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OSW



ISLAMIC STATE IN GERMANY, GERMANS IN ISLAMIC STATE

GERMANY'S HOMEGROWN JIHADISTS

Artur Ciechanowicz

WARSAW
APRIL 2017

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OSW |

CENTRE FOR EASTERN STUDIES

OŚRODEK STUDIÓW WSCHODNICH im. **Marka Karpia**

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THESES

- Muslims from Germany have travelled to regions military conflicts and activity are being carried out by Islamic radicals. One consequence of this in Germany has involved the introduction of a series of legislative changes, the strengthening of the operating potential of specific services and the implementation of certain existing, albeit hitherto not applied, provisions aimed at preventing possible attacks.
- Some of the measures taken by German politicians and services aimed at stepping up control of radical Islamist groups naturally leads to civil freedoms being limited. In Germany, this is a sensitive issue. It triggers numerous debates and disputes. The German leadership is responsible for providing security, but can nevertheless not permit itself to excessively interfere in laws regarding the surveillance of citizens.
- Salafis have become the embodiment of the terrorist threat in Germany and Islamic State is considered their only spiritual homeland. At the same time, it has become a characteristic feature of the German narrative regarding the terrorist threat to emphasise a very strong and durable division between Islam and Salafism and defining Islamic radicals through the prism of the theory of a youth counter-culture, which – according to German security services – has around 8,000 supporters. Similar to neo-Nazi and leftist armed groups, Salafis have become one of the groups which rebel against the German constitutional order.
- The Salafi problem is in fact a political problem and the approach to it has been a product of actions taken by specific parties in domestic politics. Most politicians support the idea of not associating Islamic radicalism with the majority of Muslims and not stoking anti-Islamic mood in Germany. They claim that, especially in the context of the migrant crisis, this could lead to the stigmatisation of all Muslims and, in turn, to social conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

In Germany, Islamic radicalism is not a new and unknown phenomenon and departures of jihadists to conflict regions have been recorded before. However, the present scale of this phenomenon, alongside threats formulated towards Germany, has made Germans aware of the size of the risk. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) considers several hundred individuals who in recent years travelled to fight in the war alongside groups from which they originate to be one of the greatest threats to Germany's internal security. Despite the fact that they have not organised any attack on a scale comparable to that of the attacks carried out in Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels, through their presence and activity, Islamic radicals permanently residing in Germany exert a certain influence on how the German state and society function. Moreover, their existence is a symptom of a deep problem which is unlikely to be automatically resolved if and when Islamic State collapses, the possibility to travel to the conflict regions is blocked, and the jihadists returning from these trips are taken to court. The problem of the radicalisation of Muslims living in Germany will likely grow in the coming years. The biggest fear experienced by security services and politicians involves this radicalisation translating into acts of violence and terror carried out in Germany, the potential reaction to these by German radicals, and the social and political consequences of such conflicts. Despite not being interconnected, recent attacks involving migrants (the summer of 2016) have made the slogans promoted by anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim groups all the more credible. Topics referred to in these slogans include: the impossibility of integrating Muslims, crime among immigrants, and the state's failure to fulfil its commitments towards its citizens.

I. ISLAMIC STATE MILITANTS COMING FROM GERMANY

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, around 810 individuals from Germany have travelled to the Middle East to support Islamic terror groups¹. This is the official number quoted by the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA). The actual number of jihadists coming from Germany is not known. According to the security services, it may be considerably higher than is stated in official statistics and it continues to rise. So far, over 130 German jihadists have been killed in Syria and Iraq and around 270 have returned to Germany. 70 of them are known to have gained combat experience².

1. The profile of a German jihadist

The reasons why individuals travel to Syria and Iraq to fight in the war are different in each case. Religious, economic, socio-political, culture-related and psychological factors play a role here. However, radicalised Islamists from Germany do have certain socio-demographic parameters in common.

80% of militants from Germany are men. However, recent months have seen a rise in the number of women who decide to travel to a conflict region³. Most of these individuals are aged 15–25, over half of them were born in Germany, and 60% have German citizenship. Converts account for 12% of the total number. All the militants coming from Germany have been associated with Salafi groups (as are all the Islamic terrorist cells so far identified in Germany)⁴.

The most recent data regarding the ethnic descent of German jihadists come from 2014. According to them, 38% of individuals who travelled abroad to join Islamic State and fight are of Arab origin, 22% are of Turkish origin, 9% have

¹ BKA-Präsident warnt vor IS-Rückkehrern, 16 May 2016, http://www.focus.de/politik/experten/tophoven/holger-muench-im-interview-militaerausbildung-kampferfahrung-netzwerk-bka-praesident-warnt-vor-is-rueckkehrern_id_5531663.html

² BKA liegen hochbrisante IS-Papiere vor, 7 March 2016, <http://www.n-tv.de/politik/BKA-liegen-hochbrisante-IS-Papiere-vor-article17163921.html>

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Salafistische Bestrebungen, 21 July 2015, <http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af-islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/was-ist-islamismus/salafistische-bestrebungen>

their roots in the Balkans (mainly in Bosnia), and 4% have their roots in Afghanistan⁵.

The German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution refers to the profile of a typical German jihadist using the abbreviation “4M” – from four German M-words which stand for four characteristic features: muslimisch (Muslim), maennlich (male), Migrationshintergrund (having an immigrant background), Misserfolg (not particularly successful in life)⁶. The Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), for its part, published a special report in which it analysed the biographies of 670 militants and found out that almost half of them had previously come into conflict with the law and had been known to the police; 82 had secondary or vocational school education; 80 had enrolled as students but never graduated; around 160 were unemployed⁷.

