundeswehr. Understandably, there is always the inherent risk of “leaving” a potential extremist active within the police or military, given that the success of a deradicalization procedure might take considerable time, resources and can only be evaluated with only a degree of certainty.

As the only alternative (albeit costly one), a special status for the extremist suspect might be considered (e.g. blocking access to weapons or high risk duties). Nevertheless, it would be highly questionable if police officers or soldiers who have gone through such a program are sent back to their original posts. It has to be kept in mind that police officers and military personnel are bound to the democratic principles of the German constitution through oath and that their code of conduct has to reflect their exceptional responsibilities as bearers of the monopoly on the use of violent force in the state.

It would simply be irresponsible of the government institutions to knowingly keep extremists<sup>2</sup> (who are hostile to these democratic principles by definition) in active service, which would violate the unwritten contract between the state and the population. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to offer follow-up strategies to these personnel who are removed from active duty and not to leave them on their own, which could potentially cause a higher radicalization risk. Once these individuals are transferred to civilian life, they can look forward to a wide array of governmental and non-governmental deradicalization programs across Germany.

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2 The term is of course highly controversial in Germany. While legally the term does only cover illegal and aggressive activities against the German constitutional order, a fierce debate amongst left-wing and conservative politicians and researchers about the scope of the term ‘extremist’ has been going on for almost a decade without a notable solution. To identify an extremist, the authorities usually stick to the line of illegal or criminal behaviour (connected to a certain ideology). In addition well known activities (e.g. participation in rallies or concerts), identifying symbols (e.g. tattoos, clothes) can also be used to determine affiliation with extremists or extremism. In general, the authorities enjoy broad discretion when it comes to deciding whether military or police personnel adhere to the constitutional order or not.

Although it might be necessary to establish a deradicalization program for former police officers and soldiers due to special needs, and maybe even due to knowledge of sensitive information, the number of potential clients for such a program would probably not be high enough to sustain it and justify the resources it would require. All in all, the first priority of the armed forces and police lies in preventing and reducing the risks to the fulfilment of their core tasks. Extremists therefore need to be prevented from joining the ranks of the military and police. They have to be uncovered and removed from service. Disciplinary actions should be used to the full extent possible even if they are hardly suitable in light of the changing political or religious ideologies.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Concluding this short article about counter-extremism and deradicalization in the German armed forces and police, it needs to be stressed that accounting for all active service members the threat of violent extremists strategically infiltrating law enforcement and military institutions is very low. Although a certain attraction of right-wing extremists to the Bundeswehr exists, the number of actual violent incidents involving enlisted personnel or right-wing motivated incidents within the military remains negligible. What's more, right-wing terrorist groups directly linked to the military have not been an issue in two decades. Regarding the German police, there is simply not enough evidence backed by scientific studies to validate the extent of xenophobic or right-wing tendencies amongst police officers. Nevertheless, we can point out some worrying incidents from the past, such as the NSU – and we can draw on the results of one study that indicates the need to explore this potential problem further. Needless to say, this becomes ever more difficult as the German federal structure allows a high degree of autonomy for the states regarding their own police forces. To conduct a nationwide representative study of all German police entities would prove extremely difficult, if not impossible. After the NSU discovery in 2011, several parliamentary inquiry

boards on federal and state level have indicated widespread anti-immigrant sentiments – although not a system that would be inherently supporting racism – within all levels of the police. These sentiments have strongly contributed to the failure to detect the right-wing terror cell in the past. All intelligence and police agencies involved in investigating crimes committed by the (at that time unknown) NSU have never suspected a right-wing background of the perpetrators, and had pointed a finger at other immigrants for the killings. In consequence the authorities never tried to combine the evidence with knowledge about possible right-wing killers or the extreme right-wing movement. This widespread notion of immigrants accounting for higher crime rates is deeply troubling as it strongly impedes the basic tasks and duties of the police, which is to investigate crimes, by objectively following all the leads in order to validate or disprove certain theories. However, with everything we know so far, there is no clear evidence of direct aid or protection of the NSU by either the police or intelligence services, despite the fact that the level of “incompetence”, lack of investigative coherence and the high number of intelligence informants in and around NSU might suggest otherwise.

For both – the military and the police – the first steps to more effective counter-extremism are through more consistent and transparent research looking at the real extent of extremist attitudes in the forces. Also of help would be a sensitivity training of sorts, which would heighten the awareness about xenophobia, right-wing extremism and jihadi ideologies in the midst of the German police and military. Establishing effective internal and external quality management mechanisms (e.g. umpires and neutral complaint management structures) are essential and so far only two German police forces in the federal system have done so.

Furthermore, training for police officers and military personnel lacks the element of counter-extremism almost completely. At least in the case of the Bundeswehr, recruit assessment is carried out, although with no specific background checks for extremism. A specialized military law enforcement and criminal investigation agency responsible for military personnel and wider responsibilities than the current military police would also be helpful. It

could identify and remove extremists from the armed forces. This is so because as the military intelligence (similar to its civilian counterpart) might give priority to collecting information and recruiting informants over the immediate removal and prosecution of individual extremists.

Last but not least, civil-military-cooperation in counter-extremism might be the most effective and innovative recommendation of all. Bringing civilian experts in radicalization, extremism and terrorism into specialized joint task forces would help to avoid path-dependency and organizational thinking, which has accounted for the largest share of failed counter-extremism measures.

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# **THE DANGERS OF INFILTRATION: RISKS OF RADICALS JOINING THE ARMED FORCES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN THE CASE OF POLAND**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this article is to describe the risks related to the penetration of national security services (law enforcement agencies, military, foreign and domestic intelligence services) by radical elements in the case of Poland. A special attention was paid to radicalization that leads to terrorism.

For the convenience of the reader, the following text is composed of three main parts. The first one describes the general political situation in Poland, with special attention to radical movements and political parties.

The second part is devoted to analysis of general risks related to the infiltration of radical elements into the security services, and the third one is an attempt to identify potential risks in Poland and contains suggestions of possible ways to mitigate those risks.

Polish political scene in the period 1989–2005 was almost clear of politically relevant radical elements and movements. Until 2005, there were two main forces: post-communists, gathered in a coalition named SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, Democratic Left Alliance) and post-Solidarity parties and coalitions, which underwent numerous changes, break-ups and alliances (Roszkowski 2006).

Radical far left and far right groups existed, but their social and political influence was almost negligible. Radical right-wing groups – mostly skin-heads – were not able to conduct any activities other than hooliganism and street-level violent acts (beatings, riots) or using various forms of hate speech (Kornak 2012). Many small groups tried to reactivate the pre-war Stronnictwo Narodowe (National Party). Although those groups managed to formally register a number of such parties, none of them was politically relevant until 2001. Far-left groups were confined to large cities. The most visible but marginal left-wing groups were radical greens (Urząd Ochrony Państwa 1999). In other words, radicals were at this time considered a kind of “political folklore”.

