

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Faculty of Philosophy
Department of Political Science

Abstract to topic:

**Radicalisation and deradicalisation of ISIS
foreign fighters (2013 - 2019)**

Area: 3.3 Political Science

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Sofia

13.03.2024 г.

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1. Relevance and Significance of the Study

This topic was chosen because of its relevance and importance, relevant to the period of its development. The significance and relevance of the problem is proved by the numerous cases of bombings in different European countries during the period under study. As an EU Member State, Bulgaria is obliged to react both politically and in the development of various scientific studies and analyses that come up with ready-made proposals for achieving greater effectiveness in the fight against terrorism and organised criminal networks. Relevance is determined by the increasing number of terrorist attacks that are taking place, not only in the territories where terrorist organisations operate and could even be said to occupy their official place, but also in the territory of a number of European countries. The fact that the fighters who occupy the ranks of these organisations are being recruited from foreign countries is also becoming increasingly common. This is a particularly worrying fact, because in this way the activities that these organisations develop (propaganda or terrorist) are greatly facilitated. Networks of recruits are built up, which in turn recruit new and new fighters ready to serve faithfully in the name of the causes that the Islamic State places at the forefront of its ideology. This, in turn, creates an ever-widening field of action for extreme Islamists. The supply of the various types of material needed by the organisation to exist and carry out its terrorist activities is being facilitated, and the scope and methods of the attacks being carried out are expanding. It is important to clarify that radicalized individuals are not always talking about committing or attempting to commit an attack, but since the focus of this paper is on the radicalization and deradicalization process, these cases should be included in the rationale for topic selection.

Its significance is determined by the author's thesis, namely that there are grounds for further theorizing in the field under study. It is necessary to make a clear distinction between the most common and widely used definitions in academic and normative texts, and also to clarify approximately the exact scope of each of them, its limits, essence and main characteristics. This also includes an analysis of the basic concepts of "radicalisation" and "deradicalisation" in their binary, with all the resulting peculiarities and specificities. From a global perspective, the topic is particularly significant in terms of Bulgaria's EU membership and national security. The topicality and daily changes, the emergence of newer trends in terrorism and the terrorist

methods used by extreme radicals require a continuous revision of the current normative documents, strategies and plans to combat this highly negative contemporary phenomenon.

2. Approval

The thesis has been designated for defense by the decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy of 09.01.2024 for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", the jury is approved in the following composition:

1. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Iskren Plamenov Ivanov SU
2. Assoc. Prof. Boris Petrov Popivanov SU
3. Prof. Nikolay Dimitrov Slatinskiy, Ph. C. Rakovski"
4. Assoc. Ph.D. Momchil Doychev Badjakov, NBU 5.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ralitsa Zhekova Zhekova VSU

Reserve members: 1. One from SU Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoycho Petrov Stoychev - SU SU 2. One external Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Georgieva Hinkova, NBU

Secretary: Beka Avram Nathan

Chairman of the jury is Assoc. Dr. Iskren Ivanov. The thesis should be held no later than 16.05.2024.

3. Main research question

Elaboration explores the question of what are the main factors that determine the process of deradicalisation and how they could be properly classified and systematised for further research.

4. Hypothesis

In order to answer this question, the study examines this process in close relation to radicalisation, hypothesising that the two processes are in constant dependence on each other and that the latter is impossible to take place without the former. The development also expresses the hypothesis that in order to achieve a sufficient degree of effectiveness in the process of deradicalisation, it is necessary to consider this process in the scientific field in terms of its

phasing. That is to say, an expansion of the terminology in purely theoretical terms is proposed, emphasising the need to consider the process in specific steps, which can be scientifically differentiated as such, based on predefined criteria and characteristics. The development of such a theoretical toolkit would facilitate the further development of concrete plans, measures and strategies in the fight against terrorism and would greatly facilitate the process of deradicalisation. This study also advocates that the differentiation of the stages in the process would facilitate the earlier diagnosis of the phenomenon and therefore would favour and create the necessary conditions for intervention and counteraction in its earlier stages, thus avoiding the reaching of extreme forms of radicalisation.