2. The jihadists’ motivation

Departures by militants from Germany to conflict regions with the intention to help their ‘brothers in faith’ are not a new phenomenon and form one of the symptoms of the existence (for some time already) of radical groups of German Muslims or, more broadly speaking, of the socio-political problem of the lack of integration of a section of individuals stemming from immigrant families. The so-called Hamburg Group centred around Mohammed Atta played a key role in the attacks carried out on 11 September 2001. In the wake of these attacks the media repeatedly reported on German citizens undergoing training in camps run by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Jihad Union in Pakistan and those fighting ISAF troops. For Germans, the brothers Yassin and Mounir Chouka have become the embodiment of the ‘jihadists next door’. They are German citizens of Moroccan descent who travelled to the Kunduz province in Afghanistan to join a group of militants associated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and to fight, for example, Bundeswehr contingent soldiers. However, “Abu Ibrahim” and “Abu Adam” became known mainly for short propaganda videos in which they called on Muslims in Germany to

⁵ Immer mehr deutsche Dschihadisten in Syrien, 26 February 2014, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/nrw-kuendigt-konsequenzen-an-immer-mehr-deutsche-dschihadisten-in-syrien-12822278.html>

⁶ Deutschlands Neo-Salafisten, 29 October 2014, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/hans-georg-maassen-die-vier-m-der-deutschen-salafisten-13235053.html>

⁷ Klug, kriminell, großer Freundeskreis: So ist der deutsche IS-Kämpfer, 23 September 2015, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/dschihad-so-ist-der-deutsche-is-kaempfer-1.2661697>

carry out attacks and invited them to join the fight against “the infidels” in Afghanistan and Pakistan⁸. Despite considerable media attention focused on the brothers from Bonn, the scale of the phenomenon was still marginal. It is estimated that since the beginning of the intervention in Afghanistan around 100 German residents (with some sources claiming this number to be 200) have travelled there to fight in the war. This number includes the wives and children of these men⁹. According to German security services, the significant increase in the scale of individuals departing from Germany to take part in the war in Syria and Iraq is mainly connected with two factors discussed below.

- Geographical accessibility

Syria is much better accessible by various means of transport than Somalia, Chechnya or Afghanistan, where only the most determined individuals managed to travel, additionally on condition that they had local contacts. It is cheaper and simpler to make dreams of jihad come true in Syria and Iraq. The most popular ‘route’ to Islamic State runs from Germany to Turkey by plane (German Salafis refer to these flights as the “Dschihad-Express” or “jihad-express”), and from there on to Syria.

- Islamic State propaganda

Islamic State has been able to organise a successful propaganda campaign to win supporters in Europe. Video messages, nasheeds (in this case – war songs performed solo) and blogs build the image of Islamic State territory as a place where sharia law is being fully observed and as a centre of the fight for justice and moral purification, thus making migration there (hijrah) an obligation. These are places where people are assessed not based on their skin colour but on whether they are good Muslims¹⁰. Islamic State values are contrasted with the “rotten” West. Taking part in the war – the message seems to suggest – is

⁸ Ich will unbedingt Deutsche töten!, 4 December 2013, http://www.if-zeitschrift.de/portal/a/ifz/!ut/p/c4/JYvBCsIwEAX_KNvUHsSbJRdBP0hB66WkzRoXmqSsWwvix5vgG5jL8OA0m-Wjf5K1QinaCG3Qj7YZVDavDnh4fJU8MGNWwIHvk_iXWClzLOaEaU0QpFoxC2Z6tjFZzYplKWZhzUeSgq7Rp9UbX1X_6uz2Z46XWTWMO7RnmEPY_5Z7Eww!!/

⁹ Für deutsche "Gotteskrieger" ist Syrien Reiseziel Nr. 1, 4 October 2014, <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article132910243/Fuer-deutsche-Gotteskrieger-ist-Syrien-Reiseziel-Nr-1.html>

¹⁰ WATCH: ISIS Releases New ‘No Respite’ Propaganda Video in English, 24 November 2015, <http://heavy.com/news/2015/11/new-isis-islamic-state-news-pictures-videos-no-respite-english-language-propaganda-full-uncensored-youtube-daesh/>

a romantic adventure, an occasion to feel a member of a community of militants, and an opportunity to fight against Bashar al-Assad and other “infidels” (meaning those who oppose Islamic State, no matter whether they are Muslims or not). It is also represented as a historic mission involving the creation of a “caliphate and predominantly a religious imperative”¹¹. It is not just the content of this propaganda message which is important, but also its form and channels of communication. The footage distributed via social media and video sharing sites are usually of good quality with certain editing efforts evident to copycat the dynamic style of Hollywood movies and video games which Western viewers are accustomed to¹². Another characteristic feature involves footage targeted at German viewers increasingly often featuring German speaking fighters¹³. Salafi groups operating in Germany are fertile ground for Islamic State propaganda as they form part of Muslim youth subculture referred to as turbo-Islam or pop-Islam (see below). In their view, Islamic State is the embodiment of the utopia of a true caliphate.

