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# Radicalization of children soldiers<sup>1</sup>

support to the broken prisoners. The radicals also surrounded universities as a venue for advertising their ideas, leading them to reach out to very young people. Many, after graduating, traveled to terrorist organizations to receive the necessary training. It can be seen that the main religious converts are not only the imams, but also the members themselves, and the

easiest way to reach targets on the Internet is thus becoming the main radicalization scene in recent years.<sup>2</sup> And here the younger generation lives, including teenage youth, but today it is quite common for 7-8 year olds to also exist in computer space. ISIS has also developed its own computer game-based technique in a matter of seconds, using Grand Theft Auto V in its videos to spread its own ideas and recruit.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. The process of the indoctrination

Radicalization is not a new phenomenon. It can be found in all ages and continents, from the biblical ages, through the early days of colonization to the present day. Suffice it to mention the Bar-Kohba uprising i. s. Between 132 and 135, or José Gabriel Tupac Amaru led an uprising against the Spaniards between 1778 and 1783. Of the radicals of later ages, noteworthy are the Russian anarchists, the “Narodniks,” who attempted to assassinate with a firearm four times. Against Tsar Alexander, whose life was eventually extinguished by the Polish Ignacy Hryniewiecki in 1881 with a bombing. And examples of 20th century radicalization could be listed continuously: Fidel Castro, Ernesto Che Guevara. The leaders of the Red Army Faction (RAF), Gudrun Esslin, Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, the founders of the Red Brigades (BR), Renato Curcio and his wife, Margherita Cagol, and Alberto Franceschini, the Army of the Republic of Ireland (IRA), the Basque Country and Freedom (Euskadi ta Askatasuna) and political branch of the Batasuna Party, etc.<sup>4</sup>

## Abstract<sup>1</sup>

In the context of this study, I examine the strategy of the Islamic State terrorist organization in the process of radicalization of children. In this paper, I examine the segment of the organization’s operation, how to include the little ones among the members of their armies, and look for the answer to what warrior activity leaves, traces physically and mentally in children, and whether reintegration succeeds. A number of programs are working to achieve this goal effectively, including the United Nations DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration) programs. In connection with the study, I summarize the peculiarities of the system.

## 1. Introduction

The tools and areas of radicalization have changed enormously in recent decades, driven by technological advances. Initially, the framework for this was provided by religious sites, i.e. various mosques, “cultural institutes”. Examples include the mosque in London-based Finsbury Park or the Hamburg al-Kudx (Taiba) Mosque, where the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks also visited countless times. Closely related to the mosques were the imams idolized as a charismatic religious leader preaching there, who were also involved in the recruitment of extremists. However, the role of mosques has declined significantly in recent years. The site was mostly relocated to its prison walls (Camp Bucca), where individuals professing extreme dogmas were able to provide

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<sup>2</sup> Répási Krisztián: Európa az iszlamista terrorizmus árnyékában. Hadtudományi Szemle, 2013/1.

<sup>3</sup> Révész Béla: A gyermekek háborúja <https://honvedelem.hu/hatter/biztonsagpolitika/gyerekek-haboruja.html> (2021.01.12.)

<sup>4</sup> Bács Zoltán György: A radikalizáció és a terrorizmus kapcsolata, egyes

Right at the beginning, the question arises: how can one be recognized when one enters the path of radicalization in connection with extremist religious ideas? Research shows that there are certain signs that show up at the beginning of the process. Among other things, he begins to change his lifestyle, personality, appearance, which is noticed only by those who closely follow the life of the individual. The first signs include:

- isolation from others,
- leaving the usual places,
- rejection of alcohol and non-Muslim celebrations and forms of entertainment,
- refusal to celebrate birthdays (since the full conversion to Islam is the date of rebirth),
- contempt for Western customs and clothing
- rejecting music while listening to the lyrics of wandering imams.<sup>5</sup>

However, the physical transformations are also very spectacular. Men appear to be wearing beards, modest and neutral colored clothes, refusing to wear silk shirts or gold items, and removing any previous tattoos.

