ANALYSIS OF THE DERADICALIZATION PROGRAMS IN THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Iličić, K., Toth, L.

ABSTRACT: *In the Republic of France, dealing with the issue of radicalization and deradicalization is relatively recent. In French deradicalization programs, a highly centralized approach was applied with a large role of the government and a very small role of civil society. Also, deradicalization programs are structured and clearly set at the state level. The main aim of this paper is to analyze how the deradicalization programs was thought out and implemented in the Republic of France, as well as the results and success of these programs. It can be concluded that the deradicalization programs in France have their shortcomings and there are no clearly established criteria by which to evaluate the program and, if necessary, modify them to make them more successful. The research methods used in the work are deductive method, analysis method, descriptive method and case study method.*

KEYWORDS: deradicalization, deradicalization programs, France

1. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is one of the most recent topics of the 21st century and it never loses its importance. That is exactly why it is the subject of interest of various researchers, scientists, politicians, and state institutions (intelligence, military and police). Closely related to terrorism are radicalization, and consequently the deradicalization of terrorists. It is believed that one of the possible roots of terrorism is precisely the radicalization process (Ehrlich, Liu; 2002). There are numerous sources of radicalization as well as numerous ways in which individuals and terrorist groups can become radicalized. There are also different approaches and programs of deradicalization.

Several cases are known in which a former prisoner committed a terrorist act after leaving prison and attending a deradicalization program. For instance, in November 2019, Usman Khan attended an academic conference on the rehabilitation and reintegration into society of prisoners convicted of terrorist offenses and on the same day, in the afternoon, he stabbed five people on the streets of London (Koehler, 2021). There are several other similar examples, and that is precisely why it is wanted to see what deradicalization programs are like in the Republic of France.

Prevention of radicalization can be considered as an anticipatory response of crisis management to an impending possible crisis, because in this way it is intended to prevent a crisis event, in this case a terrorist attack. While deradicalization can be seen as both an anticipatory and a reactive response. For instance, if a person has committed a terrorist attack and wants to

deradicalize him in prison this can be seen as a reactive response, but on the other hand it can also be anticipatory in the sense that this person moves away from radical ideology and does not repeat such actions.

It is very important to distinguish between the concepts of radicalization, extremism and terrorism. For the European Union, radicalization is defined as a phenomenon when people accept different opinions, positions and ideas that can lead to a terrorist act. Radicalization is mainly encouraged by ideology and religion, but they are not the only ones. Susceptibility to radicalization is also influenced by the social and political environment in which the individual occurs (Europski parlament, 2024). Therefore, radicalization brings an individual to a state where he approves of violence to achieve some goals that are important to him. In addition to radicalization, extremism must also be defined, which is an opposition to the basic values of democracy, such as the rule of law, the personal freedom of everyone, and tolerance towards others and those who are different. Respectively, the acceptance of political or religious beliefs which are not acceptable to most people. There is a difference between violent and non-violent extremism. Violent extremism is characterized by using violence to achieve its goals, while non-violent extremism uses different methods to achieve its goals, such as protest (Educate against hate, 2024). On the other hand, deradicalization can be defined as a process in which an individual becomes less radical in their religious or political beliefs (Cambrigde Dictionary, bez datuma).

The research methods that will be used in the paper are deductive method, analysis method, descriptive method and case study method. The main goal of this work is to see through a comparative analysis how the deradicalization program was designed and implemented in the Republic of France, as well as what the results are. In this way, they are expected to see the advantages and disadvantages of the deradicalization program and see where there is space for improvement and progress.

2. PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Until March 2012, in the Republic of France, terrorism was considered practically only as a problem of public order and peace. Then the attack of the 23-year-old attacker Mohamed Merah, who had dual citizenship French and Algerian, took place in which he killed seven people. French actions in Afghanistan and the ban on full veiling of Muslim women are cited as the motive for his attack. Due to traffic violations and petty theft, Mohamed was in prison for short periods from 2005 to 2009 and it is assumed that he was further radicalized by Islamic Salafists in prison (Bbc News, 2012; Deutsche Welle, 2012; Lahnait, 2021).