This paper hypothesizes that the creation of such a profile might be possible from the perspective of already radicalized individuals. That is, a scientific construct could be created that includes a finite number of characteristics that make up the image of a "desired" ISIS foreign fighter. In this way, the aim is to reach, through subsequent deconstruction, the individuals most vulnerable to this process. Profiling is the basis and should form part of the further development of a toolkit for accurate diagnosis of the stages and forms of radicalisation.

5. Subject and object of the study

The subject of this study is defined as foreign fighters, and the object is the processes observed in their cognitive and behavioral development. These are the processes of radicalisation, in all its forms - violent, non-violent and extreme radicalisation leading to terrorism, and the observed reverse processes of deradicalisation. The subject thus defined and the processes outlined (the object of study) are part of and constitute the living constituent unit of the larger subject of study, the Islamic State. Since the smaller subject (the living force) can only exist as such in the context of the larger, it should invariably also be part of and the object of study of this paper. As will become apparent in the content presented below, the subject is discussed in detail in a separate paragraph to Chapter I. The conclusions drawn from the history and development of the organisation and its structure and modus operandi thus presented, as well as its place, role and significance on the international stage, and in particular its policies towards foreign fighters, form the basis upon which the theoretical construct representing the image of the recruited is to be built. This explains and justifies the considerable space that this paper devotes to the study of

the subject and the conclusions, implications and generalisations drawn. The subject itself is complex and multi-component. It comprises a multitude of factors and a number of features arising from the complex nature of the 'shell state', which scholars define the Islamic State and its structural features as a political entity. The considerably strong degree of economic development, compared to its political one, also determines the aforementioned peculiarities and characteristics that the studied entity has and which are of interest for proving the hypothesis and achieving the set goals and objectives.

The profile of foreign fighters is also the subject of the study.

6. Objective / Objectives

In its course, the study aims, through the different methods it uses, to collect and summarize facts and data from empirical and secondary analyses that serve to derive the relevant characteristics describing the respective stages.

The objectives of this paper are to provide a scientific explanation of the mechanisms by which the Islamic State recruits fighters from different countries and also to examine the process of deradicalisation. One of the main issues raised is whether such a process is possible at all, what influences it, who are the competent authorities and institutions that guide it, and can they be replaced by more adequate and effective methods.

7. Methodology / Methods

In order to answer these questions and fulfil the aims and objectives, the dissertation uses qualitative methods - in-depth interview, ethnographic research and secondary empirical-research analysis of previously conducted interviews and other documents. Based on these methods, the main factors that influence the deradicalisation process are derived, making it possible to relate each of them to the different stages of the radicalisation process. A secondary analysis should also be made on some normative documents. The main interest for this paper is the security strategies prepared by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, and in particular the Strategy for Countering and Combating Terrorism, because the research is aimed at proposing new more detailed measures, based on proving the thesis of the gradual development

of the radicalisation process, and it is carried out in the context of an already existing legal and normative environment.

8. Content and structure of the study

The study begins by clarifying the conceptual apparatus used. The terms "radicalization" and "deradicalization" are examined as binary oppositions, as well as other related concepts from the thematic field under study. Conclusions are drawn on the basis of the sources cited, with the cross-cutting generalizations aiming in a peculiar way to prove the hypothesis presented. Some references are made to the further course of the research, including a clarification of the concepts that the development assumes to be relevant, according to the proof of the main research question. To this end, both narrow and broader definitions are included, each followed by a commentary on strengths and weaknesses, with the starting point again being the proof of the main research hypothesis. A brief analysis is also made of the importance of correct use of the conceptual apparatus in terms of national and international uniformity. The quoted definitions are taken from proven scientific works in the field and from documents dealing with the researched issues. In the pursuit of precision, the study also compares national and international authors and scholars in the field in order to arrive at a maximum number of common characteristics around which the definitions are united. In this way, a solid foundation is provided on which the study proceeds and on which further conclusions and inferences can be accepted without reservation. The main focus of chapter two is on arguing the need to consider the radicalisation process as a series of stages, highlighting the link to the deradicalisation process and the need to identify and develop specific measures to influence and impact on the radicalised, according to the stage the process has reached. The chapter is divided into two paragraphs for readability, perceptiveness and quicker access to specific information, with the first paragraph focusing, in its main part, on the The dissertation devotes considerable space to this paragraph because there are not a few studies in the field, some of them handling substantial and solid argumentation, but also conflicting with each other. Therefore, a careful and critical look is needed to sift out what is valid, in order to prove the main research hypothesis, from those conclusions and inferences that rather distance and dilute the focus of the present study and that would not contribute and do not have the practical value that is sought when looking at the processes of radicalization and deradicalization. Here again, as in Chapter One, each of the models presented and followed by the author's commentary and analysis as to which arguments