It is difficult to draw a precise personality profile of a jihadist. Similarly, it is not possible to point to a single cause to explain why young people living in Europe (and who frequently were born there) decide to abandon their former lives and travel abroad to fight in a war. Radicalisation seems to be a prerequisite for making this decision. According to criminologists, the underlying cause of radicalisation of a portion of Muslims living in Germany is the sense of not belonging to lay, liberal society (typical of second and third generation immigrants), accompanied by the lack of connections with their parents’ or grandparents’ country of origin¹⁴. The feeling of alienation is stronger when accompanied by disorientation in the realm of axiology, so typical of adolescents, and by rebellion against their parents’ lifestyle. The combination of personality traits, social factors (discussed above) and exposure to a certain ideology (for example Salafi or Islamic State propaganda) can cause a person to become radicalised and decide to travel to Islamic State-controlled territory. The cited BKA report suggests that radicalisation is taking place in a circle of friends

¹¹ ISIS könnte eine Modernisierung des Islam einleiten, 10 August 2015, http://www.20min.ch/reportage-IS/interview_mansour.html

¹² Dschihad 2.0, 28 January 2015, http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/selbstradikalisierung-im-netz-dschihad-2-0.724.de.html?dram:article_id=310037

¹³ IS veröffentlicht erstes Propaganda-Video auf Deutsch, 6 August 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHp9s-MnlbQ>

¹⁴ Deutsche IS-Dschihadisten. Kriminalätiologische und kriminalpräventive Analyse des Radikalisierungsprozesses. Roland Christian Hoffmann-Plesch, *Kriminalistik* 2015/2, p. 74.

(37%), in mosques (33%) and via exposure to propaganda messages on the Internet (30% of the cases).

3. Actions by German jihadists in Syria

Specific information regarding the role German jihadists play in Islamic State is scarce and difficult to verify. The arrival of a foreign volunteer from Germany in Islamic State is mainly viewed as a propaganda success and proof of the effectiveness of actions aimed at building a community of supporters in Europe¹⁵. On the spot, following verification, having undergone ideological and military training, jihadists from Germany are delegated to perform one of three types of tasks¹⁶. Not all of them are sent to the front.

- Volunteers who have a specific profession for which there is demand in Islamic State get a 'job' consistent with their competences;
- A section of the volunteers is sent to work on propaganda materials targeted at German viewers. The entire production of propaganda materials to be distributed in the West is carried out by foreign jihadists. Some of them – in particular those who were active members of Salafi groups in Germany – become the 'faces' of Islamic State campaigns (former rapper Denis Cuspert aka Deso Dogg aka Abu Talha, Salafi activist Christian David Emde aka Abu Qatada, or Reda Seyam aka Dhul al Qarnayn).
- Those who do not fit into either of those two 'professional' categories are sent to work for maintenance 'service' or to fight at the front. According to statements by some of the fighters who returned to Germany, 'Europeans' are being used to torture, execute or watch over the prisoners, to track down deserters and to carry out suicide attacks (so far, around 20 individuals from Germany have perpetrated such attacks). Incidentally, the German narrative promotes the view that these are the tasks local mujahideen refuse to carry out. The cruelty of foreign fighters is seen as a result of more profound radicalisation, the lack of knowledge of local customs and

¹⁵ Wenn du dahin gehst, bist du tot, 16 July 2015, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/islamischer-staat-rueckkehrer-101.html>

¹⁶ Unsere Angst vor den Pop-Dschihadisten, 10 August 2015, <http://www.20min.ch/reportage-IS/index.html>

only superficial religious knowledge. All this makes these individuals more prone to manipulation¹⁷.

4. The returns

According to BKA figures, around a third of the 810 Islamic radicals who had left Germany to fight in Syria, have returned to Germany. The services and experts dealing with Salafi communities distinguish three groups of these individuals¹⁸:

- Those who did not make it to Syria and discontinued their travel in Turkey, without crossing the Syrian border. Most of the time what motivates them is fear of the increasingly realistic perspective of becoming involved in military activities, possibly getting killed and finding themselves in a situation where it is impossible to return to their former lives.
- Those who stayed in Islamic State for a short time only. Upon arriving in Syria, potential militants are first verified for their intentions and usefulness. The verification process takes several weeks during which time some of the volunteers begin to become aware of the divergence between what they had heard about living in Islamic State and about the war as presented in propaganda materials, and what they really see. The mounting doubts and conscience pangs make them decide to return.
- Those who formed a bad opinion of Islamic State after several weeks or months of 'service' in the ranks of fighters and decided to return to their former lives. However, this is possible only when German government agencies have no evidence of them taking part in military activities, otherwise these individuals will be arrested.

5. The legal consequences

Return generates the risk of legal consequences. The main penalty is criminal responsibility for being a member of a terrorist group (articles 129a and 129b of the Criminal Code). Since 2002, membership of a terrorist group outside Germany is also prosecuted. Since 2009, the so-called *Terrorcampgesetz* (or the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Lamya Kaddor, *Zum Toeten bereit*, Piper Verlag 2015, pp. 140–143.

law on terrorist camps) has been in place, which provides for prosecuting individuals who have undergone training in terrorist camps. In April 2015, the Bundestag adopted a package of laws prepared by the ministry of the interior and the ministry of justice, toughening these provisions (for more on this see section 3).