In addition to the mentioned attack, several later attacks in Paris in 2015 and 2020, Nice in 2016, and Strasbourg in 2018 encouraged France to take more concrete action to prevent the recurrence of terrorist attacks. After the attacks in Paris in 2015 France declared a state of emergency (Mucha, 2017). Since 2014 France has developed and implemented several national plans to address and prevent radicalization in response to increased violent extremism in the country, primarily related to Islamist radicalization and preventing youth from leaving for Syria.

France decided on a top-down approach, in the sense that the prevention of radicalization is organized at the central level (at the level of the government) and at the local level (at the level of local authorities, prefectures) (Lahnait, 2021).

After the terrorist attack by Mohamed Merah in 2012 France adopted a deradicalization plan. The first deradicalization plan was adopted in April 2014, which recognized that a comprehensive approach to the prevention and prevention of violent extremism and the fight against terrorism should deal with factors that are conducive to radicalization. France did not want to base the fight against radicalization on a religious approach out of respect for religious freedom and for fear of being suspected of neo-colonialism towards Muslim communities. First deradicalization plan consisted of 24 measures aimed at preventing young French people from going to fight in Syria and the prevention campaigns took place in cooperation with the Ministry of Education at the national and municipal levels. The Ministry of the Interior has opened a free telephone line intended for citizens who can report their suspicions if they notice and suspect the radicalization of individuals. In the period from 2014 to the end of 2018 more than 60 000 calls were recorded (Hecker, 2021; Lahnait, 2021).

During 2016 France established a program to isolate radicalized prisoners but soon suspended it due to suspicions that it contributes to even greater radicalization (Lahnait, 2021). Also, an analysis was conducted based on 137 people who were accused of terrorism in the period between 2004 and 2007. At least 22 of 137 repeated their act, for instance by new attacks on the territory of France or by planning new attacks, by going abroad to fight for jihadist ideas or by glorifying terrorism. One of the 22 is Cherif Kouachi, who was one of the two attackers at Charlie Hebdo in 2015 (Hecker, 2021). An anti-terror law that came into effect in November 2014 included a ban on French nationals suspected of committing a terrorist attack from crossing the border and allowed authorities to block websites glorifying terrorism and jihadist ideology. Two months later, after the terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo, the online campaign "Stop Jihadism" was launched with an associated website, as well as Facebook and Twitter profiles, whose task was to prevent radicalization by spreading the site and its contents as much as possible (Lahnait, 2021; France 24, 2015).

As a result of all these events, the budget for the French security sector has been increased. In March 2015 the Minister of Finance presented an action plan to prevent the financing of terrorism and in July a new law on intelligence services was passed, which gives greater opportunities to the services to adapt to technological innovations. Also, new job openings are planned, namely 5000 jobs in the police in the next two years, 2500 in the judiciary and 1000 in the customs service. Moreover, the reduction of the number of French soldiers has been postponed to 2019 (European Eye on Radicalization, 2018).

The deradicalization plan from 2014 was revised in 2016 because of the attacks in Paris in November 2015. It consisted of 80 measures, 50 completely new, and the other 30 were already existing measures, but additionally expanded. Out of 80 measures, 15 of them were dedicated to the issue of preventing radicalization. Also, the resources for action were increased and the total budget was 123 million euros. The novelty was the opening of 12 so-called deradicalization centers in each French province, whose task was to rehabilitate individuals who were considered susceptible to radicalization and wanted to join jihadist groups and people

who wanted to reintegrate back into society through the adoption of French national values. One-on-one mentoring is provided for residents, and they are mentored by volunteers. However, of the 12 centers envisioned only one was opened, which was closed after 10 months due to controversies surrounding the concept of deradicalization and the goals to be achieved by the center's activities, unqualified staff and the rebellion of residents who lived near that center. Also, the number of experts who will work on the deradicalization program with radicalized persons and their families should have been increased, but this did not happen (Lahnait, 2021; European Eye on Radicalization, 2018).