Only after the 2001 parliamentary elections, two parties, which may be considered radical (or hostile to the existing political system) managed to secure seats in parliament. Samoobrona (Self-defence) was a rural (agrarian) movement and a typical “protest party”. Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families), as the name suggests, was a highly conservative and nationalist party, one of the descendants of the new “national parties” mentioned above. The electoral base of those parties was different – in case of Samoobrona it was mostly rural and provincial electorate, frustrated by the difficult economic situation. LPR voters were conservatives, who perceived European integration as hostile to Polish culture and the Catholic Church. In that context, important was the support of conservative “Radio Maryja” radio station. Both parties became more relevant after the next elections in 2005 when they became members of the parliamentary coalition with the conservative party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS – Law and Justice) and when they came to power

(they have disintegrated due to political scandals, the sheer disproportion between their radical programs and the reality, and finally due to conflicts with PiS, which wanted to incorporate its ruling partners into the coalition. So the most successful of the radical parties so far has failed to achieve its goals.

After 2001 however, a new phenomenon has appeared which can be described as “soft” radicalism. In case of Poland, the most common ideological principle embodied in this idea stream is a notion that the “peaceful revolution” of 1989 is not yet over, or that this compromise was a bad choice, because it allowed members of *ancien regime* (including intelligence officers and members of security services) to save their power – political and economic. And those people, in cooperation with some members of former opposition (in this theory many of them were secret collaborators of communists) – have created a political and economic “gray network” (called “układ”), which became a source of all problems in Polish politics and the economy.

The “Gray network” may be defined as a group of individuals, working in a clandestine manner, which includes former or active members of intelligence or counter-intelligence services and exercises long-term control of important areas of social life (mass media, political parties, government agencies, key elements of the economic system) (compare Zybertowicz 2008, 188-190).

This concept is de-facto a conspiracy theory – and makes it possible to classify all actors using this concept as radicals. It is also the most important justification to describe some parties, fractions and persons as “soft radicals”. It may be considered a kind of a litmus test, a basic ideological assumption for radicals based on which all further “soft radical” ideologies are created.

So that concept of a “gray network” is used not only to explain why certain problems exist – and as any “good” conspiracy theory is applicable to any sphere of life – any kind of problems, from the health care system to higher education, from intelligence services to highway construction – all problems may be explained by the wrongdoing by the members of this “gray network”. And there are clear cases of various forms of “removing” this network by

actions of right wing politicians. “Soft radicalism” can be seen most notably in case of PiS and its political programme. PiS, as well as some small parties that were breakaway fractions of PiS and parts of Platforma Obywatelska (PO, Civic Platform) are actors with roots that may be traced back to “Solidarity”. Leaders, members and supporters of those parties and groups accept many of the democratic rules and principles, the parties are strongly pro-western in foreign policy programmes (and especially pro-US and pro-NATO), and they accept Poland’s membership in the EU. They also support market-based economy. On the whole, they are conservatives, in ideological alliance with conservatives in the Polish Catholic Church – and it is visible in such matters as abortion, in vitro regulations, LGBTQ rights, or education.

One of the earliest cases of political actions of these “soft radicals” was the process of “lustracja” (vetting) in which confidential informants of communist secret services would be exposed. This was first attempted in 1992 by members of J. Olszewski cabinet – and then the Minister of Internal Affairs Antoni Macierewicz, nowadays one of the most important politicians of PiS. This attempt, when weak evidence was used as a tool in the political fight (among those accused of secret collaboration were high-ranking political leaders including the speaker of the lower chamber of parliament W. Chrzanowski and Lech Wałęsa). Since then, the problem of “lustracja” remains still unresolved, and the candidates to certain public functions who were born before 1972 have to declare whether they were collaborators of security services, and in many cases, informal “lustration” is carried out by politicians and journalists. The main problem here is the quality of evidence – the existing data are incomplete, sometimes faked, and it usually requires deep investigation to prove or disprove any allegations.

But when the concept of a “gray network” is used in politics, it opens much wider areas whereby Round Table Agreements are disregarded, and Poland after 1989 is described as being ruled by the “network” and it is used to explain all political failures. It also creates the notion that the Polish state and its institutions (including the security forces) are “stolen” or “seized” by the members of the gray network. The most interesting problem here may be the fact that this notion itself is somehow self- legitimizing in terms of loyalty

towards the nation and the state. The very idea of the state hijacked by the gray network means that any action against the state or its structures in its present (“hijacked”) form, when conducted from certain ideological point may be explained as an act of “sanation” (healing) of the state, even an act of liberation.

Such an attempt was embodied in the creation of a new service – the anti-corruption bureau (Centralne Biuro Antykorupcyjne CBA), which was to “clear” the elites from corruption and in fact was in its early days controlled by PiS politicians and used in politically sensitive operations, which were to prove the existence of the “network” but failed to deliver any credible results. Also other civilian security services were used in similar operations, but to lesser effects.

Another and more spectacular incarnation was the case of military intelligence. In 2006, both PiS and the majority of PO deputies in parliament had supported a bill to dismantle military intelligence and counterintelligence service (Wojskowe Służby Informacyjne, WSI). According to PiS politicians – again, a notable person was Antoni Macierewicz – WSI were infiltrated by Russian intelligence services and had deep connections with organized crime. In the process of their dismantlement, a report was made, exposing a number of human sources and secret operations and none of the accusations made were later proven in court.

This concept can be also applied to conventional armed forces. Because most flag officers (generals and admirals) started their careers before 1989, and some of them graduated from Soviet military academies, they are obvious elements of the “gray network theory”. An additional problem related to the armed forces is the interpretation of Poland’s history, popular among right-wing groups and politicians that consider the military of pre-1989 Poland a Soviet political tool and who glorify the so-called “Żołnierze Wyklęci” (Cursed Soldiers) – members of the underground armies from World War II who remained in the underground after 1945 and formed short-lived anti-communist resistance groups.

The final problem of importance is the geographical basis for cleavages existent in Poland, where the eastern part of the country is traditionally conservative, supporting PiS and where influence of the Catholic Church is strong, while western Poland is more liberal, and is the electoral base of PO and left-wing parties.

## RADICALS AND SECURITY FORCES: GENERAL RISKS

Description of the potential risk of penetration of security services or radicalization of its members in Poland requires wider elaboration of general risks, which may be divided into two groups. One may be called tactical (short-term, where the effects are limited), second – strategic(long term, where effects are long- lasting and may affect the entire political system).

Tactical risks are, first of all, knowledge and training gained by radical elements. Military or police training contains areas of knowledge and *know-how* which may be highly attractive for radicals preparing terrorist attacks. According to several manuals written for terrorists by terrorists like *Mini manual of the Urban Guerilla* (Marighella, 1969), Breivik manifesto (Breivik 2011), Al-Qaeda training manual (US Department of Justice) knowledge about firearms and explosives, medical and tactical training, all of which are highly valued in terrorist activities.

There are some possibilities to gain such knowledge and skills outside the security services – in civilian medical schools or as sporting shooters or hunters. But military and law enforcement training is unique. For example, firearms training is not just about shooting (often, as in the case of competitive shooting or hunting, which is limited by other rules). It is training in the use military-grade weapons, including machine guns or grenade launchers, which also include ways of using firearms in order to eliminate the enemy in the most effective way.