are considered relevant and which are not, with the reasons for doing so justified and reasoned. The rationale includes a wide range of factors - historical, terminological, psychological, social and economic, but mostly political. Among the arguments weaving the main analysis are, of course, many practical tools from the field of security and defence in national and international terms, and throughout the dissertation strives for objectivity and impartiality as far as possible, given the complexity, multidimensionality and specificity of the issues under study. In order to achieve this to the greatest extent possible, the author focuses on the main scientific works that represent a synthesis of the main trends in the field, thus achieving conciseness and focus in a purely structural way, which in turn gives sufficient space and depth to the analysis. Based on this, relevant conclusions and implications are drawn which support the subsequent course of the research. The main achievements of this section include the bringing together and summarising of key features that have been shown to be significant in initiating and deepening the radicalisation process. This provides the author with the basis for proposing his own model of the radicalisation process in the second paragraph that follows. It is an abstract and generalised scheme of the stages of the radicalisation process. The differentiation and differentiation of these concrete stages finds ground precisely on the broad scientific grounding presented in the previous paragraph. The two paragraphs should be considered in their entirety, bearing in mind that the second paragraph separates and differentiates the author's contribution to the scientific field, but it forms an integral part and rests on the scientifically significant research models proven and defended in the previous paragraph, developed to date. As the main achievement of the author's model presented in this way, one can point to the fact that it presents the radicalization process not as a linear but as a cyclical phenomenon. This corresponds to indoctrination as a phenomenon because it is continuously fed. This is also the process of radicalisation, seen in its phased nature and re-created in the author's model, uncoincidentally called the 'Wheel of Radicalisation'. The work devotes particular space to some specific cases of radicalised individuals, such as women and children in ISIS lagerets. These are also examined in detail in Chapter Two, and the analysis made draws, for the most part, on the writings of Professor Tatiana Dronzina, who has contributed immensely to the issues under study. Without repeating, the analysis made in the first paragraph of chapter two highlights some key points that prove the necessity of a special treatment of these cases and their separation into a separate category. At a later stage (in the second paragraph), this also finds relevance in The

Radicalisation Wheel. Another key point of the author's model is that the different stages make reference to the level at which the radicalisation process takes place, clearly indicating the relationship between the micro and macro levels, their interconnectedness and indivisibility. However, the most significant merit of the presented model undoubtedly remains its visuality, which determines its practical value. The opportunity provided by the model is to assess the extent to which a person has accepted the views of the Islamic State and, accordingly, at what stage of the radicalisation process he is, and this contributes to achieving a higher degree of specificity in taking deradicalisation measures, which is also a crucial task facing our national security. The national strategies and plans developed and adopted address precisely these issues. The study highlights the close relationship in which they are situated with European documents addressing the same issues and concludes that this is particularly important given the assertion made in the introduction that the cases addressed are not a phenomenon that can be resolved at national level, as the Islamic State organisation itself goes beyond the national and what secular states accept as systemic in general. The radicalization wheel, however, contributes to a higher degree of precision in terms of measures. Chapter Three addresses this issue in detail. Among the merits and achievements of this part of the development is the secondary analysis that is made, which considers in parallel the phenomena of deradicalisation and disengagement, examining the interrelationship and causality between the two. The analysis starts from purely conceptual aspects and reaches concrete examples and case studies, from which the different elements of the common process are clearly visible. It is these elements that are also of primary interest to the study, as they provide an answer to the main research question, explaining the processes and phenomena whose answer is sought. These elements highlight the need to take various measures, which are conditionally divided into hard and soft measures. Of course, within these two clusters, again, fall a multitude of elements, but the main emphasis that the research puts is that for the different stages of the wheel of radicalisation, different measures than those defined in the national strategies and plans will be called for, i.e. the entire scientific and expert database is used, and through the construct presented in the thesis, its further enrichment and refinement is sought, which prevents inadequate application of measures. Moreover, as is evident throughout the study, there are no wrong or incorrect measures, but there are measures that are inappropriately or disproportionately used. Thus, the main hypothesis is proved, namely that the process of deradicalisation is directly dependent on the process of radicalisation. This