Due to the failure of previous programs, threats and attacks that continued to occur in France, in February 2018 a new program "Prevent to Protect" was presented, which is the first plan devoted solely to the issue of preventing radicalization. The program covers individuals who are radicalized and want to join the fighting in Syria, as well as returnees who want to be reintegrated into society. The program consists of 60 measures divided into 5 groups and includes 20 government bodies, ministries and state secretaries, from the fields of justice, internal affairs, education and youth, health and sports, which shows that the issue of radicalization is a multidisciplinary issue that requires the involvement of experts from different fields (Lahnait, 2021; European Eye on Radicalization, 2018).

The first group is dedicated to the prevention of radicalization and an important role is played by the Ministry of Education and schools, which play a major role in creating the resistance of young people to radicalization through education. The professors should have been educated with brochures on recognizing the early signs of radicalization and their role is to notice changes in the behavior of their students and then report it to the school principal or external agencies (Lahnait, 2021; European Eye on Radicalization, 2018).

In the second group, state and local administration, sports and higher education play an important role. It is dedicated to the early detection of radicalized persons but what then happens to persons who are reported as suspicious is not entirely clear. There are standardized procedures for identifying risky situations and how to report them to competent authorities (Lahnait, 2021; European Eye on Radicalization, 2018).

The third group refers to understanding and predicting the development of radicalization. Refers to the formation of an expert group constituted of sociologists, psychologists, political scientists and anthropologists who each participate in their own domain in creating the best possible deradicalization program based on a multidisciplinary approach. The fourth group refers to the professionalization of the actors participating in the deradicalization process and the evaluation of procedures on the ground and is in principle a response to previous criticisms. The fifth group refers to separation instead of deradicalization and the issue of resocialization and integration into society of returnees and their families, as well as monitoring and rehabilitation of prisoners who have been found guilty of participating in terrorist actions (Lahnait, 2021; European Eye on Radicalization, 2018).

This program was implemented only in four French cities and the number of participants differed there. There were 63 in Paris, 32 in Marseilles, 14 in Lyon and 11 in Lille. After two years of the program the research showed that of the 63 participants who took part in the

program in Paris, two ended up in prison again. One person because of previously committed violations, and the other because of drug dealing. In Marseilles 6 people ended up in prison again, of which only one was suspected of planning an attack and the other five were for offenses that had nothing to do with radicalization. Two people out of 11 participants in the program in Lille were reimprisoned, but not a single person due to suspicion of radicalization, while in Lyon not a single participant ended up in prison again. It can be concluded that out of all the participants only one case of recidivism was recorded and that the program is successful. However, it is a very small cause, that is the number of participants and the relatively short duration of the program (Hecker, 2021).

This program is less detailed than the previous ones because the goals and the information about the way the plan will be implemented are not so clearly elaborated. On the other hand, the earlier plans were not even adequately evaluated so that better programs could then be designed, because it is not even known what exactly was well thought out and done, and what was not. Also, one of the future problems that is not completely clarified by this program will occur when in a few years a large part of the prisoners convicted of terrorism or radicalization will be released from prison and a particularly intensive reintegration program will be needed to prevent violence. In addition, religion is completely excluded from this plan and is not mentioned because President Emmanuel Macron has announced a comprehensive plan to organize Islam in France that should address the religious aspects of radicalization (European Eye on Radicalization, 2018).

From all the above, it can be concluded that one of the main problems of this program, the same as the previous ones, is that at the beginning there is no working definition of the term radicalization and there is no national consensus on the subject. If the term radicalization were to be defined, the public would not associate it with only one category of extremists. The advantage of this program is certainly the emphasis on the professionalization and education of the officers who work in the deradicalization process (European Eye on Radicalization, 2018).