6. The assessment of the threat

According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the departures of Muslims from Germany to fight in the war in Syria also pose a potential threat for Germany. The security services are aware that in a situation where such a large number of volunteers are travelling to IS, it is increasingly likely that a portion of individuals who have undergone training in terrorist camps, know how to use arms and build bombs, have combat experience and are accustomed to violence, will return to Germany. This approach is relatively new. Until recently, the German security services emphasised numerous advantages of the fact that radical Islamists had left the country. They thus turned a blind eye to travelling jihadists or even facilitated their travel. This was revealed in October 2014 by Ludwig Schierghofer from the State Criminal Police Office (LKA) in Bavaria. He referred to a classified instruction prepared by the federal ministry of the interior in May 2009. The logic behind this approach was as follows: if we are dealing with a radical Islamist, who is ready to carry out an attack in Germany, it is better to have him leave the country. This strategy was being followed until the autumn of 2013¹⁹. This was when it became evident that Syria, not Afghanistan, is the main destination for German jihadists. Moreover, the number of individuals who travelled to Islamic State has led to the conclusion that the risk posed by returning militants who have gained combat experience, outweighs the advantages associated with their temporary absence from Germany.

Individuals returning from Syria are under constant surveillance by specific services. Most of them have been the subject of investigations or taken to court. This is one of the reasons why the threat of potential attacks comes from local Salafis, who have not travelled to regions of military activity and cannot be kept under strict surveillance by the police and the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Back in 2012, Heinz Fromm, the former head of

¹⁹ Behörden ließen Islamisten jahrelang ausreisen, 2 October 2014, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/deutsche-dschihadisten-behoerden-billigten-angeblich-ausreise-von-islamisten-13185935.html>

the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, argued that not every Salafi is a terrorist but all known Islamic terrorists from Germany stem from Salafi communities. This diagnosis continues to be valid.

II. THE REACTION OF THE STATE

According to the federal ministry of the interior, the level of threat of attacks carried out in Germany is high. The internal report on state security compiled by the ministry in January 2016 suggests that Islamic State militants have added Germany to their list of potential targets. The ministry assumes that the scenario of potential attacks may resemble that used in the two terrorist attacks carried out in Paris in 2015 and in Brussels in 2016. Militants who have returned from Syria and operate in small cells or on their own have been considered the biggest threat²⁰. This assessment continues to be valid. Moreover, the attacks carried out in July 2016 in Ansbach and near Würzburg indicate that also migrants who had come to Germany as refugees may pose a certain threat. In these circumstances, the government chooses to act according to a strategy which places a security-promoting solution before a freedom-promoting one where doubt exists. As a consequence, since the beginning of 2015, a series of legislative solutions has been adopted to limit the scope of civil freedoms which would not have been accepted (either by politicians or the public) in a situation of no threat²¹. Another implemented measure involves boosting the human potential of specific services and modernising the equipment they use. The provisions which had been in place but which were not implemented are becoming the basis for formulating indictments.

1. Toughening the law

In connection with the 2015 terrorist attack on the editorial office of the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine, the Bundestag adopted a series of laws prepared by the ministry of the interior and the ministry of justice toughening the provisions regarding the fight against terrorism and travel by potential militants to conflict regions. The amendments cover²²:

- article 89a section 2a of the Criminal Code: before the law was amended, a stay in terrorist training camps was punishable similarly to making

²⁰ Anschläge wie in Paris möglich: So groß ist die Terror-Gefahr in Deutschland, 14 January 2016, http://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/bericht-des-innenministeriums-anschlaege-wie-in-paris-moeglich-so-gross-ist-die-terror-gefahr-in-deutschland_id_5209723.html

²¹ So schafft sich unsere Demokratie ab, 20 November 2015, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2015-11/terror-sicherheit-deutschland-gesetze-freiheit>

²² Kampf gegen den Terror wird verstärkt, 4 February 2015, http://www.bmjv.de/DE/Themen/FokusThemen/KampfTerror/KampfTerror_node.html

preparations for an act of violence posing a threat to the state (article 89a) or participation in training preparing oneself to carry out such an act (article 91). At present, just travelling to states which host terrorist training camps with the intention to take part in such training is punishable. In this way, the amendment implements into German law the guidelines contained in the UN Security Council resolution no. 2178 on foreign terrorist fighters of September 2014. Pursuant to these guidelines, all cases of travel, attempted travel with the intention of engaging in terrorist activity and financing terrorist organisations should be punishable²³;

- article 89c of the Criminal Code: before the amendment, gathering, transferring assets which are “not insignificant” or making them available for terrorist purposes was punishable. This phrasing was imprecise and led to doubts among lawyers. In the amended version of the law, the phrase “not insignificant” was omitted. The provision refers to recommendations by the Financial Action Task Force, an organisation involved in fighting money laundering and the funding of terror;
- the law on identity documents which in its present version makes it possible to deprive an individual of this document. Until recently, German law made it possible to deprive individuals of their passports, but not of their identity documents. The amended law enables the authorities to retain this document as well and issue a temporary document in its place, valid for up to three years. It is important that it would not be possible to travel outside Germany using this temporary document. This amendment is intended to prevent individuals from taking part in military activities in Islamic State territory. Until recently, despite having been deprived of their passports, volunteers from Germany could travel to Syria and Iraq if they used their identity document as their travel document. It was enough for them to travel to any country neighbouring the EU, from there to Turkey, and on to Iraq or Syria²⁴;
- the law on data retention passed by the German parliament in October 2015 enables telecom operators to retain telephone and Internet data for up to ten weeks. Data regarding users’ location are to be retained for up to four

²³ Resolution 2178 (2014), 24 September 2014, http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178_2014_EN.pdf

²⁴ Reisen von Dschihadisten verhindern, 24 April 2015, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2015/01/2015-04-24-gesetz-personalausweis.html>

weeks. Investigators will have access to certain information when they suspect an individual has committed a serious crime and when they obtain permission from court. In this case “serious crimes” include suspected involvement in planning a terrorist attack and violating certain provisions of the law on narcotic substances²⁵;

- back in 2014, pursuant to article 3 in connection with article 15 section 1 and article 18 section 2 of the law on associations, on the initiative of Germany’s interior minister Thomas de Maizière the activity of the organisation known as “Islamic State” was banned in Germany. The ban also covers popularisation of IS symbols, illustrations and image during meetings, in written form, on sound recording devices, and in the form of images. The introduced amendments complement the solutions already in place which were adopted in the aftermath of the attacks carried out in New York on 11 September 2001. Their validity has been extended until 2021²⁶.