interdependence is evident throughout the paper and is evident in each of the case studies or examples discussed, of which there are many, and it is in these that the similarities and differences between the various stages, as well as the interplay between the two levels at which radicalisation takes place - the micro and macro levels - are most clearly highlighted. Mistakenly, one is referred to the field of psychology and the other to the field of economics. Quite different dynamics are at work here, and one of the main virtues of this dissertation is that it seeks to, and to a large extent does, reveal them. The two levels are not isolated; on the contrary, as the wheel of radicalization shows, they flow seamlessly into each other because they are part of the global political context and environment. Though separate phenomena and isolated cases, they all find ground in a common global environment that is increasingly blurring boundaries, giving rise to intra-individual conflicts, national and ethnic and international conflicts, and the crisis of identity, the lack of elementary twenty-first century social goods and bigotry are only expressions of all this. The examples are many and the thesis will not dwell on them, but the thesis examines them in detail because they are the subject of the study and this requires that another fundamental and very important question be answered - is it possible to create a single profile of ISIS foreign fighters and the answer is a resounding no, in terms of a profile as it is seen from the forensic and special services perspective, but yes, in terms of a theoretical construct and the derivation of common characteristics, and that is what the wheel of radicalisation is. It is a set of factors driving an individual towards extremism and the corresponding counter elements or traits that foreign fighters acquire by being part of the ranks of the Islamic State, including recruiters. The word counterparts should be emphasised here, because the radicalisation process does not only depend on the individuals who are radicalised, but also on the recruiters, who very often remain in the shadows, even for the security services. Just as there is no deradicalisation without radicalisation, there is no radicalised without a recruiter, even if the relationship between the two is only media, as is the case with lone wolves. Very often, they do not come into direct or even any contact with recruiters, but even the media messages that the Islamic State and other terrorist organisations send to their followers are enough to consider that there is contact, as long as there is an exchange of messages, ideas, values and ideals that consist in an extremely unacceptable and fanatical ideology. And this is where the intersections between recruit and recruiter are sought. What is the commonality or perhaps the difference? What are those chakras of the wheel that click in the fatal assembly that

produces terrorists? These and others are some of the many challenges that confront the work thus presented as it seeks evidence, answers and arguments to prove the hypothesis presented. Some of these are answered successfully, but others will continue to be sought for their answer long after the date announced for the defence, and this is normal. Moreover, it is no accident that the thesis focuses on a specific research period. The Islamic State has undergone major structural upheavals that have also forced it to undergo many military-strategic metamorphoses. Issues related to the organization are also the topic of the next chapter of the thesis. Here it is examined in detail for the period indicated in the title of the thesis, as space is also devoted to its formation and history, as these are considered to be integral to its outlook to date. The history is important because it provides an answer as to the motives that drove the organisation forward. Moreover, Chapter Four, examines the Islamic State in the context of other terrorist organizations, detailing its place among them and what its strategic positions are. An overview of the Islamic State is provided, which includes a brief history from the formation of the terrorist organization to the present, as well as more important events, including mainly successful and unsuccessful attacks. An analysis is made of the reasons for the success or lack thereof. A number of questions related to the subject and object of the study are posed. The main characteristics of the Islamic State as an organization and political entity are examined in detail in this paper. Among the issues discussed are the status of the terrorist group on the international stage, its "statehood" from a political and economic perspective is discussed, as well as how these circumstances exert their significant influence on the processes of radicalization and recruitment of foreign fighters. Last but not least, the processes are discussed in terms of political capital. An attempt is made to uncover the mechanisms by which the organisation accumulates a certain amount of influence and, more importantly, in what ways and through what strategies this influence is reintegrated in order to sustain the results achieved and even to enable the further development, territorial expansion and economic influence of the Islamic State. The main factors and strategies that the organisation employs are outlined, while the interrelationships between them are revealed. Considering them in their entirety rather than as isolated phenomena allows relevant conclusions to be reached. One of the main points this paper addresses is the context in which these processes unfold. Particular emphasis is also placed on the difference between the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations. The comparisons made make it possible to bring out, to an even greater extent and with greater clarity and precision, those characteristics of the entity under