In April 2021, the attacker, a Tunisian citizen, entered a police station near Paris and stabbed a French policewoman in the throat and she died. It is a terrorist attack, and a few days later the French government proposed a new law on the fight against terrorism. By putting emphasis on the corona virus epidemic from 2020, it is as if terrorism has fallen into the background, but the French Prime Minister stated that the threat of Islamist terrorism is still great. This was an attack by a so-called lone wolf, a person who is not a member or has any ties to any terrorist group but acts independently. Such attackers are very difficult to detect and prevent their actions and more resources are needed for this. The new law enables intelligence agencies to keep pace with new technologies, better monitoring of potential terrorists "online" through algorithms and more systematic monitoring of persons who are in prison for crimes related to terrorism. Also, the police can close mosques suspected of supporting terrorism, as well as other facilities (Index HR, 2021).

3. DISCUSSION

In France, the topic of deradicalization is relatively new and basically started with the terrorist attack in 2012. The approach to deradicalization and prevention of radicalization programs is highly centralized. The advantage is the equality of the set standards for all programs, and the disadvantage is that such programs prevent the diversity of experiences and approaches that are adapted to local needs. Despite active programs and prevention of radicalization terrorist attacks continue to occur. The research showed that this happened due to mistrust between different agencies and non-cooperation, both on the horizontal and vertical levels. A full review of the intelligence services was conducted in 2016 and it was concluded that it would be the best to establish a single national counter-terrorism agency modeled after the United States (Mucha, 2017).

As an immediate response to terrorism, in France was declared a state of emergency and civil liberties were curtailed. The Amnesty International organization expressed concern about the state of emergency in France which lasted and human rights organization accused France of encouraging radicalization in society due to the marginalization of minorities. Citizens of the Muslim faith and North African settlers were especially discriminated which further deepened the division between the Muslim and non-Muslim population and led to the growth of hatred and Islamophobia. In the period when the state of emergency was declared, for example 4292 searches were conducted without a warrant. Also, if an individual was suspected of posing a threat to public safety, he could end up under house arrest without any special order (Mucha, 2017).

In France, a program of integration of immigrants into society has not been developed, but it is guided by assimilation policies and does not recognize the existence of national minorities. This is precisely why minorities, who feel rejected and threatened, are potentially fertile ground for radicalization and a threat to the entire society (Tatalović, 2017).

As one of the programs for the prevention of radicalization and deradicalization in France, the separation of prisoners convicted of terrorism or radicalism from other prisoners, as well as an increase in the number of prison imams who visit prisoners and talk to them about Islam (Mucha, 2017). France's response to terrorism is an increase in security measures and even repression. Since 2015 prevention and deradicalization programs have been established, but this was for a short period of time and was not well developed and the program implementers were not adequately educated. Therefore, great results cannot be expected from such programs (Mucha, 2017).

The National Front (FN), or as of 2018 the National Gathering (RN), a far-right political party in France was founded in 1972 and its fundamental ideology is revolutionary nationalism. It tries to defend France from the West and wants to find a third way between communism and capitalism (Cairn info, bez datuma). The current leader of the party Marine Le Pen, daughter of party founder Jean-Marie Le Pen, in 2017 became the first woman to enter the second round of presidential elections in France, rejected her father's anti-Semitic rhetoric, and advocates the return of the old French currency, leaving the European Union and the NATO alliance, closing

the borders, reducing social assistance to foreigners in France and making it possible to obtain citizenship based on origin or special merit, rather than by birth itself. In France, this party has the support of many young people who are looking for answers to the main questions that bother them, and they find the answer in the program of this party (Deutsche Welle, 2016; Deutsche Welle, 2017).

As can be seen from the above, the current topics in France led to the strengthening of the extreme right party, which became one of the main parties with its representatives in the parliament. The party, among other things, based on the issue of immigration and care for refugees, collects the votes of citizens dissatisfied with current policies and in fact in a certain way further polarizes society and creates fertile ground for further radicalization.