2. The end of lenience

The new regulations have been adopted largely under pressure from public opinion rather than due to a lack of legal infrastructure to fight potential attackers. Prior to the Paris attacks, Germany had legislation in place which enabled the prosecution of members of terrorist organisations even if they were active outside Germany. Before 2015, these provisions had been practically defunct. Lawyers avoided formulating indictments based on these provisions, doubting whether they are in line with international law and fearing that they might easily be challenged²⁷. The increased feeling of threat in the aftermath of the Paris attacks has led to a surge in the number of investigations carried out by the general prosecutor’s office in Karlsruhe in connection with suspected Islamic terrorism. In late 2015, the prosecutor’s office was working on 136 investigations targeting 199 suspects. In 2014, there were 42 investigations focused on 80 individuals; in 2013 there were 5 investigations focused on 8 suspects. So far, accusations have been brought against 17 individuals. Sentences

²⁵ Bundestag beschließt neue Vorratsdatenspeicherung, 16 October 2015, https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2015/kw42_de_vorratsdatenspeicherung/391654

²⁶ Anti-Terror-Gesetzegeltenbis 2021, 27 November 2015, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/bundesrat-terror-gesetze-jubilaum-101.html>

²⁷ Das Terrorcamp-Gesetz nutzt kaum gegen den IS, 1 October 2014, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2014-09/islamischer-staat-syrien-rueckkehrer-terrorcamp-gesetz-89a/seite-2>

have been passed in seven cases and have involved imprisonment for a period ranging from 21 months (suspended) to eleven years (this was the case of an individual who had returned from Syria)²⁸. At present, all the prosecutor's offices are processing investigations focused on 800 individuals who returned from Syria or were prevented from travelling there.

There have also been changes in how the police acts. This phenomenon has not been visible in statistics, however, police officers admit to the media that they have begun to use preventive detention of individuals considered dangerous²⁹. A similar shift has been observed in relation to so-called 'racial profiling', or selecting individuals in the street to be checked based on their skin colour³⁰.

3. Expanding the police and intelligence services personnel

The terrorist attacks carried out in France in January 2015 have triggered a debate on the level of preparedness of the German police for this type of threat. This included a discussion on its equipment and weaponry. In the case of Germany, the debate revolves around investing in specific technologies, in particular those used for surveillance, rather than supplying the police with more arms.

At the federal level, the biggest problem faced by the security services is insufficient personnel; this was admitted by Holger Münch, the head of the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA). According to Münch, police officers are burdened with an excessive amount of duties, especially when it comes to the surveillance of individuals suspected of involvement in terrorist activity. It is true that the BKA is employing new officers to combat terrorists, but before they are delegated to service, they need to undergo appropriate training. The problems are aggravated by the ongoing migration crisis which absorbs the attention of a large portion of the security services' personnel.

²⁸ Zahl der Terrorverfahren in Deutschland hat sich verdreifacht, 20 January 2016, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-01/bundesanwalt-schaft-terror-verfahren-islamismus>

²⁹ Kampf gegen die Ich-AGs des Terrors, 22 January 2015, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/neue-strategie-deutscher-behoerden-kampf-gegen-die-ich-ags-des-terrors-1.2316817>

³⁰ Wenn nur die Hautfarbe zählt, 8 April 2015, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/racial-profiling-wenn-nur-die-hautfarbe-zaehlt/11604882.html>

In this situation, the German ruling coalition decided that in 2016–2018 a total of 3,568 new jobs will be created in the Federal Police (Bundespolizei). The BKA will be allowed to employ 297 new officers, 200 of whom will be dealing with Islamic terrorism. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution will employ 470 new officers, 200 of whom will be involved in monitoring Salafi groups. The Federal Intelligence Service (BND) will create 225 new jobs, 125 of which will supplement teams involved in exposing terrorist organisations.

In the aftermath of the January 2015 attacks in France, Germany identified the need to create a new special unit to intervene during a prolonged terrorist threat. Germany does have a GSG9 unit which specialises in operations carried out during a terrorist attack. However, its capability may be insufficient should an attack be carried out on a large scale. This is why the Ministry of the Interior decided to create a special unit within the Federal Police structure to intervene also during rallies and sports events (BFE+). This unit will consist of 250 officers delegated to five locations in Germany: Blumberg (Brandenburg), Sankt Augustin (North Rhine-Westphalia), Hünfeld (Hesse), Bayreuth (Bavaria), and Uelzen (Lower Saxony)³¹.

The state's reaction involving the use of repressive and preventive measures alongside increased socially-motivated ostracism lends a certain level of credence to the Salafi narrative about the persecution of Muslims. So, paradoxically, Salafis welcome the actions targeting them. This argument is being used by leftist and liberal groups in Germany to prove that these methods bring the opposite results to what was assumed. In contrast to this narrative, though, there is no other effective response, either temporary or long-term, to the challenge posed by radical Islam. One direct effect of permanent surveillance and increased vigilance among citizens has been the absence of large-scale attacks to date. In the long term, these two factors may discourage potential supporters of Salafi groups from increased involvement (in terrorist activities).

