

ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM THREAT IN BULGARIA

Krastyu Ivanov KRASTEV

Vassil Lesvski National Military University, Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria
krustev_kr@abv.bg

Abstract: *The analysis of the religious extremism manifestation objectively reveals as independent the following variables E – Existence, C – Capabilities, I – Intentions and T – Targets. The essence of the proposed analytical model is the fact that if some of the mentioned variables is not presented it is practically impossible for religious extremism to manifest in the society and become violent. The paper describes an analytical model of religious manifestation model, based on some variables and results of research of religious extremist activities in Bulgaria.*

Keywords: religious extremism, threats & risk analysis

1. Introduction

As a country located in the center of the Balkan Peninsula, Bulgaria has successfully maintained peaceful coexistence of its ethnic and religious groups. However, the U.S. Department of State reported that a terrorist threat is increasing for Bulgaria. As it stated, “[a]n influx of asylum seekers from Syria has exacerbated border security challenges, raised interethnic tensions, and challenged underfunded state agencies.”[3]

The concerns of the U.S. Department of State that the flow of people could allow some foreign fighters (terrorists) to transit in and out of Bulgaria remains in the country report of 2014.[4]

The additional evidence for new security challenges before Bulgaria is the fact that ISIS released a map, which outlines the territory they aspire to conquer within next five years; the territory of Bulgaria was included in their plans.[5] Dusica Tomovic cites a CIA report that indicates the number of Balkan Muslims who want to join ISIS has increased. In

terms of rating the report’s ranking, Balkan Muslims are right behind Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia.

In parallel with ISIS ideas, the Muslim population in Bulgaria is exposed to the ideas of Islamization, which comes straight from Turkey. Thus, Turkey looks at Bulgaria as a formal territory and has a real interest to influence the Muslim communities there.[6]

2. Religious demography analysis

For the purpose of this research, the religious affiliation is of great interest. Even though, the question about religion, interestingly enough, has the highest number of non-responders – 21.8%. This could mean that people are either afraid been of stigmatized because of their faith or simply irreligious. The numbers of adherents to different religions in Bulgaria are shown in Table 1. [2]

The highest share of Christians is taken by East-Orthodox, which is 4 374 135 persons or 76% of those who declared their faith. The total number of Christians

includes also Catholics – 48 945 persons or 0.8% of answered, and 64 476 persons determine themselves as Protestants or 1.1%.

Persons who consider themselves

Muslims are 577 139 or 10%, of them 546 004 are Sunni and 27 407 persons are Shia. The other 3 727 people answered only Muslim.

Table 1 Population by religious groups as of 01.02.2014

<i>Group</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>% of declared</i>	<i>% of total</i>
<i>Christians</i>	<i>4,489,271</i>	<i>77.9%</i>	<i>61%</i>
<i>Undeclared</i>	<i>1,606,269</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>21.8%</i>
<i>Irreligion</i>	<i>682,162</i>	<i>11.8%</i>	<i>9.3%</i>
<i>Islam</i>	<i>577,139</i>	<i>10.0%</i>	<i>7.8%</i>
<i>Others</i>	<i>9,729</i>	<i>0.2%</i>	<i>0.1%</i>
<i>Figure of percentage</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>5,758,301</i>	<i>7,364,570</i>

Numbers show the relation between ethnicity and religion in the 2011 census as follows:

-Bulgarian ethnic group (5 664 624) – 4 240 422 East-Orthodox, 43 985 Catholics, 36 613 Protestants, and 67 350 Moslems. 222 387 of Bulgarians did not point religion.

-Turkish ethnic group (588 318) – 444 434 Muslims (420 816 Sunni, and 21 610 Shia), 2 008 recorded Muslim only, 14 698 persons pointed no religion, 39 529 did not state their religion, 5 279 East-Orthodox, 1 182 Catholics, and 2 400 Protestants.

-Roma Ethnic group (325 343) – 84 867 East-Orthodox, 23 289 Protestants, 42 201 Muslims, 30 491 “no religion,” and 49 491 did not stated religious belonging. There is no detailed data on the Pomak ethnic group in the 2014 census.

3. Religious extremism manifestation model (REMM)

This paper is focused on researching the degree of religious extremism threat to Bulgaria. In pursuing the answer of this question, the author suggests an analytical multidisciplinary approach build upon the REMM (Religious Extremism Manifestation Model). [2]

The possibility of the religious extremist acts manifestation in the society is

possible to be described by the methods of mathematical modeling as a basic functional dependence, as shown in the formula:

$$P_{RE} = f(E_{RE}, C_{RE}, I_{RE}, T_{RE}) \quad (1)$$

where:

P_{RE} – Possibility of religious extremism manifestation;

E_{RE} – Existence of religious extremists and groups;

C_{RE} – Capabilities of religious extremists and groups;

I_{RE} – Intentions of religious extremists and groups;

T_{RE} – Targets of the extremist's acts.

The first independent variable E_{RE} (Existence) represents the issue of ascertained existence of some extremist person or groups in the region.

Second independent variable C_{RE} (Capabilities) describes the capabilities of the existent religious extremist group. It includes the level of the extremist's knowledges, their criminal or terrorist experience, financial support, weapons (small arms, explosives etc.) and other sources needed for conducting of terrorist act.

Third variable I_{RE} (Intentions) is determined by the previous variables E_{RE} (Existence) and C_{RE} (Capabilities). It includes also the aim of the religious

extremist group and desired effects of the terrorist act.