The same thing can be said about medical training. Soldiers or police officers receive training tailored to the needs of their service, like basic treatment of gunshot wounds and medical evacuation under fire. Other elements of advanced training may also be useful for terrorists, particularly when such skills are difficult or impossible to acquire outside the security services.

Explosives and demolition training is one such area. In a civilian world, any explosives-related jobs are highly niche jobs (mostly in mining) and the civilian use of explosives is very much different than military. Military training in the use of explosives usually covers knowledge about using mines and other explosive devices against people, vehicles, buildings, roads, or bridges. And training in detection and disposal of such devices may be useful in preparing more lethal terrorist explosive devices.

This example highlights another area of knowledge and skill highly useful for terrorists. There are many aspects of police and military activities – including information gathering techniques which are a double-edged sword. Typical for police and some military units, of use to terrorists can be training in basic stationary and mobile surveillance, which may help terrorists to prepare an attack and also make them aware of signs of possible surveillance. This also applies to other elements of police and military activities.

Also, knowledge about tactics, techniques and procedures, internal organizational culture, people and equipment may be useful. When terrorists gather insider information about certain police tactics, they can plan their activities accordingly – i.e. making sure that the time of attack is adjusted to reaction time of police units, or they may be able to spot unmarked cars, knowing for example what models are used by plainclothes officers, or even recognize certain people as security forces personnel.

Information about people working in security services may also be used to further penetrate them in order to recruit new followers of radical ideologies or to acquire weapons or information. Usually in police or military units, weapons and ammunition are controlled, an officer or soldier cannot simply

take a weapon from stock, or use ammunition without accounting for it, and any loss must be reported immediately. If a member of a radical group steals a weapon to which he or she has access, this makes for a very short-sighted *modus operandi*. Unless the weapons are used, such loss would initiate investigation and raise suspicion. But when radicals or their collaborators work in positions giving them more control over equipment (i.e. in the logistic services), they may be able to help steal weapons and for some time conceal that certain items are no longer in the possession of the military or law enforcement.

The same principle applies to information that would be useful for terrorists – potential targets, critical infrastructure, but also about the radicals themselves. Highly valuable is information about investigations and sources of information about radicals (including human sources). But usually, such data is compartmentalized and used on “need-to-know” basis. This means that even if a member or a sympathizer of a terrorist group has access to certain level of information, he/she is only allowed to know about matters that directly involve his or her role in the service. Asking for more data or downloading it from computer systems is usually an accident waiting to happen. But again, the situation changes when a network of “informants” is formed, each piece of information may be gathered, compared to others and used to create a larger picture and support radicals’ activities.

Still yet, such deep forms of penetration of security services may still be considered “tactical” level. Strategic level is more than stealing weapons or information, more than obtaining training. It is the use of state security apparatus according to radical ideology and the political goals of radical actors. One could think of this as obtaining full control over security services, which would mean that a radical group would have to take over power in the entire state, but it would be a false impression. Also, false would be to expect an absolutely passive stance of the police or military if such an attempt was made.

In a successful terrorist campaign, one element is particularly important. It is a special kind of compliance of the state apparatus, which must act in a way

the terrorists want – like overreacting, using excessive physical force (e.g. heavy-handed crowd control methods), limiting citizens' rights, persecuting entire ethnic or political groups etc. The strategy of provocation is a classic terroristic strategy (Marighella 1969). In such cases, terrorists may secure strategic victory, even if they lose on a tactical level. They may not be able to conduct some kinds of attacks, or may lose some of the members of their network, but *overkill* leading to political fallout – when innocent person is killed or draconian security procedures are implemented are for them a political victory. When radicals penetrate the security services, they may be able – even at a low level – to use them as tools. One possible scenario may be intentional killing of selected person in order to fuel political conflict. In this scenario, we can mention the case of the killing of Benno Ohnesorg in West Berlin in 1967, which prompted radicalization of leftist youth and was one of the factors which led to the formation of radical left terrorist organization in Germany.

Other possible trajectory is the local diffusion of power. When radicals penetrate security services, their goal may not be nationwide. It is much easier to penetrate local agencies or departments, especially when the structure of such services is decentralized or there are close relations between the local society and formally centralized services (like military forces). Such a scenario may be very dangerous when political and social conflicts occur within a small territory – like city or a small province of a country (or border area). Local radical groups may “hijack” local branches of a service, creating force which becomes a de facto subordinate element of a radical group. This is also supported by the fact that security services are more likely to recruit only people with a specific background – like ethnicity, religious or racial identity, political stance or personal connections. This scenario was already highlighted by many past conflicts, like Ulster *Troubles*, where one of the elements of the ensuing peace process was creating a new police force composed equally of Catholics and Protestants. Recent riots in the United States also served as a stark reminder that when the demographics of the police force do not reflect the composition of the society, it becomes a flashpoint.

All of these factors and risks mean that effective prevention tools are required, which should minimize the risk of penetration of the military and law enforcement agencies by radical elements. Such tools must be adequate to the social and political situation, and the present and potential threats and the structure and organizational culture of the armed forces and police services.

## THE CASE OF POLAND

Poland in its recent history was not attacked by terrorists, however there were – and still are potential risks, foreign (mostly Islamic groups, due to strong Polish support of the US-led Global War on Terror), and domestic (Piekarski 2013).

The problem of infiltration into the security services in case of Poland may be connected with the phenomenon of paramilitary training and paramilitary organizations. Unlike traditional radical paramilitarism when a radical group forms its paramilitary wing, in Poland this process may be described as militaristic form of the above- mentioned *soft* radicalism.

Paramilitary organizations in Poland after the political changes emerged mostly as new incarnation of the 1939 organization “Związek Strzelecki” (Riflemen’s Association, also called “Strzelec” – Rifleman). This organization in its original form had very strong political position – it was created in the Austrian Galicia shortly before World War I and its members and leaders, like Józef Piłsudski, became later the political elite of Poland. The organization itself was controlled by government and tasked with preparing young men for military service by teaching them basic military skills (drills, physical training, shooting and others). Also, the social and national element of such activities, and reasserting of pro-government views cannot be omitted.

After 1989, several new groups were created, with support derived not directly from the state, but from right-wing political activities – almost all using in their names various forms of the word “Rifleman” or the phrase “Riflemen’s Association”. They are all legally registered associations. One is called “Związek Strzelecki Organizacja Społeczno – Wychowawcza” (Riflemen’s Association Social and Educational Organization”), there is also “Związek Strzelecki «Strzelec»” (Riflemen’s Association «Rifleman»)” or just “Riflemen’s Association”. What’s more, there is as Związek Strzelecki Rzeczypospolitej “Riflemen’s Association of the Republic”. This movement is strongly divided – and it is possibly the best- known example of the multiplicity of these organizations. Also, those organizations themselves are divided into smaller local detachments which are highly independent in their activities. The common core of their activities typically contains the following goals:

- Supporting the independence of Poland
- Education of youth to patriotism
- Preparing young men and women to military and civil defence service
- Promoting patriotism and Polish history and tradition (Związek Strzelecki 2015; Związek Strzelecki OSW 2015)

All these organizations conduct basic paramilitary training drills, basic weapons and shooting training, elements of infantry tactics, combat in the urban environment, field medicine, and radiocommunications.