Muslims in Germany

Before the migration crisis, 3.8–4.3 million German residents identified themselves as Muslims. The largest group among them, 2.6 million individuals, are of Turkish origin. Around 550,000 German Muslims come from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Bulgaria. Around

³¹ Deutsche Sicherheitsbehörden rüsten auf, 17 November 2015, <http://pdf.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2015-11/paris-attentate-deutsche-sicherheitsbehoerden-ruesten-auf.pdf>

330,000 are from Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Around 280,000 are from the Maghreb (mainly Morocco). Muslims account for around 5% of the German population and 25% (out of over 15 million) of residents who come from immigrant families. 45% of Muslims in Germany have German citizenship. Most German Muslims (74%) are believers in Sunni Islam; 13% are Alevis; 7% are Shia Muslims; and 6% belong to other branches of Islam.

Salafism

Salafism is the most prominent and dynamically developing branch of independent Islam in the world. It is an extremist religious movement within Sunni Islam characterised by strict puritanism and legalism (all actions must have their justification in the Quran and in hadiths) and the rejection of tradition understood as a foreign element in pure, original Islam to which Salafis refer. Salafism - both in Germany and globally - is an amorphous, decentralised and multi-branch religious movement. It is being shaped by its members and it has no unified leadership, although there are leaders surrounded by groups of their supporters. Salafism does not automatically assume military combat - the approach towards militant jihad is one of the lines of division among Salafi groups; they are highly diversified when it comes to this issue.

Due to the fact that Salafism (seen as pure, the most orthodox Islam) is attractive to converts and individuals returning to faith, this branch of Islam is gaining popularity across the world (including in Europe).

Source: <https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/homojihadicus.pdf>

III. THE DANGER OF RADICALISM

Both the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) and most media and politicians view Salafism as the most dynamically developing extremist movement in Germany. In late 2015, the security services announced that there were 7,900 self-declared Salafis residing in Germany. However, the BfV also assumes that the circle of individuals who support them is much wider. Out of around three thousand mosques, 12 are controlled by Salafis. A hundred other mosques support these groups.

1. Salafis as a subculture

The German narrative regarding Salafis is mainly being shaped by representatives of the security services, teachers, social workers, and Muslim communities competing with Salafis. As a consequence, the debate focuses on security issues as broadly understood (terrorism, radicalisation etc.), demonises propaganda initiatives, and discredits Salafis as charlatans juggling with passages from the Quran and presenting their supporters with a black and white vision of the world alongside clear rules on how to behave, but lacking fundamental knowledge of the religion they promote. This is the reason behind the constant comparisons of Salafism with leftist and neo-Nazi radicalism and attempts at explaining its popularity solely on the basis of the theory of youth subculture. This approach partly results from political correctness and partly from the specific, professional perspective of the participants of the debate, who are focused on repressive and preventive measures targeting individuals undergoing radicalisation. The tendency to inertly assign new phenomena to previously known categories is equally important³². This perspective is not devoid of practical sense, especially in the case of the police and social workers, who are expected to have a utilitarian approach to the problem.

In its analyses, the BfV presents Salafism as a serious if isolated problem affecting “difficult” youth, and as another counter-culture. To justify this approach it focuses on categories of features which are common for subcultures in Germany: the external attributes by which members of specific subcultures recognise each other (short trousers, beard, no moustache), the tendency to form associations, organise rallies and use violence towards their ideological

³² Extremistische Gewalt: Das IS-Verbot ist symbolisch, 10 November 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/hooligans-gegen-salafisten-polizei-warnt-vor-hogesa-gewalt-a-1002027.html>

opponents³³. The Salafi ideological offering is characterised as referring to a “pure form” of Islam, strict observation of recommendations contained in the Quran and Sunnah in religious practices and daily life, and following the example of Muhammad himself and the first three caliphs (al-Salaf al-Salih). As far as political issues are concerned, Salafis most frequently hold the following views: they do not recognise democracy (because it is heresy), they treat political parties as organisations which are against Islam (because they lead to a fragmentation of the unified community of Muslims) and ban individuals from exercising their electoral rights (both passive and active). Muslims who do not follow these rules are treated as “infidels”. According to Salafis, this category also comprises Christians and Jews. Engaging in contacts with “infidels” is prohibited³⁴. Also in the case of Salafis, anti-Semitism, which is typical of Islamic radicals, is a blend of the most widespread stereotypes (for example accusations of ritual killings of children), the view refusing the state of Israel the right to exist, and justifying violence against Jews by way of religious motives. The ultimate goal of Salafis in Germany is the creation of a theocracy in which sharia law would be observed (in their interpretation) and the present constitutional order would be annulled³⁵.

Based on their preferred methods of attaining this goal, in the German discourse Salafis are divided into proponents of the political line of Salafism and those who support the jihadi line of Salafism. The former tend to emphasise missionary and propaganda activities. Their approach to using violence is ambiguous and far from an unconditional rejection. The other line of Salafism assumes that immediate armed combat is the method for creating a confessional state. Both lines consider jihad (understood as armed combat) one of imperatives of Islam.

The BfV estimates that the jihadi line of Salafism is supported by around 15% of German Salafis. According to 2015 data, Salafism is a phenomenon 90% shaped by individuals coming from Muslim families, in particular by representatives

³³ Salafismus – ein deutscher Extremismus, July 2013, http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi_siak/4/2/1/2013/ausgabe_1/files/said_1_2013.pdf

³⁴ Wie man Muslim wird, 23 May 2016, http://salaf.de/nichtmuslime/pdf/fue0001_Wie%20man%20Muslim%20wird.pdf

³⁵ Salafistische Bestrebungen, 21 July 2015, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af-islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/was-ist-islamismus/salafistische-bestrebungen>

of the second, third or even fourth generation of immigrants. Three quarters of supporters of this ideology have German citizenship³⁶.