For women: the clothing is completely transformed, the former feminine pieces are replaced by the closed clothes for example jador (women's clothing covering the whole body) the complete refusal to use makeup.

Among the new habits, it should be emphasized that they only eat with the right hand, hot food cannot be blown, the consumption of unclean food becomes forbidden. Special cosmetics and soaps that contain alcohol or are of animal origin are rejected. Physical contact with other sexes, borrowing of money become forbidden and stricter adherence to the provisions of the Qur'an (e.g., washing hands before touching the Qur'an).<sup>6</sup> Sometimes too clear signs of radicalization are deliberately hidden by martyrs preparing for martyrdom. He keeps it a secret from his surroundings and follows a Western lifestyle, consuming alcohol.

Many researchers emphasize that the internet and various social media interfaces are indeed effective tools in the beginning of the radicalization process (contact, encouragement, information videos), but in order for these messages to lead to a successful recruitment, this requires a receptive to an individual who is able to embark on the path of radicalization. This is supported by the fact that foreign fighters mostly come to the organization in groups and these groups prove to be friendly communities, and there are a number of geographical points where

the connection rate is exceptionally high (Molenbeek district, Brussels)<sup>7</sup>

„According to a study in the United States focusing on the role of cultural identity in the process of radicalization, it can lead to isolation and a sense of insignificance if a particular immigrant cannot identify with the culture in which he or she lives,” researchers called the phenomenon „cultural homelessness.” Isolation The lack of belonging is exploited by the leaders of terrorist groups in the process of radicalization. The study looked at the experiences of 198 respondents with a Muslim background and also addressed the issue that possible negative experiences associated with isolation (such as discrimination, feelings of humiliation or job loss) could further facilitate the process of by accepting a radical and violent ideology, it finds its purpose in life. Other researchers view that in times of uncertainty and tension, an individual tends to identify with the segment of his or her identity that he or she feels most vulnerable to. This is also an important aspect for understanding some second- and third-generation immigrants. Not to be overlooked is the fact that Europe's Muslim population is constantly growing and that their average age is younger than that of ‚indigenous’ European citizens, there is an urgent need to examine the issue of immigrant identity among both European Muslim and host communities. This is also essential because finding a balance between inherited religious and / or ethnic identity within Muslim families – the primary loyalty to the issuing community – and the values and way of life of the host society can lead to failures and frustration from time to time.<sup>8</sup>

Real spatial and internet propaganda promotes, and can promote radicalization in those whose personalities and emotions tend to do so, the value of injustices in their lives that they have suffered because of their racial, religious, national or ethnic affiliation.

The result of a vicious circle is xenophobia and radicalization, all of which are prerequisites or mediums for each other.

The reasons for becoming a terrorist cannot be traced back to a single cause. There may be types or typical situations that help you understand this complex process.

A person's political, religious, social, national and other grievances, „injustices” together with his personal – internal, spiritual – qualities (wanting to be a hero, struggling with a narcissistic personality or mental problem) are integrated into his psyche and this is the basis for his decision.

formái, gondolatok a megelőzés lehetséges perspektíváiról. Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle, 2017/ 5., 5. o.

<sup>5</sup> Szabó Tibor: Az „új terrorista” lélektana és a védekezés módszertana. Valóság, 2016/10. 12. o. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration> (2021.01.10).

<sup>6</sup> Szabó Tibor: 2016/10. i. m. 12. o. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration> (2021.01.10).

<sup>7</sup> Jasko, Katarzyna – Kruglanski, Arie W. – Hassan, Ahmad – Gunaratha, Rohan: ISIS: Its History, Ideology and Psychology. In: Woodward, Mark – Lukens-Bull, Ronald (eds.) Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives. Springer International Publishing, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Horváth-Sánta, Hanga: Radicalization into Salafi Jihadism: Some Patterns and Profiles in Europe 2015–2017. Defence Review, 2017/2. 26–44.