Paramilitary organizations are not armed, although they may have access to firearms via commercial shooting ranges and use replicas of firearms (airsoft guns). Usually they use uniforms resembling military (the same camouflage pattern as Polish Armed Forces) with markings of “Riflemen” organizations. They receive limited support from the military, usually in the form of surplus equipment like uniforms or access to military training areas. Usually, they have signed agreements with the Ministry of Defence regarding such support (Dowództwo Generalne Rodzajów Sił Zbrojnych 2015). It should be noted that in many cases, military support or access to certain resources is a discretionary decision of the military personnel (i.e. commanders of military units) which means that often it is a matter of unofficial relations between military and paramilitary leaders, with obvious transparency problems.

Most of these organizations declare themselves apolitical. However, most of them are active in eastern (conservative) part of Poland. They resort to using language loaded with such terms like “nation” “patriotism” “state” in their programs. On the local level, they cooperate with local authorities, schools and the Catholic Church, often performing honorary duties on such occasions as important Catholic feasts or national events (Independence Day) (Piekarski 2015, 78-81).

Also in recent years, new elements in their programme appeared, as well as new groups, with notable example of one association called “Obronanarodowa.pl – Ruch na rzecz obrony terytorialnej” and a campaign “Odbudujmy Armię Krajową” (Rebuild Home Army) started by this association. Since 2010, the agenda of paramilitary groups was expanded to clearly focus on political demands with regards to the creation of Territorial Defence System, which would partly incorporate the existing organizations into the Armed Forces – but as autonomous actors.

Similar initiative called “Strzeleckie Pododdziały Obrony Narodowej” (Riflemen National Defence Subunits) was proposed by “Związek Strzelecki OSW.” The association was described as closely cooperating with local authorities and security services. Also in this particular case, the politicizing of paramilitary activism is visible because the official information published by “Związek Strzelecki OSW” informs that “SPON units shall support voice of Nation” which is quite a murky phrase about possible political activities espoused by these formations. Also, the leaders of “Związek Strzelecki OSW” expressed their gratitude to the right-wing website TV Republika.pl, and two conservative journalists (ZS Strzelec OSW 2014). Two units called SPON were formed in eastern Poland thus far in the towns of Świdnik and Jarosław.

It seems that the main intention of this initiative is raising formal status of paramilitary groups in order to receive more material resources (including weapons) from the military, but avoiding the consequences of being in the regular army. It should be noted that the ideological component is visibly stronger than it was in the past. This is in part evidenced in that Obronanarodowa.pl in its declaration regarding its “Rebuild Home Army”

campaign describes it as a voice of the new generation of Poles who want to “build free and just state on the basis of traditional values” (ObronaNarodowa.pl 2014). Not only the language is significant here, but also the name: “Home Army” in Polish history was an underground army operating during World War II. The concept of this campaign is based on an assumption that today’s Polish armed forces are not an effective national defence force – and liberal and post-communist elites are to blame (which is a very similar concept to the “gray network” theory). One of the mentors of this action is a deeply conservative politician Romuald Szeremietiew, and such initiatives received support from other conservative politicians as well. It is safe to say that these groups have managed to get their case into the open political agenda of right-wing parties and politicians are who promising to strengthen the Polish defence system by utilizing paramilitary organizations. Also, the armed forces and the present government both have noticed these groups and started to strengthen cooperation with them (Piekarski 2015, 81-84).

An obvious question arises: what makes such a situation dangerous or risky in the context of the radicalization of the armed forces?

First, the problem is due to the lack of effective control over autonomous paramilitary organizations. The military or the police cannot conduct vetting of its members and the leaders of these groups. It is itself risky, because there are no legal limits regarding paramilitary training in Poland, only the access to firearms or explosives is controlled.

Other risk lies in self-radicalization, especially in the above-mentioned context of political conflicts in Poland. The rhetoric about a “stolen nation” or the “gray network” used by right-wing politicians, in addition to the cult of “Cursed Soldiers”, using the names like “Home Army” are contributing to the creation of an atmosphere of perceived occupation or threat by those who are labeled as members of this “gray network”. So, the individuals joining these organizations, attracted by the uniforms, weapons, military training, with hopes of increasing their chances of joining a real military, may gradually radicalize and consider committing violent acts.

The second problem lies in the risk of radicalized individuals joining the armed forces. For the military, cooperation with paramilitary organizations has mostly personnel benefits – the army can find candidates who are usually already trained in basic soldier skills. This may, however, pose a whole new set of problems mentioned above, and the closer the contacts between military and paramilitary organizations, the more risk arises.

An additional problem is the geographical distribution of paramilitary groups, which are most active in the eastern, conservative part of Poland, where the economic situation is worse, compared to the western part of the country (which is a long-lasting problem). This makes for the military or other government job much desired by many young men and women from these areas. This may in turn lead to over-representation of the members of paramilitary organizations and further increase the risk of the institution's radicalization.

There is an unanswered question regarding these outlying problems – the degree of awareness of the military leaders. It may be just possible that these problems may be overlooked or ignored, because cooperation with local paramilitary groups may be considered a positive factor in relations with the local civilian authorities and “looks good” in the eyes of the military elites.

The fact that paramilitary organizations declare their support for the military, feeds in the recruits, and espouse “tradition”, “patriotism”, “duty” and similar may also help bring about a highly positive attitude among the military. It does not, however automatically mean that paramilitary training or the citizens' volunteer contribution to national defence is dangerous, or dominated by radical elements. But nevertheless, there are still questions about the role of paramilitary organizations in Poland's national defence system and as long as those questions remain unanswered, it will not be entirely clear if these groups do indeed provide valid and positive contribution to national security, or whether they remain a kind of “shadow army” loyal only to one end of the political spectrum. There are very few examples of actual infiltration of military and police services by radical elements in Poland, however, there is one confirmed case when members of a radical paramilitary

group tried to make contact with soldiers of special units, but it was done under cover by students of one of the private schools in Kraków (Woznicki 2013).

Although problems and dangers described in this article remain mostly at the level of potential risks, the combination of “soft radicalism” and “soft paramilitarism” may become a dangerous, combustible mixture, leading to all sorts of risks described in the second part of the text.

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# RADICALS IN UNIFORMS – A REAL THREAT TO SLOVAKIA?

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2011, a new phenomenon of right-wing extremist paramilitary groups attracted public attention in Slovakia when an entity called *Slovak Recruits* came into existence. This informal and unregistered organization, gathering young men willing to undergo military and combat training, started to gain public attention after it launched a series of trainings in weapons and military equipment in forests across different regions of Slovakia. Since then, their membership is on the rise, similarly as their activities.