consideration that make it such a serious threat to contemporary democratic society and the world order. These include the terrorist group's high adaptability to modern technology and its ability to be used in different contexts and for different purposes - from purely advertising and information to the ability to recruit foreign fighters and radicalise them to a certain stage (most often cognitive). The claim to religious authenticity and genuineness as well as a return to the roots of Islam seem illogical at first glance, but it is in their convincing combination that the success of the organisation lies. It is obvious that the policies and strategies employed by the Islamic State are laden with certain qualities, including consistency, focus and the presence of strategic planning, both in terms of foreign policy actions and in purely economic terms. Since the organization, while possessing certain features of statehood, could not be defined as a fully functioning sovereign state, this study avoids the formulation of a domestic political plan. In this case, it is rather an internal organisational or financial plan, which also has its indirect influence on the recruitment of new fighters, i.e. on the processes of radicalisation. Achieving a certain stability against the backdrop of collapsing authoritarian regimes inevitably has a pulling force on attracting followers and joining the ranks of the terrorist group.

An even more direct link is observed on the propaganda activities, for which modern technologies and mass media are used, and the process of recruitment of foreign fighters. The online environment or virtual space is one of the main fields in which the initial stages of radicalisation can be observed. This environment appears to be extremely suitable for these first stages, as it also provides certain protections for the recruiter, since the communication that takes place is indirect. However, despite the high degree of anonymity, it is not complete and does not apply to an absolute extent, which in turn, could be used in the fight against and the process of deradicalisation. It is the identified 'victim' or the person to be recruited who would be asked to play a key role in this process. It is precisely for this reason that a preliminary study is needed to determine the stage of radicalisation in which they find themselves, and in this way it can also be determined to what extent they could take an active part in the deradicalisation process, i.e. cooperate and to what extent more passive measures need to be taken against them in order to ensure the necessary secrecy and guarantee the safety of the process. Measures taken that are appropriate in a given case may very often be incompatible with a given stage. Therefore, a diagnostic toolkit developed in advance would ensure that inappropriate measures are not used and thus provide a higher degree of effectiveness in the fight against terrorism and the

deradicalisation process. The secondary analysis of data and normative decisions made, in chapter five, would prove the existence of certain stages. Moreover, through these methods, the main characteristics of the different stages could be identified and delineated, as well as the factors that influence the acceleration or deceleration of the process and the transition from one stage to another, which would also allow for a certain predictive activity, which is also relevant given the rapid dynamics with which the radicalisation process develops and the frequent inability to take measures so quickly. It is often necessary to make a judgement as to what stage of the radicalisation process a person will be at when the group of counter-measures actually begins to be imposed and to take effect. So-called anticipatory policy or forward-looking activity is part of the overall strategy and plan building to more effectively combat the problems of violent extremism, as well as taking targeted measures that correspond to a particular stage or phase of the process.

As mentioned, chapter five is an empirical study based on court records and decisions. For the purpose of the research, an interview with some of the persons whose records and decisions are taken into account in the thesis was planned, but the same was prevented due to objective reasons and did not take place. However, correspondence with the DGIS was successfully carried out, thanks to which more material was gathered to support the main hypothesis and assumptions of the study. It is evident from the study that there are a number of national and international programmes that correspond with the plans and strategies developed. This part of the study focuses on their specificities, including characteristics such as objectives, persons targeted by the programme, etc. But again, there are significant deficits in terms of scientifically based judgement about the stage of radicalisation. There is a reliance on ad hoc solutions based on local judgement rather than having a robust national solution. All this comes in support of the analysis done in the previous chapters and reinforces the thesis of the need for a more holistic yet detailed view of the phenomenon under study. The intertwining between the different factors, resting on different levels but undeniably having a common political-social basis, needs to be clearly seen and brought out. The present study takes a step in this direction; the research and analyses carried out through the documents and scholarly works reviewed are only the beginning.

In its second part, chapter five focuses on the characteristics of the research subjects in order to confirm or refute the conclusions drawn regarding the profile of the foreign fighter (research subject). The sample chosen is not representative because it is negligible, but it nevertheless adds some touches to the conclusions already reached.

Some diagrams are also presented for greater clarity and accessibility. The first is the basic model (Multi-contextual Model of Systemic Terrorism), which also serves as the basis for the author's model, the Radicalisation Wheel. The second presents the model itself. Already in the first scheme the three levels of the micro-context (also called psychological-personal system), the macro (socio-cultural and political system) and the intermediate meso-level (group-organizational network system) are clearly visible.