A similar view of radicalization is the study of Fathali Moghaddam (Georgetown University, USA), which identified the path to this in 6 steps:

- the first step is to look for the relative deprivation that characterizes the person's life in the individual's individual social environment,
- the second step is for the individual to seek his or her truth;
- the third step is for the person to start recognizing the groups, countries responsible for the injustice and to consider an aggressive response,
- the fourth step is to identify oneself with the morals of terrorists, which justifies violence in order to end injustice,
- the fifth step is to fix the opposition between us and them in the person and join a terrorist organization, and
- the last, sixth step, the commission of a terrorist act.<sup>9</sup>

The role of the Internet is particularly evident between the second and fourth steps.

A person can easily find information and websites on the Internet to echo their "injustice," their grievance. You can find people or groups who have the same opinion, the same grievances.

Moreover, the Internet, with its system of communication tools, also provides an opportunity for the convert to carry out his or her spiritually convincing, persuasive activities, regardless of geographical distance.

The convert can send the documents in text form and can impress the user through online chat.

It is worth recalling Marc Sagerman's view of radicalization, his study focusing specifically on a broad interpretation of Islam. It sets out four conditions in this regard:

- religious outrage,
- the Western war against Islam,
- resonance with personal experience, and
- mobilization of networks.<sup>10</sup>

In practice, al-Qaeda, which was also extremely effective before the terrorist organization Islamic State, established the principle of "action-retaliation-action". The creator of this was Osama bin Laden, who consciously incited external resistance, that is, in fact, consciously provoked the "unbelievers" and the United States, which was seen as their leader. He sought to create a situation in which the "infidels" responded to the assassinations with an overreaction, provoking outrage and radicalization (and triggering a further wave of fundamentalist volunteers) in hitherto peaceful Muslim communities. Another element of the principle was that it is

only necessary to have a control center in the beginning, because later the organization will become self-sustaining and self-stimulating.<sup>11</sup>

The movement may find it difficult to succeed without outside sponsors. In this case, under external sponsors, active believers living in different countries of the world are to be considered. Who are already carrying out assassinations on behalf of the Islamic State without the direct involvement of the main governing body. György Zoltán Bács divides people who are more exposed to radicalization into two groups, and one group clearly becomes a terrorist as a means of escaping from a system of complex problems resulting from social difficulties. It states that "social injustices, inequalities, the dogma of religious intolerance, cultural incompatibility and illiteracy as raw materials will be added to the 'factory' of society, exclusion, frustration and marginalization will be added to the 'production line' as catalysis. From this is born the social end product, radicalization itself. Its end users are terrorist organizations."<sup>12</sup>

But what about children? How do boys and girls aged 6-7 become child soldiers?

### 3. Indoctrination and reintegration of child soldiers

In the case of radicalized young people, we must also distinguish between two groups:

- on the one hand, minors from the West (there is a difference between children arriving on their own and young people coming here with their families), and
- among children living in crisis areas.

The way recruitment and thus radicalization will be completely different. Because of the distance, you can reach sympathizers from the West primarily on the Internet. While you can do both physical and mental training with the child living on site.

It employs a well-established "routine" procedure when occupying new areas of ISIS. As part of this, male members of the community will be killed, women and young girls will be victims of sexual violence, and women deemed older will also be executed. And the very tiny boys are taken to re-education camps, where they are subjected to a program

<sup>9</sup> Mealer Micheal: Internet Radicalization: Actual Threat or Phantom Menace. US Government, Department of Defense, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Mealer Micheal: Internet Radicalization: Actual Threat or Phantom Menace. US Government, Department of Defense, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Béres János: A modern iszlám fundamentalizmus gyökerei és az al-Kaida. Felderítő Szemle, 2006/V. 152. o.