Existence of such a group is understandably raising a lot of questions concerning security and consequences of their operating on the territory of the Slovak Republic. It is true especially for the fact that their existence, along with declared ambitions to protect the Slovak nation, suggests the intentions to partly substitute certain tasks under the domain of the official state security forces. More importantly, given the not entirely clear source of training know-how and equipment, there is a justified question of potential relations and linkages with military forces of the state as well as abroad. This has in fact been suggested by many incident reports in recent years, as is mentioned below.

The aim of this paper is to introduce the current situation in the Slovak Republic regarding this largely unexplored issue. Its side aim is to also outline the main challenges ahead as well as the biggest threats and consequences for internal security of the country. Firstly, the relevant theoretical framework and terminology is explained. Secondly, various potential ways of interconnections between members of armed forces and right-wing extremist actions will be introduced, including the outline of the most important incidents that recently took place in Slovakia, foreshadowing a potential threat and thus also outlining potential direction of future developments. Thirdly, the case of paramilitary groups in Slovakia will be analyzed in detail. Finally, the applied counteractions as well as further recommendations for solving the situation will be briefly introduced.

## DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

The clarification of the terminology is necessary given the diversity of the topic, especially in different geographical areas, and possible uncertainties as to the meaning of terminology used in relation to right-wing extremism. As of now, no unified definition of extremism has been adopted and the definitions differ depending on the circumstances, which are rapidly changing and evolving, as the list of below mentioned specific cases and their evolution suggests.

For the purpose of this article, where especially the relation of armed forces and right-wing extremism is taken into account, “right-wing extremism” is understood as an ideology that denies the concept of fundamental human rights, advocates against certain ethnic or nationalist minorities, and at the same time includes the main characteristic features of aggressive nationalism, elitist perception of own nation/ethnic group, xenophobia and anti-system and anti-democratic rhetoric etc. (see e.g. Mudde 2000; Mareš 2005). It is also important to distinguish between different forms and levels of radicalization according to the intensity of its manifestation. For this reason, we

should distinguish between right-wing extremism and right-wing radicalism, although the line between the two is still harder to identify. The main difference dwells in the intensity of anti-system attitudes; while radicals oppose the individual features of the democratic order, yet do not attempt to destroy it, while the extremists aim to change the whole system for another (see e.g. Mareš 2003; Stoss 2000 etc.) Moreover, it is also important to be aware of the fact that there are violent as well as non-violent manifestations of right-wing extremism, taking various organizational forms, such as political parties, civic associations or the already mentioned unregistered paramilitary groups.

Although some definitions of right-wing extremism contain violence is its natural part – e.g. *“organized discrimination and violence against persons belonging to other national/ethnic, religious or linguistic groups in society”* by Mudde (2005, 162) – this definition might not be sufficiently accurate anymore, given the rapid development on the right-wing extremist scene. It is mainly due to the trend of adopting more moderate rhetoric on part of the extremists in order to achieve successful entry into the political system, and thus also soften the way the organization is presented in public, which is also the case of the Slovak Republic.

Violence thus can be understood as one of the possible ways how to achieve ideological, political or religious goals through fear, intimidation or even physical attacks (Schmidt 2013), but taking into account the recent development, especially in the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe, this can be done also in a more stealthy way. This is also the reason why organizational or personal connections between different registered or unregistered right-wing extremist organizations should be closely monitored and analyzed.

Paradoxically, this does not mean that the violent part of the right-wing extremism’s manifestation is not relevant anymore. According to the model of radicalization, the process of radicalization of public opinion leads to violent extremism via legitimizing its violent manifestations as a justified part of the political agenda. The end result is often increased support from the public for

extreme action, given the fact that radicalization either of certain individuals or public opinion as such creates fertile ground for further violent action, either in the form of individual, group or mass violence (see e.g. McCauley and Moskalkenko 2008). Recently, we have been observing the emergence of right-wing extremist movements whose main ambition is to provide military and combat training to its members as a part of their strategy of achieving political aims. Moreover, the case of individual people resorting to violent action or so called “lone wolf” terrorists is another serious security issue that should be in the centre of attention.

The term *paramilitary group* can also refer to numerous types of organizations and wide range of actors, based on different categorization and distinguishing criteria, e.g. relation to the state authorities, aims and intentions, internal organization, or even relation to violence (see Mareš 2012). However, when talking about right-wing extremist paramilitary groups, the most appropriate characteristic features include the military and combat focus, as well as self-perception. What's more, partially applicable are features of security forces, hierarchical internal organization, often including a rank system as a part of internal hierarchy, use of uniforms and violence or threats to use it based on its capabilities (according to the definition of Scobell and Hammitt, as modified by Mareš 2012).

On the other hand, terrorist acts perpetrated by lone wolves are more individual, sometimes spontaneous and unplanned actions, conducted without any organizational support<sup>1</sup> (Fengen and Carlsson, 2013; Briggs, Goodwin and Ramalingam 2012), which is a security threat that is even harder to detect.

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1 Probably the most famous case of “lone-wolf” terrorist is Anders Behring Breivik, who has perpetrated attacks in Norway in 2011.

As mentioned above, the main focus of this article is to explore the cases of possible involvement of members of security forces, either current or former, in activities of right-wing extremist paramilitary groups, since such involvement might constitute a serious threat to the internal security of the country, as will be explained further below. Slovakia's position also needs to be understood within the broader context that can help shed more light on the sources of extremism and the possible consequences of such linkages. The interconnection between military forces and right-wing extremism is not a new issue and there are several examples of the phenomenon, historically as well as geographically, spanning other countries of the region. Here, particularly relevant are those cases (countries) that are regularly identified as sources of inspiration for the Slovak right-wing extremist scene, namely Germany, Czech Republic and Hungary.

In Slovakia, two basic sources of inspiration relevant to the issue of extremism could be identified. Firstly, there is the historical inspiration, which can explain the presence of para-militarism or violent activities of members of the right-wing extremist scene, both recent (especially during the 90-ties), and earlier (World War II period marked by Slovak clerical-fascist war-time state). The latter still serves as the most common ideological source for contemporary Slovak right-wing extremists.

Secondly, the inspiration extremists take from neighboring countries should be taken into account. It can help better understand the nature of the activities of paramilitary groups, and can also lead to further development of anti-extremist measures as will be shown below.

The concept of paramilitary groups, particularly if operating as home militias, is not new and was present already during the first years of existence of the Slovak Togetherness (*Slovenská Pospolitosť*), a right-wing extremist civic association (for a while also a political party) which had instituted wearing of official uniforms, resembling those worn by the wartime Hlinka's Guard,

suggesting a strong historical reference. Hlinka's Guard (Hlinkova garda), a paramilitary organization active between the years 1938 and 1945, was an associated organization to Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. The Slovak Togetherness has made several public appearances, appearing in dark blue uniforms and symbols inspired by those used in World War II., making open statements against minorities, especially Hungarians, Jews and Roma, as well as praising leaders of Slovak clerical-fascist war-time state<sup>2</sup>.