In addition to the scientific models, some charts representing statistical data concerning the subject of the study are also attached in the dissertation. The diagram clearly shows the proportion and number of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq. The information presented comes in addition to chapter four, adding more visibility and clarity to the processes described. The exact proportion and percentage between the number of foreign fighters arriving from different countries and regions of the world is indicated, which is part of the characteristics of the subject under study. The last chart adds another touch, because in it can be seen the percentage of foreign fighters returning to their homelands, a phenomenon that is both joyful and disturbing.

9. Stages in the preparation of the dissertation

The study went through several stages. After the formulation of the topic thus indicated, at the beginning, with the assistance of the supervisor and other lecturers from the Department of Political Science, the selection of relevant scientific literature was proceeded with, including material mainly from the field of political science and security, but also in a broader context such as Islamic studies, psychology, sociology and economics. This circumstance is necessitated by the specificity of the development, which synthesizes and summarizes political phenomena with severe security implications and which are dictated by multiple and diverse factors.

The forward synthesis was not an easy task, as for the needs of the study, it was necessary to bring out the main directions and trends in the researched field, including achievements, controversial moments, case studies, etc. since the title of the study itself includes two phenomena, their clear definition and terminological explanation was also part of the tasks. Also

included were studies based on empirical observations, by scholars who worked in the field and interviewed a large number of people, and authors who synthesized and generalized certain trends in an attempt to create a theoretical underpinning of these phenomena.

Not a little time was also spent on finding reliable and scientifically sound, systematic and structured information about the Islamic State terrorist organization. Here again, reliable Bulgarian and foreign authors who have worked for years in the field and in the field of Islamization and problems of religion were used.

This completed the first stage of writing the dissertation. The collection of facts, materials and evidence to prove the research hypothesis, however, continued and, in addition to being based on a solid foundation of evidence, it also rested on evidence derived from a number of normative documents. It was at the second stage that a solid study was carried out, concerning the systematisation of the current legal framework in Bulgaria and in the European Union. The documents in force and valid for the period under study were found and collected. These included plans, strategies, measures, guidelines and many others. This made it possible to compare them and to take into account whether they operate in conditions of coherence or whether there are certain discrepancies and inconsistencies. Secondly, it has made it possible to see whether there are gaps.

With the materials gathered in the first and second stage, the writing of part of the dissertation volume (theoretical part) was proceeded, the introductory part was finalized, in which the preliminary criteria, aims, objectives, methods and, of course, hypothesis were set. After the analysis of the materials thus gathered, the general tendencies became even clearer, both with regard to the phenomena under study and with regard to the practical measures applied in the fight against radicalization and terrorism, which provided the basis for proceeding to the next stage of the research, namely on this basis, what has been deduced as the closest to the hypothesis and in order to achieve the specific aims and objectives set at the beginning and to be able to provide an adequate answer to the main research question posed, to build a new scientific model that is more responsive to the needs of the security and defence services.

The next stage of writing the dissertation was devoted to it. This was, also, not an easy task, since the research conducted so far in the field has its solid theoretical grounding and although seemingly some may be opposed to each other, on a second reading it is clearly seen that we are talking about the same phenomena and case studies, having similar solutions, but viewed from

different angles, and this was also a determinant of the chosen approach, which is that the model created should cover and be able to satisfy as many case studies as possible. It is for this reason that the author's model presented, which is the main contribution of the thesis, is as neutral as possible and can be related to each individual case of a radicalised person. It is neither based on religious alone, nor on political, social, age or any other characteristics, while taking into account each of these factors, as well as their combinativity and interaction at different levels (micro, meso and macro) and at different stages of the radicalization process.

Once this model was built, came the last stage of the dissertation preparation, namely the need to verify the analysis, the conclusions, generalizations and inferences made on the basis of the facts and materials gathered in the first two stages, as well as the validity of the built author's model. This stage was the most challenging due to the epidemiological situation. The objective circumstances imposed and the consequent need for stricter measures and restrictions on free movement had their impact. The stage itself went through several phases - planning and discussion with the supervisor, conducting institutional correspondence and collecting materials from hearings.