<sup>12</sup> Bács Zoltán György: A radikalizáció és a terrorizmus kapcsolata, egyes formái, gondolatok a megelőzés lehetséges perspektíváiról. Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle, 2017/ 5., 5. o.

matic brainwashing.<sup>13</sup> The situation with radicalization is different in children than in adults. The younger a little girl or boy is, the easier it is for a group leader to promote an extreme idea. Young people have a completely different sense of fear, they do not feel the consequences of the weight of their actions, but they are also much easier to influence. All they need is a charismatic individual to look up to, who they are somewhat afraid of, knowing that they alone are not yet able to control their lives. Normally, this role is mostly performed by the father and mother of the pups, however, in societies where close ties between seedlings and their parents cannot be established, they are easily replaced by the leader of the religious leader or terrorist organization. At an early age, even the community has a huge role to play, as it is typical at this age to imitate and follow each other in carrying out various activities. So if one of your buddies is a terrorist, your comrades will join him soon.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Ed Husain puts it “the community of a young child determines its whole destiny”<sup>15</sup>

It is not uncommon in Africa to have 6-7 children in a family. Everyone has their own job to do and responsibility. Dad asks for that as well. This system is easily transferred to perform the tasks expected in the army.<sup>16</sup> After the conscription of minors, they may not find their previous life. They do not recognize their parents, their place of birth, and in extreme cases they do not even remember their own names. The reason for this is, among other things, complete mental transformation, indoctrination by the method of mantras. They repeat ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times the same extreme ideas that their group leaders demand. This can result in a very severe loss of identity over many years. Another source of the problem is that the fixation of dogmatic foundations alone does not involve the loss of total memory, so it is likely that children are under the influence of various mind-altering agents from the beginning to the end of the process. The list of drugs used for infants varies widely. They also chain young people to themselves by using these agents. For example, cocaine has an effect that makes the little girl, little boy, feel good and she will think she is in the right place here as she is in a great mood. Calming agents help to overcome resistance, as not everyone will immediately be a humble soldier who can kill people without thinking. The pas-

sage of time on these military bases plays a major role. Participation that lasts for several years can have even irreversible consequences in the life of the little one. They are attacked during an extremely receptive period, and they are best suited to a deep feed of extreme dogmas. They are educated that aggression, violence is not anti-norm, but an accepted ordinary behavior that is difficult to shape later.<sup>17</sup> They show young people videos about the execution of killings, there is no doubt that their method of radicalization is effective, as after a certain time they are able to kill on behalf of ISIS without hesitation.<sup>18</sup>

DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration) programs have been set up to reintegrate young people. The program is nothing more than: „The dismantling, disarmament and reintegration will lay the foundation for the protection and maintenance of the communities to which these individuals return, while building the capacity for long-term peace, security and development.” In situations where it is too early or impossible to carry out a DDR program, the UN supports community-based violence reduction activities that create the right conditions for political processes to advance and for the disbandment of armed groups.<sup>19</sup>

It may take weeks, months or even years to participate in this program to highlight young people. As a result of the struggles, their socialization remained at a very low level, so teaching basic tasks such as sending a letter is also required. Due to the events experienced, young people experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>20</sup>

The basic symptoms of PTSD, such as intrusive symptoms (flashback, nightmares), withdrawal symptoms (avoidance of trauma-like people, places), and symptoms associated with increased wakefulness (sleep disturbance, irritability, difficulty concentrating) result in severe disability and other gloomy symptoms. anxiety disorders, drug and alcohol dependence may further increase the burden of the disease. „<sup>21</sup> In Western society, this is an extremely rare disease in children, and it is difficult to treat. It can occur up to months after experiencing trauma, when the person concerned sees the events that have happened before their eyes as if they had happened again and again. As a result comes shame, guilt that after a while becomes un-

<sup>13</sup> Révész Béla: A gyermekek háborúja <https://honvedelem.hu/hatter/biztonsagpolitika/gyerekek-haboruja.html> (2021.01.12.).

<sup>14</sup> Kőnczöl Zsófia: Gyermekkatónák – egy pszichológus szemével, 2015 <https://honvedelem.hu/hatter/biztonsagpolitika/gyermekkatonak-egy-pszichologus-szemevel.html> (2021.01.12.).