4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that deradicalization programs in France at the state level are structured, clearly set and equal for everyone. In France, the main role is played by the government, which sets clear measures and objectives of the program and there is no level of decentralization or a large role of non-governmental organizations. It is difficult to measure the success of the program because the evaluation criteria for the program are not clearly set and terrorist attacks still occur today.

There are several factors that influence susceptibility to radicalization, from the situation in the family, the socio-economic status of the individual, the political situation in the country and the behavior of political elites, so that the multidisciplinary of this problem and the importance of the participation of experts from different fields in the design of radicalization prevention and deradicalization programs should not be ignored. In France, no special attention has been paid to the education and training of persons implementing deradicalization programs.

Policies towards immigrants are also one of the important factors that influence the situation in society and the position of immigrants. If the state wants to forcefully assimilate them and integrate them into society, as is the case in France, it is not surprising that immigrants oppose this and thus become even more alienated from the state and the system.

Certainly, the issue of radicalization and deradicalization, as well as the setting up and implementation of a deradicalization program is a multidisciplinary problem that requires the involvement of the political elite, experts in various fields such as sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, teachers and psychologists, as well as the entire society for the situation in society to be adequately and so that there are no excluded social groups. For deradicalization programs should be found a way to evaluate and determine their success and advantages and disadvantages, so that they can be further developed and supplemented and if necessary, changed. However, without the involvement of the entire society, deradicalization programs alone do not mean much and can achieve little concrete.

5. LITERATURE

Bbc News (2012) Preuzeto 02.06.2024. s https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17456541

Cairn info (bez datuma) Cairn-info: International Edition. Preuzeto 03.06.2024. s https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_POUV_157_0005--the-origins-of-the-national-front.htm?contenu=article

Cambridge Dictionary (bez datuma) Deradicalization. Preuzeto 02.06.2024. s https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/deradicalization.

Deutsche Welle (2012) Preuzeto 02.06.2024. s https://www.dw.com/hr/francuska-se-boji-novih-napada/a-15836810

Deutsche Welle (2016) Preuzeto 03.06.2024. s https://www.dw.com/hr/%C5%A1to-je-zajedni%C4%8Dko-francuskoj-i-njema%C4%8Dkoj-desnici/a-19550382

Deutsche Welle (2017) Preuzeto 03.06.2024. s https://www.dw.com/hr/nacionalna-fronta-je-postala-mainstream/a-38687159

Educate against hate (2024) Preuzeto 01.06.2024. s https://www.educateagainsthate.com/what-is-extremism/

European Eye on Radicalization (2018) Preuzeto 02.06.2024. s https://eeradicalization.com/prevent-to-protect-analysis-and-perspective-on-the-french-program-to-counter-terrorism-and-radicalization/

Ehrlich Paul R., Jianguo Liu (2002) Some Roots of Terorism. Population and Environment 24(2): 183-192.

Europski parlament (2024) Preuzeto 01.06.2024. s https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/hr/headlines/security/20210121STO96105/sto-je-radikalizacija-i-kako-se-moze-sprijeciti

France 24 (2015) Preuzeto 02.06.2024. s https://www.france24.com/en/20150128-france-government-social-media-campaign-warns-would-be-jihadists

Hecker Marc (2021) *Once a Jihadist, always a Jihadist? A Deradicalization Program Seen from the Inside*. Pariz: Ifri.

Index HR (2021) Preuzeto 02.06.2024. s https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/francuska-vlada-predlaze-strozi-zakon-za-borbu-protiv-terorizma/2272327.aspx

Koehler, Daniel (2021) Deradicalisation in Germany: preventing and countering violent extremism. *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, 128: 59-78.

Lahnait, Fatima (2021) Combatting radicalisation in France: drom experimentation to professionalisation. *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals,* 128: 105-125.

Mucha, Witold (2017) Polarization, Stigmatization, Radicalization, Counterterrorism and Homeland Security in France and Germany. *Journal for Deradicalization* 3(10): 230-254.

Tatalović, Siniša (2000) Europski modeli ostvarivanja prava nacionalnih manjina. *Politička misao* 37(2):79-84.