The German public debate on this devotes considerable attention to the online propaganda activities carried out by Salafis. Social media and video-sharing sites enable them to present their materials in an attractive and easily accessible form. Public charity collections, for example for Syria, are another opportunity for Salafis to spread their message. Seminars and lectures (Islam-seminare) organised in the spirit of entertainment and hosted by “stars” (i.e. foreign or local preachers) are another popular form of missionary work. These events are frequently organised during Christian holidays. On the one hand, these are days off from work or school, which may justify the choice of day. On the other, this sparks protests³⁷. Critical voices not only help promote the events but may also be used by Salafis as proof of the alleged Islamophobia of the entire German society. Most initiatives organised by Salafis do contain elements of provocation since, aside from their declared goals, they are intended to spark controversy and promote Salafi groups. In September 2014, Sven Lau, a prominent Salafi preacher, accompanied by several of his supporters wearing fluorescent vests with the inscription “Shariah Police” ‘patrolled’ the streets of Wuppertal in North Rhine-Westphalia. The guard members reprimanded women for wearing (what they saw as) overly provocative clothing and other members of the public for drinking alcohol and listening to music. Politicians and the media considered this initiative an attempt by Islamic radicals at seizing state prerogatives, making it a hot topic across Germany³⁸. Similarly, the Salafi trademark campaign “Lies!” (or Read!), during which in Salafis distribute copies of the Quran and information brochures about Islam city centres, is seen as challenging Germany’s constitutional order. German Salafis receive the materials they distribute from Saudi and Egyptian associations involved in propagating religion (World Wide Association for Introducing Islam, World Organization for Presenting Islam, Cooperative Office for Call and Guidance,

³⁶ Extremistischer Salafismus: Ursachen, Gefahren und Gegenstrategien, 15 August 2015, http://www.mik.nrw.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Redakteure/Verfassungsschutz/Dokumente/Broschueren/Extremistischer_Salafismus_Aug15.pdf

³⁷ Salafisten planen Hasspredigten an Heiligabend, 2 December 2010, <http://www.rp-online.de/nrw/staedte/moenchengladbach/salafisten-planen-hasspredigten-an-heiligabend-aid-1.723430>

³⁸ Kalkulierte Provokation, 7 September 2014, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/sch-aria-polizei-kalkulierte-provokation-13140309.html>

Conveying Islamic Message Society)³⁹. In response to the “Lies!” campaign, in May 2015 CDU politicians from North Rhine-Westphalia distributed copies of the German constitutions to passers-by.

2. The narrow perspective

The debate on Salafism lacks a perspective which would pay attention to the processes taking place in Germany’s Muslim community and the trends in German Islam. Most probably, the development of Salafism in Germany would not have been possible without so-called pop-Islam⁴⁰ – an amalgamation of youth trends which emerged in Germany at the beginning of the 21st century and which were shaped by descendants of immigrants. These two movements, for their part, would not have emerged if Islam itself had not gained popularity in Germany. Although they fight pop-Islam, Salafis build their position based on a renewed image of Islam among second and third generation immigrants. In doing so they use methods which have been tested before, but they strive to attain their own goal.

Pop-Islam

In opinion journalism it is referred to as a blend “of hip-hop and Islam, H&M fashion and gender segregation”. Supporters of pop-Islam intend to take an active part in Germany’s socio-political life and at the same time maintain and cultivate their Muslim identity. The term ‘Allah-Kids’ refers to the activists of Muslim associations such as Muslimische Jugend in Deutschland (Muslim Youth in Germany), Lifemakers Germany, Islamische Denkfabrik (Muslim think-tank) or M.A.H.D.I. (Muslime Aller Herkunft Deutscher Identitaet – Muslims of All Origins with German Identity). Their actions are *de facto* a protest against becoming isolated in immigrant ghettos and an attempt to negotiate the status of Islam in the German state. On the one hand, pop-Islam is the consequence of the increased popularity of Islam in Germany and of individuals searching for an attractive way to express their faith. On the other hand, it has indeed led to a situation in which Islam is no longer associated by Muslims themselves with the ritual approach

³⁹ Nina Wiedl, Geschichte des Salafismus in Deutschland, in: Behnam T. Said / Hazim Fouad (eds.), Salafismus. Auf der Suche nach dem wahren Islam, 2014, pp. 411-441.

⁴⁰ Pop-Islam, 19 March 2012, <http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/jugendkultur-islam-und-demokratie/125194/pop-islam>

of their parents and instead it has become an attractive, modern day identity manifested mainly by music (hip-hop in particular), clothing (brands such as Styleislam) and new media (Cube-Mag, muslimetv). It is worth noting that pop-Islam is not a liberal and secular strand of Islam. It regularly makes reference to preachers such as Amr Khaled (an Egyptian TV preacher who rejects extremism and used to condemn Osama bin Laden), Tariq Ramadan (a Swiss-born Muslim theologian and philosopher, promoter of so-called Euro-Islam, grandson of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood Hasan al-Banna) and even Yusuf al-Qaradawi (the main ideologist of Muslim Brotherhood)⁴¹. However, in contrast to Salafis, pop-Islam does recognise Germany's constitutional order and supports increased participation of Muslim communities in Germany's political life as part of this order.