On the basis of the decisions thus made, the correspondence conducted and the materials collected from the hearings, we proceeded to the penultimate part of the writing of the dissertation, namely the empirical part.

At the last stage, under the guidance of the supervisor and subsequently after the received reviews, the development went through several revisions, the aim being to highlight to the maximum extent the scientific contribution, the conclusions drawn and the generalizations and conclusions reached by the research, as well as to draw its practical application.

10. Conclusions, summaries

The conclusions and generalizations drawn support the hypothesis of the need for further theorizing in the field under study and the opinion expressed about the growing strength and potential of the terrorist group. A more detailed examination and in-depth analysis of the radicalization process, including the delineation of distinct stages, would facilitate the development of more detailed normative documents, including counterterrorism plans and strategies.

The main contribution of this study remains the author's model of the radicalization process. It is based on an extensive and systematic study in the scientific literature. In addition to serving to

prove the thesis put forward, it also represents a useful theoretical and scientific tool that could serve as a basis for more rigorous research in the field. Its value as such is also proven in the present work, as through it certain ideas for the introduction of concrete measures for deradicalisation and prevention of radicalisation are derived. The model of the radicalisation process sheds new light on what has been achieved so far in academia. It examines it in depth, detailing the details and particularities surrounding each stage. All these are classified and systematized in the exposition, thus fulfilling one of the main tasks of the study.

Apart from the proved hypothesis and the accomplished tasks, the paper also contains purely theoretical paragraphs on the basis of which some conclusions and generalizations are also reached. The structure, nature and modus operandi of the Islamic State organization is examined in detail, using reliable sources for this purpose. Despite the organization's claims to be a state structure, it could not be characterized as such, at least because in order to be characterized as a state, it would need to be recognized by at least part of the international community. In the period under review, the Islamic State reached the culmination of its development and indeed possessed its own funding, hierarchical structure and occupied a vast territory of Syria and Iraq, but these were not sufficient preconditions for its claims to be fulfilled from a political point of view. The ways in which it recruits and trains its foreign fighters are varied but can be grouped under the general heading of propaganda. This is one of the main methods used by the organisation, and what distinguishes it from the extremist Islamist groups that preceded it is the ferocity and brutality of the propaganda material it disseminates. Surprisingly or not, this strategy has proven to be a winning one and since 2013 its fighting ranks have grown significantly in a short space of time. This gives the organisation self-confidence and its demonstrative acts of brutality and violence also increase manifold, with the emergence of so-called lone wolves who represent sympathisers of the ideology but who act independently and from a distance rather than going to Syria or Iraq. The brief overview of the Islamic State that has been provided includes a brief history from the inception of the terrorist organization to the present, as well as more important events, including mainly successful and unsuccessful attacks. An analysis is made of the reasons for the success or lack thereof and how it affects the overall radicalisation process and the mechanisms by which the organisation recruits foreign fighters. Among the main focuses of the analysis on the structure and activities of the Islamic State is the question of its ability to accumulate political capital and use it successfully in these campaigns. It

concludes that it uses it skillfully in recruitment, with the conditions for this determined by the opportunities it provides for territorial expansion and economic influence. The ideology that forms the backbone of the Islamic State is also examined in detail, and the results of this analysis show that it is political in nature because behind the ostensibly religious tenets, there are clearly identifiable political goals and behaviors. It has also proved that the organisation is adept at using new technologies to achieve its goals and that it has certain qualities such as consistency, focus and strategic planning, both in terms of foreign policy actions and in purely economic terms.

In order to understand the radicalisation process in even greater detail, besides the overall functioning of the organisation, internal organisational dynamics were also examined. No small part of the study is devoted to the relations between the members of the Islamic State itself. The question of what is the profile of the foreign fighter is also sought to be answered. In the course of this research, it is concluded that profiling radicalized individuals is an extremely complex task that has no clear-cut answer. It would be difficult to construct a single profile of those susceptible to radicalisation. Credible sources have been presented which refute the widely held view that persons of low educational status, persons belonging to poor sections of society and minority ethnic or religious groups who are marginalised join extreme Islamist currents. The latter represent only part of the militant jihadist organisation established in Syria and Iraq. Another part of the foreign fighters are well-educated, wealthy, persons with good characteristics who may not even have been Muslims at the time the radicalisation process began. All these conclusions reached by the study once again confirm the thesis that the focus of research and the work of security officials should not be on the search for common characteristics or vulnerable groups, but on the process they go through to reach an extreme and manifest open forms of aggression and terror, here seeing all stages of the process as well as its different levels.