It is also important to mention the role of the right-wing extremist scene in Slovakia of the 90s. It was dominated mainly by unregistered and informally organized neo-Nazi groups, many operating as branches of foreign organizations (such as Blood and Honor Division Slovakia) and using violence as crucial part of their strategy. Although neo-Nazi groups principally do not fully comply with the definition of para-militarism, it is a relevant part of the picture, especially due to the presence of some crucial factors, such as using uniforms, using violence as a form of strategy aimed predominantly against minorities or immigrants, and protecting the majority groups (Mareš 2012).

In addition to historical influences, and drawing inspiration from neighboring countries, many reasons remain why this threat needs to be taken seriously, including its potential escalation. Hungary as Slovakia's neighboring country shares many similarities in terms of political development, social, political, economic and cultural situation, as well as support for right-wing extremist ideas. What's more, both Slovak and Hungarian right-wing extremist parties built their agenda on strong nationalism and xenophobia predominantly directed against the Roma as a sizeable minority in both countries.

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2 See e.g. the annual gatherings organized on the occasion of the anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak clerical-fascist war-state on March 14, public statements supporting its president Jozef Tiso (see for instance the speech of the then leader of Slovak Togetherness during the gathering on March 14, 2010 (Sýkora, 2010) or a more recent statement of the current leader of the organization (Škrabák, 2013). Moreover, Slovak Togetherness is traditionally active in organizing demonstrations against the Roma minority, using misleading titles such as a series of election campaign demonstrations 2009-2010, some with violent subtext, such as e.g. the most infamous demonstration held in Šarišské Michaľany in August 2009 entitled "*Demonstration against the Gypsy terror*".

However, apart from higher electoral results of the right-wing extremist party Jobbik – Movement for Better Hungary in the recent elections compared to Slovak People’s Party Our Slovakia (Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko), in Hungary is registering a significantly higher level of violence aimed at the Roma communities. This violence is carried out mainly by members of para-military groups called Hungarian Guard and the Véderö (Defence) organization. Among the most prominent cases of violence, the Hungarian Guard was accused of killing six Roma in North-Eastern Hungary between 2008 and 2009 (McDonald-Gibson 2013), while Véderö was involved in a series of violent attacks against Roma settlements in the city of Gyongyospata in northern Hungary in 2011 (Romea 2011). According to available sources, we can conjecture that the anti-Roma sentiment, as well as the dissatisfaction with the socio-economic situation and frustration with the (political) system in place is very similar in both countries.<sup>3</sup> Several parallels exist also with cases of violent behavior of the majority population towards the minority in Slovakia, yet on a smaller scale, usually confined to single incidents (e.g. the incident in Hurbanovo in 2012 when two Roma were killed by a police officer, or an incident involving shooting as a result of inter-ethnic conflict in Dubnica nad Váhom in 2012 (ERRC 2012). Especially in the present-day anti-immigrant and anti-minority atmosphere, such manifestations could take on an escalating tendency.

Especially important aspects of the functioning of the Hungarian Guard<sup>4</sup> are the regular military trainings over the weekend, conducted for its members in order to train them to take action against the enemies of the nation (Athena Institute 2013). It is particularly this aspect of their activity, which is very similar to the emerging activities of Slovak paramilitary groups, as will be further explained below. Last but not least, the Hungarian extremist scene is idolized by its Slovak counterparts and looked to for inspiration.

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3 High level of individual dissatisfaction with the current political and economic situation along with worsening attitudes towards minorities or immigrants is shown in many European surveys, such as DEREK Index or Eurostat.

4 Although the Hungarian Guard was officially dissolved in 2008, the organization has re-grouped and is still active under the altered name of The New Hungarian Guard.

## PARAMILITARY GROUPS OPERATING ON THE TERRITORY OF SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Currently, two significant paramilitary organizations are operating in the Slovak Republic, both active in military trainings of their members and characterized by open and hostile attitudes towards minority groups, as well as strict and even aggressive nationalism. Both organizations were included in the most recent official Strategy for Combatting Extremism for 2015–2019 as “sports-military” organizations displaying symbols of right-wing extremism and considered threatening, mainly due to their use of weapons (Ministerstvo vnútra 2015).

Slovak Conscripts (Slovenskí Branci) were established in 2011 and although self-proclaimed as an apolitical organization, the group has very clear and openly hostile attitude toward NATO and European Union.<sup>5</sup> It is estimated that the group currently has several hundred members (Kern 2015a) and their activities have increasing tendency (Ministerstvo vnútra 2015). One of the organization’s officially declared aims is “*to prepare young people to deal with various crisis situations and to be able to protect themselves, their family, relatives and their motherland*”, which according to their declarations involves also military tactics, conventional and guerilla combat styles and weapons training (Slovak Conscripts 2015a). Organized into divisions according to country and regions, their main activities consist of organizing military, combat and survival trainings<sup>6</sup> led by internal as well as external, and and foreign trainers, aiming to operate as a de-facto home militia.

Apart from trainings, Slovak Conscripts also organize tourist and educational activities for the purpose of promoting Slovak national history and aiming to

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5 See e.g. the statement published on Facebook page of Slovak Conscripts with the appeal “*to renew the borders*” and cancel the Schengen Agreement. According to the leader of the group, “*borders were created and have always been there for the protection of the citizens of the given country*” (Slovak Conscripts 2015b).

6 Examples of the activities organized by Slovak Conscripts can be seen also in the promotional video published by the group (Slovak Conscripts 2015d).

protect the Slovak nation against intruders.<sup>7</sup> According to the statements of the leader of the Slovak Conscripts, Peter Švrček, the reason for establishing the group is to provide young people with a platform to learn “*discipline and responsibility towards their own nation*” (Pravda 2015).

Action Group Kysuce Defiance (Vzdor Kysuce), also active since 2011, is another organization classified by the Ministry of Interior (2015) as an organization with paramilitary character aiming to provide military and combat trainings for its members,<sup>8</sup> while maintaining numerous nationalist-tinged tourist and public activities as an integral part of their agenda.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to Slovak Conscripts, this group is not as strictly apolitical, which is visible mainly from the activities of its leader Marian Magát, unsuccessful candidate in the local elections in 2014, and known for frequent openly xenophobic and racist statements (see e.g. Kysuce Defiance 2013). In the case of Kysuce Defiance, the interconnection between the organization and other subjects on the right-wing extremist scene is better observable, mainly with Slovak Togetherness (Slovenská Pospolitosť) and its previous leader Marian Kotleba, the current leader of People’s Party Our Slovakia (Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko) (Ministerstvo vnútra 2015).

Moreover, the characteristic feature of the Slovak right-wing extremist scene over the recent period is the persistent effort to enter the political arena and mainstream politics, which means that it is not the mere existence of paramilitary groups itself that should be considered when evaluating activities and efforts for self-presentation. Although [these groups] are constantly making appeals not to be labeled right-wing extremists, and claiming they

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7 As an example, apart from trainings over the past few years, Slovak Conscripts organized also several tourist activities as well as educational lectures for students of primary and secondary schools in Central Slovakia (see below).

8 Examples of the trainings organized by Kysuce Defiance can be seen also in the promotional video published by the group (Kysuce Defiance 2011).