3. The dimensions of the risk

Salafi communities pose a certain threat because they supply volunteers to fight in Syria and other locations across the world. The German security services have come to assume that individuals trained in jihadist camps and having combat experience may use their knowledge when they return to Germany. However, not only Salafis returning from Syria are dangerous. Homegrown radicals who remain in Germany form a base which enables potential attackers to carry out reconnaissance, find safe accommodation, transport, organisational support, gain access to equipment and materials. Unlike radical neo-Nazi and leftist organisations, Salafi groups are tight and highly resistant to infiltration⁴². For this and other reasons, for example due to the decentralisation of their structures, it is difficult to forecast possible moves by Salafi groups. An increase or a drop in their activity frequently depends on local developments. The emergence and rapid development of a Salafi community in Solingen in North Rhine-Westphalia was related to the fact that Abu Usama al-Gharib, a radical preacher who moved to Germany from Austria and decided to settle and work there⁴³.

⁴¹ I love my prophet - Zwischen Lifestyle, Glauben und Mission. Islamische Jugendkulturen in Deutschland, September 2009, http://static.sdu.dk/mediafiles/Files/Om_SDU/Centre/C_Mellemoest/Videncenter/Nyheder/2009/090921GN.pdf

⁴² Warum sich Terroristen so schwer überwachen lassen, 19 January 2015, <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article136493969/Warum-sich-Terroristen-so-schwer-ueberwachen-lassen.html>

⁴³ *Ibid.*

The threat posed by Salafi groups is not limited to potential attacks. The security services indicate that since 2012 the internal discourse between Salafi groups has rapidly become radicalised. This translates not only into an increase in the number of volunteers wanting to travel to Syria, but also into a growing number of individuals prone to faster radicalisation and into the increased incidence of organised violent acts also in Germany⁴⁴. Across Germany, there are regular clashes between Salafis and specific ethnic or religious groups with which they are in conflict. The large-scale fights between Kurds and Yazidis on one side and Salafis on the other side, which took place in October 2014, are a symbol of the war in Syria getting spilled over onto the streets of German towns. The street fights with the use of machetes and barbecue spits, which took place in Hamburg and in Celle in Lower Saxony, were attended by 400 and 300 people respectively. As a result of these fights, 23 people were injured.

Salafis are also trying to recruit supporters among migrants who arriving in Germany. The BKA and the BfV have recorded cases in which migrants were being offered donations by radical Islamists, alongside help in translation and bureaucratic issues in government agencies, and invitations to visit mosques. However, this is not a large-scale phenomenon. In November 2015, the Federal Criminal Police Office reported 60 attempts to “recruit” supporters and the BfV identified one hundred such attempts. Both offices assume that they do not know about all cases⁴⁵.

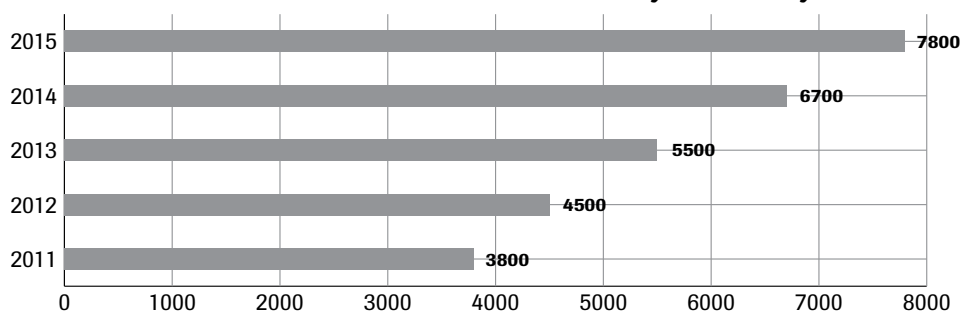
Moreover, the actions by Salafi groups are causing an increased feeling of threat within society and are triggering radicalisation of a section of it. The mainstream narrative discussed above is unable to prevent this since it focuses on the counter-cultural elements of this phenomenon and omits the broader socio-political problem which this phenomenon is a symptom of. As a consequence, anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant movements and militant groups are emerging which offer their supporters simple ideological solutions and consolidate their support based on the fears a part of society has. Since 2014, the HoGeSa movement (Hooligans gegen Salafisten or ‘Hooligans against Salafis’) has regularly been organising rallies in Cologne. The Dresden-based Pegida

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Salafisten werben – unter dem Deckmantel der Hilfe, 25 November 2015, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/fluechtlinge-salafisten-werben-unter-dem-deckmantel-der-hilfe/12639482.html>

movement⁴⁶ began to hold its demonstrations in the wake of the events in Celle and in Hamburg in protest against proxy wars waged in Germany⁴⁷. Although Salafi groups in Germany are composed of second and third generation immigrants, their actions bear an impact on the course of the debate on the present migration crisis. They are cited as confirmation of the thesis regarding the impossibility of integrating some Muslim immigrants, their radicalism and their tendency to use violence. In the wider perspective, by attracting increased media attention, Salafis contribute to the propagation of a negative image of Islam among the public.

The increase in the number of Salafis in Germany in recent years



Source: Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution)

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⁴⁶ Pegida - an association which since 20 October 2014 has been organising anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rallies in Dresden. The name is an acronym based on the phrase: Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West).

⁴⁷ Germany: Fear of terrorist attacks, *OSW Analyses*, 14 January 2015, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2015-01-14/germany-fear-terrorist-attacks>