However, the development is not limited to the conclusions drawn, but based on them makes concrete practical proposals on the implementation of certain measures. In addition to the description provided, an analysis is made for each stage, on the basis of which the corresponding measures are proposed. These can be summarised as two main types - hard and soft. The former should only be applied when extreme forms of radicalisation are present, while the latter are a typical tool for the initial stages of the process. Each of these groups is also discussed in its variants in the course of the presentation. Another major conclusion reached by this study in

relation to the measures thus proposed is that frontline professionals need to be better equipped to deal with the problems of radicalisation in terms of recognising it, and to this end it is suggested that they be trained. In this way, they will be able to distinguish between all forms of radicalisation - violent, non-violent and extreme, terrorist radicalisation.

Regarding the profiling of radicalised persons, too, several other conclusions have been drawn, the most important of which is that it poses a risk of discrimination and non-compliance with human rights law, which democratic societies de jure guarantee. The aim and objectives of this paper, which include providing a scientific explanation of the mechanisms by which the Islamic State recruits fighters from different countries and also examining the process of deradicalisation, have also been met. Answers to the questions posed in the introductory section are found.

From the reviewed normative acts and the presented scientific literature, it is concluded that as radicalisation is not an isolated process, but on the contrary it goes beyond national borders, so the measures to be taken with regard to deradicalisation should have a transnational character.

The dissertation reaches its results, conclusions and generalizations using qualitative methods - in-depth interview, ethnographic research and secondary empirical-research analysis of previously conducted interviews and other documents. The empirical research conducted supports what has been demonstrated in the theoretical chapters. The following results, conclusions and generalizations were confirmed from the documents in the case of a radicalized person, a citizen of the Republic of Bulgaria, who allegedly belongs to the Islamic State. On the basis of the empirical research thus conducted, some of the conclusions drawn in the previous chapters were confirmed and further developed, but new ones were also reached. The conclusion about the main difficulties and obstacles in building a unified profile of the foreign fighter and the ineffectiveness of building one as an instrument were confirmed.

Secondly, the political nature of the radicalisation process and the anti-democratic and unconstitutional nature of radical actions were reaffirmed. It also proved that this is rarely realised by the radicalised themselves, for whom the motives are often purely religious.

Regarding the stages that take place at the macro level, the following conclusions were reached: the Islamic State plays a verifying role in the process, it is the external author for the radicalized.

This poses difficulties in the deradicalisation process, necessitating a comprehensive approach of measures. A holistic approach is also necessary from the perspective that foreign fighters act once on their own behalf i.e. as individuals and a second time as part of the Islamic State organisation. Measures must be taken by accumulation and not by replacement.

In conclusion, this paper concludes that radicalisation is a complex process that takes place in different stages, involving micro and macro levels, which develop in a cyclical manner, each successive stage complementing and incorporating the previous one. This also calls for a comprehensive consideration and continuous revision of the plans, strategies and measures that are part of the counter-radicalisation process, taking into careful account the specificities of the different stages and the factors on which radicalisation depends. These factors are numerous and complex and include both material, including not so much monetary, as social benefits and a highly developed religious doctrinalism which is deeply political in nature and which remains a serious threat to democratic societies and the constitutional order. Research in this direction must therefore continue.

11. Scientific contribution

The scientific contribution of the dissertation consists in the presentation of an entirely new model (the Radicalisation Wheel), which consists of different variables interacting at the micro and macro level, with the emphasis not on the predominance of one or the other of them, but on the way, the multi-components and the complexity of their interaction. Thus, the model, being applied, deprives future research in the field of subjectivity. This gives it an advantage over the models used so far, because up to now there have been a number of scientific disputes in the field of research precisely regarding the variables, factors and elements relevant to the process. This lack of homogeneity, in turn, has an impact on the practical cases to be covered, being expressed in particular by a lack of consensus on the measures to be applied for the prevention and correction of radical thinking and behaviour. The fact that some scholarship emphasises the religious dimensions and considers that the phenomenon under study only applies to persons professing Islam has long been refuted, as is evident from the theoretical part of this study.