9 According to the promotional materials by Action Group Kysuce Defiance published on Facebook, apart from the promotion of physical fitness, the group also focuses on education, exploring history, tourism, environmental events and sports (Kysuce Defiance 2015).

hold no ideology or political worldview (Pravda 2015; Mikušovič 2015b), several characteristic features indicate how close they really are to right-wing extremist ideology. Although the use of symbolism in their case is more cautious compared to other groups on the right-wing extremist scene, more telling is their participation at a number of events celebrating historical personalities from Slovak fascist war-state era (Holúbek 2012), numerous published linkages to other organizations on the right-wing extremist scene, and last but not least, manifestation of features resembling the historic home militia groups, predominantly Hlinka's Guard as was explained above.

## CURRENT CHALLENGES – DIFFERENT WAYS EXTREMISTS COME TOGETHER

We can conclude that sources of inspiration, both from history or abroad substantially influence and predefine the strategies and forms of organizing that are adopted by these groups. However, to what extent these groups could get “professionalized” is even a more important aspect; i.e. whether there are at the time of this writing, or might be sources of training and combat know-how or even military equipment available for those groups. Such access has a growing influence on the threat to the internal stability of the country. The potential linkages to official military forces as the main source of combat skills and resources in the country becomes a distinct possibility, especially after several incidents indicate that such connections might indeed exist.

There are several ways to establish such links, which then fuel concerns about possible involvement of the armed forces in the activities of right-wing extremist groups. It is all the more reason to talk about these issues and explore the causes and possible consequences for the internal security of the country. Based on the above-mentioned definitions and an overview of the situation on the right-wing extremist scene in Slovakia as well as in the broader region, two main pathways to cooperation should be considered.

Firstly, it is the involvement of current members of military forces in the activities of right-wing extremist movements as well as the probability of infiltration of the members of such groups into the military forces (including the armed forces as well as police). Secondly, there is also the issue of probability of involvement of former members of armed forces and police in activities of extremists, which is different mainly due to the specifics of their former active affiliation with the official security forces.

## RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS VS. SECURITY FORCES

Just recently, a new case involving a member of the armed forces, specifically Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade from Slovakia's air defense system, has been reported as being involved in activities of Slovak Conscripts. According to the published information, he was recognized as one of the instructors during combat trainings of Slovak Conscripts members (Kern 2015b). However, this was not the first time when such information became public.

A specific issue of note is the attendance of foreign military lecturers during the activities of the Slovak paramilitary groups, such as the case of Russian trainers attending the recent training for Slovak Conscripts in September 2015 (Slovak Conscripts 2015c). The links with Russian paramilitary groups is underlined also by the fact that the current leader of the organization, Peter Švrček, admits to completion of combat/survival training administered by Russian home militia Narodny Sobor (Petrovič 2015). Close cooperation and linkages to foreign paramilitary groups is also conceded in Slovakia's official strategic document for 2015–2019, underlining it as one of the most important internal security aspects (Ministerstvo vnútra 2015).

Moreover, probably the most publicly known connection between right-wing extremist scene and Slovak military forces is Marian Mišun.<sup>10</sup> A police officer frequently appearing publicly as a member of People's Party Our Slovakia,

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<sup>10</sup> Marian Mišun became publicly known after the incident of burning the flag of the European Union in 2012, for which he was also prosecuted (Aktuality 2012).

he is currently a candidate for the Slovak People's Party, a political entity that builds on the legacy of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party during Slovak cleric-fascist war state. His involvement rightfully raises questions about the possibility of infiltration of security forces by members of extremist organizations.

Utilizing the skills and knowledge of persons from security forces for trainings of own members could be one aspect to raise security concerns, however, even more serious could be the direct efforts of infiltration of the state security forces. Such an attempt was recorded in 2015 and came from the Action Group Kysuce Defiance. Its members tried to infiltrate the armed forces and the police, in order to gain a better opportunity to fight for the nation since the army and the police would provide them better access to weapons and military equipment that could "sabotage the ruling politicians" (Mikušovič 2015a).

The involvement of members of the armed forces in activities of right-wing extremist groups is not an entirely new problem and there are several recent cases to document the links between the military forces and neo-Nazi groups.<sup>11</sup> However, the change involving the emergence of paramilitary groups indicates even more fertile ground for activism of either active-duty or former members of military with respect to opportunities of utilizing their experience.

Possible links to extremist groups might be one of the main radicalizing factors. Given the socio-economic situation and challenges on the labor market given the limited range of job opportunities for former members of security forces, combined with the level of frustration stemming from the unfavorable political situation, there are indications that the sympathy factor vis-à-vis this group, combined with the potential of financial income, there is reasonable ground for concerns about further radicalization of the members of the security forces (Nečej, 2015).

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11 See e.g. case of a professional soldier who openly showed support for neo-Nazi ideology (Vražda 2008) in 2008 or an elite soldier involved in organizing a concert of neo-Nazi band in 2009 (SME 2009). The professional soldier was also present during the neo-Nazi attack on bar Mariatchi in Nitra in 2014, for which he was expelled from the army (Mikušovič 2014).

## SUBSTITUTING THE STATE AUTHORITIES?

According to the official statements of Slovak Conscripts and Kysuce Defiance, one of their aims is to build up home militia system with the ability to perform and secure those actions that should be in exclusive responsibility of the official state security forces. The emerging refugee crisis in Europe accompanied with the increasingly hostile anti-immigrant attitudes in the society had a particularly stimulating effect on the activities carried out by the two most significant paramilitary groups operating on the territory of the Slovak Republic since 2011. In reaction to this refugee crisis, several initiatives have taken place from their side, demonstrating the nature of the threat they pose not only vis-à-vis the internal stability of the country, but also in terms of shaping the public discourse on the pressing issue of migration and refugees. In line with the declared ambition to protect the nation and Slovakia's own people, Slovak Conscripts publicly informed about its intention to control the wave of refugees streaming in and already have organized patrol duty around the refugee camp in Gabčíkovo, near Bratislava (Cuprik 2015a).

Of rather symbolic nature, this action shows the dangers connecting with substituting own solutions for the official state security policy and subbing for the role of the security forces, which might be a very dangerous trend should the tensions between immigrants and the majority population escalate. Moreover, the Action Group Kysuce Defiance talked openly about the ambition to substitute for the role of the police and the army, when they announced the plans to create the elite group that will be able to do so in case of emergency or crisis<sup>12</sup> (Cuprik 2015b).

## LEGISLATIVE SETTING AND ADOPTED COUNTERMEASURES

According to currently applicable law, apart from hate crimes, i.e. crimes of racist and hateful nature, in 2008 so-called “anti-extremist legislative” was introduced in Slovakia. Apart from introducing new terms, such as extremist

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12 See e.g. the promotional poster published by Kysuce Defiance on their Facebook profile, showing openly hostile attitude towards the EU strategy for handling the migration crisis, threatening the incoming immigrants (Kysuce Defiance 2014).

crimes, extremist groups and extremist motive into the criminal law, it contains also terms like extremist group, crime of extremism and crimes of possession, production and dissemination of extremist content (according to § 140 of the Criminal Code). Although being criticized for insufficient clarity in defining the term *extremism* itself (see e.g. Institute for Civic Education 2009), these additional efforts to cover a broad spectrum of offenses sends a very clear message on part of the state's official strategy for fighting extremism.