<sup>15</sup> Princz Orsolya: Terrorszervezetek toborzási tevékenysége áttekintő elemzés az al-Kaída és az ISIS módszerei alapján. [http://publikaciok.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/publikus/szd/Princz\\_Orsolya.pdf](http://publikaciok.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/publikus/szd/Princz_Orsolya.pdf) (2021.01.13.).

<sup>16</sup> Kőnczöl Zsófia: Gyermekkatónák – egy pszichológus szemével, 2015 <https://honvedelem.hu/hatter/biztonsagpolitika/gyermekkatonak-egy-pszichologus-szemevel.html> (2021.01.12.).

<sup>17</sup> Kőnczöl Zsófia: Gyermekkatónák – egy pszichológus szemével, 2015 <https://honvedelem.hu/hatter/biztonsagpolitika/gyermekkatonak-egy-pszichologus-szemevel.html> (2021.01.12.).

<sup>18</sup> Révész Béla: A gyermekek háborúja <https://honvedelem.hu/hatter/biztonsagpolitika/gyerekek-haboruja.html> (2021.01.12.).

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/families/support-and-advice/keeping-your-family-safe/radicalisation> (2021.01.14.).

<sup>20</sup> Kőnczöl Zsófia: Gyermekkatónák – egy pszichológus szemével, 2015 <https://honvedelem.hu/hatter/biztonsagpolitika/gyermekkatonak-egy-pszichologus-szemevel.html> (2021.01.12.).

<sup>21</sup> Martényi Ferenc: A posztraumás stressz-betegség. Tünetek, neurobiológia és gyógyszeres terápiák [https://mptpszichiatra.hu/folyoirat.aspx?web\\_id=&tmi=0&f=1&an=935](https://mptpszichiatra.hu/folyoirat.aspx?web_id=&tmi=0&f=1&an=935).



bearable. Rehabilitation for these young people is different in each case, completely individual, therefore special attention should be paid to the follow-up period after the end of the program. Child victims with a kinship are in a better position. There, there is a greater chance of being brought back into a successful society. It is important that the building of trust is gradual, which you can rely on later in reintegration.

One of the most effective tools for recruitment is the web interface, so various strategies have emerged to reduce its effectiveness. JIGSAW, a Google subsidiary, came up with an idea that targeted young people who support ISIS. The idea is very simple. If Google's user-monitoring robots detect someone's interest in the organization's videos and content, they will rank the deterrent videos that represent the true image of ISIS at the top of the search engine results list.<sup>22</sup>

There have also been a number of trends in the UK for early detection of the radicalization process. To help parents, websites specialize in recognizing radicalized children. It is explained that children may be more susceptible to extreme ideas who:

- struggle with their identity
- live separately from peer groups or UK culture
- a traumatic event hit them
- their self - esteem is low, or
- they live in family tensions.<sup>23</sup>

Attention is drawn to various signs, some of which may be typical of teenagers, but it is worth being vigilant:

- willing to listen to those who have a different point of view
- conversion to a new religion, which also means rejecting friends and the activities they enjoy
- Spends a lot of time online or on the phone and keeps a secret of what he does
- have multiple profiles on social media, use their own name or pseudonyms to share extreme views
- the support or sympathy for groups with extremist political or religious views who encourage illegal or violent acts.
- joining or seeking to join extremist organizations.<sup>24</sup>

The facts can be seen that the radicalization of children in the online space is already a current problem in many Central European countries, so it is not inconceivable that there will be a trend in Hungary as well.

<sup>22</sup> Révész Béla: A gyermekek háborúja <https://honvedelem.hu/hatter/biztonsagpolitika/gyerekek-haboruja.html> (2021.01.12.).

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/families/support-and-advice/keeping-your-family-safe/radicalisation> (2021.01.14.).

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/families/support-and-advice/keeping-your-family-safe/radicalisation> (2021.01.14.).

## 4. Conclusions

The biggest problem with the phenomenon of child soldiers is that in societies where a large number of minors go to war, there is a strong fear that in the future, based on patterns learned in childhood, it will necessarily reproduce the factors that it has the victim. Put simply, „where the little ones are harassed, exploited and killed, the children will do nothing but harass, exploit, kill others.”

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