Since the criminal code is binding also for Slovakia's security forces (both Police and the Armed Forces), these efforts go a step further explicitly condemning extremist crimes. In case of both institutions, the police and the army, there are serious concerns related to the effectiveness of detecting right-wing extremist supporters within their ranks. Even though the entry tests are trying their best to detect such individuals, their effectiveness is questionable when it comes to recognizing right-wing extremist supporters without obvious physical characteristic features, such as tattoos or clothing, and on this basis the insufficiency of this type of testing is subject to criticism (see e.g. Ďurčina and Nečej 2015). Moreover, comprehensive testing also during active duty service should be conducted regularly, with special emphasis on the support of ideas close to right-wing extremist ideologies. However, the practice is showing that this is often hard task to achieve and it is a weak link in the screening process (Ďurčina and Nečej 2015).

Particularly at risk are those individuals who leave the security forces. Being outside the reach of official authorities, and thus without the official regular testing might introduce a blind spot in the detection of involvement of former security members who depart the service having acquired valuable combat skills and know-how. Recent research has shown that although the unions and associations bringing together former soldiers and policemen in Slovakia are trying to take care of this group of individuals by providing counseling and assistance as well as organizing different cultural and social events, those who are not members, are simply out of their reach (Nečej 2015).

## RESEARCH AND MONITORING ACTIVITIES

In Slovakia, the issue of right-wing extremist paramilitary groups and their possible linkages to active duty and retired military personnel remains to be particularly underestimated and under-researched topic. Apart from the missing analyses on the subject, which would allow exploring the causes and consequences in broader terms, there is also acute lack of relevant data. This is compounded still by the challenging data gathering (mainly because of difficult access to respondents, security forces members and the requirement of inter-institutional cooperation as well as running up against red tape vis-à-vis the official authorities. Nevertheless, some basic and pilot studies and research has been conducted, with the results pointing to a greater need to pay attention to this problem.

According to the internal research conducted by the Ministry of Defense, and carried out by the Department of Human Resources, the results show that extremist crimes in the Slovak Armed Forces are negligible. However, the research methods and design of the survey are substantially insufficient given their orientation on identification of external marks and manifestations of extremism, but they fall short when it comes to recognizing the more sophisticated manifestations or inclination of individuals to support right-wing extremist ideas and philosophy (Nečej 2015). Any comprehensive survey that would take also these aspects into the consideration has not been conducted so far.

The pilot research conducted by Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs in 2014–2015, has shown that unfavorable socio-economic conditions of former armed forces members along with the lack of job opportunities create fertile ground for possible engagement of former soldier in the activities of paramilitary groups and in their training (as has already been demonstrated on selected individual cases above). Moreover, research has revealed just how difficult, if not impossible it is to reach out to former soldiers who remain outside the soldiers' and veterans' associations, which remains the biggest challenge to gathering data to assess the actual level of security threat they represent.

The principal problem arising from the above-mentioned extremism cases is embodied by the threat they pose to the state monopoly on legitimate use of violence. Therefore, the presence of groups that justify their existence by conducting tasks, responsibilities or even powers typically falling under the responsibility of state security forces, especially in maintaining order or protecting certain groups of citizens to the detriment of others, might threaten the internal stability of the country. It is especially important in the current state of the European society and driven by very negative attitudes towards minorities<sup>13</sup>, which have been recently expanded also to immigrants and refugees. In case of emergence of societal, cultural or inter-ethnic conflict, the involvement of such paramilitary groups – especially if they have access to weapons and military equipment – could result in a dangerous intra-state conflict.

Even though the increasing number of members of the paramilitary groups may not be dangerous in itself, also because there are no expectations it will grow rapidly, it is rather the mere presence of such and their acceptance by the public that presents a threat, since it provides them a degree of legitimacy. Although these groups go into great lengths to present themselves mainly as sports-leisure organizations for young patriots, often portraying themselves as helping in emergency situations (Denník N 2015e), which substantially supports the tensions in the society and evokes a false idea about the true nature of these organizations.

One proof of the consequences of this misleading public image of paramilitary groups was the incident of educational activities carried out by Slovak Conscripts in several schools in Central Slovakia in 2015. Also, the lack of information and awareness of school teachers and leadership, they failed to

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13 In case of Central and Eastern Europe, it is common for right-wing extremist groups to present the Roma minority as the enemy and to securitize the Roma issue.

identify the nature of the presenting organizations who offered to conduct military exercises accompanied by lectures for students of primary and secondary schools. The series of educational activities conducted by Slovak Conscripts thus not only opened the door to controversial lectures on history, without the necessary expertise in the area, but most importantly it offered the extremist group access to young people who in addition to receiving biased information also received weapons training (Kern 2015c).

Another side of the security issue is the so-called foreign fighters, i.e. individuals voluntarily leaving Slovakia to fight in foreign countries. The first case of Slovak citizen fighting in Ukraine was published in 2015, with the individual affiliated with Slovak Conscripts (Petrovič 2015). Although the current leadership of the organization is distancing itself from this case, arguing that he has left the organization before departing for Ukraine, it should not be forgotten that it was this platform where the person received military and combat training.

## INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION: WHAT NEXT?

The aim of this article was to outline the main challenges that Slovak Republic faces in combating right-wing extremist paramilitary groups and different forms of interconnections between these groups and the official state security forces. It provided the overview of the recent incidents related to the subject, along with the principal causes and consequences that should be explored further for the sake of improving the accuracy of detecting threats to the internal security of the country. It is important particularly in the context of this publication, since its main aim is to point out the challenges the five countries in Central Europe face or will face in the near future. The secondary aim of this article is to contribute to understanding the issue in the broader context of neighboring countries. These countries, aside from sharing similarities: political, social, economic or cultural, they also have in common the internal challenges that they currently face.

The above-mentioned incidents have highlighted a sudden disturbing increase in the activities of paramilitary groups and their role in increasing the levels of anti-minority and anti-immigrant attitudes in the society. For this reason, the danger of escalation of intra-societal and intra-cultural relations brought about by direct engagement by this group should not be taken lightly.

As a result, the presented incidents and developments lead us to several recommendations. Firstly, it is important to continue to monitor the activities and operations of paramilitary groups operating on the territory of the country. This should be accomplished not only via security agencies and state authorities, but also by independent non-governmental organizations, which would participate in educational and awareness-raising activities. The necessity of these activities is the second important lesson learned, especially in light of the above-mentioned published incidents of paramilitary groups' involvement in giving lectures to primary and secondary school students in selected regions of Slovakia. Thirdly, focusing on data-gathering among former military personnel will enable us to accurately measure the level of internal security threat to the security services in particular and the society in general. What's more, the findings will enable us to react more promptly in case of rapidly changing external situation, especially in the context of the current refugee crisis.

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