T_{RE} (Targets) is the last variable in the proposed model, which occurs in the presence of these three variables and is in close dependence with the aim and desired effects of the terrorist act.

The essence of the proposed analytical model is the fact that if some of the mentioned variables is not presented it is practically impossible for religious

extremism to manifest in the society and become violent.

It is from vital important underline that the designed model includes the main variables in their quantity values as determinants of religious extremism manifestation in the shape of the terrorist act. The thin dividing line between religious extremism and terrorism is shown on the Figure 1.

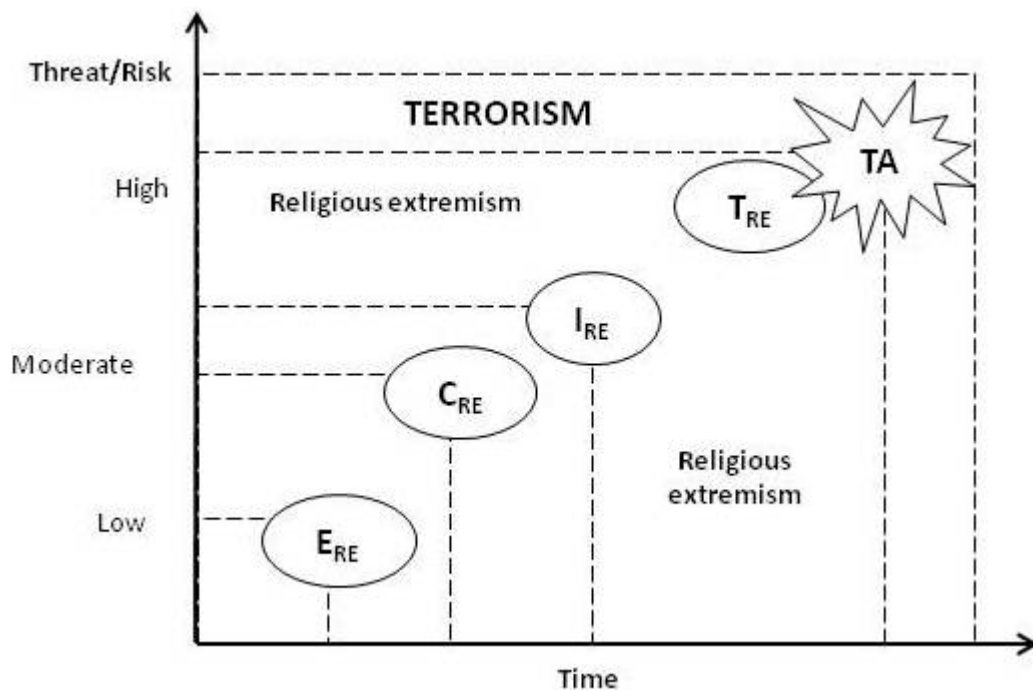


Figure 1 Time & Threat/Risk analysis of the religious extremism transformation into terrorism

The Figure 1 represents the interconnections of the religious extremism transformation into terrorism.

The level of threat/risk can be

evaluated by the presence of the mentioned variables, included in the Threat&Risk evaluation matrix on the Table 2.

Table 2 Threat & Risk evaluation matrix

Threat / Risk	Independent Variables / Determinants			
	E_{RE}	C_{RE}	I_{RE}	T_{RE}
Low	Yes	No	No	No
Moderate	Yes	Yes	No	No
High	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Following the designed matrix, the level of threat/risk can be estimate as Low of only the variable E_{RE} represents the existing of some extremist individuals or groups. Without the rest of the determinants

we can conclude that there is no current real threat.

After achievement of proper capabilities C_{RE} , the combination of the presence of both variables E_{RE} and C_{RE}

turn the risk/threat at Moderate level.

4. Analytical model implementation

4.1. Defining the research period

The historical analysis includes research of the period after the end of II World War from 1944 – 2016. The main reason for selecting the mentioned period is the factor “social-political environment” in the country. Based on the same variable the

researched period can be divided in three sub periods as follows - I sub period: from 1944 to 1989; II sub period: from 1989 to 2004; III sub period: from 2004 to 2015.

4.2. I sub period: from 1944 to 1989

The research results of the religious extremist activities during this sub period are presented in the table 3.

Table 3: 1944 – 1989 Religious Extremist Activities in Bulgaria

<i>Year</i>	<i>REG</i>	<i>E_{RE}</i>	<i>C_{RE}</i>	<i>I_{RE}</i>	<i>T_{RE}</i>	<i>Actions</i>	<i>RE/TA/CA</i>
1983	PTEGs	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Black mailing the Government	RE
1983	PTEGs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Forest fire - 750 acres forest burned, propaganda	RE
1983	PTEGs	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Unsuccessful sabotage attempt to railway transport network	RE
1984	PTEGs	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Black mailing the Government	RE
1984	PTEGs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bomb explosions at Plovdiv train station and Varna Airport	TA
1984	PTEGs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bomb explosions in Benkovski Church	TA
1984	PTEGs	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Unsuccessful attempt to sabotage Aytos train station	RE
1985	PTEGs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bomb explosions at Bunovo train station	TA 7KIA, 9WIA
1985	PTEGs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Hotel bomb explosions in Sliven	TA 23WIA
1985	PTEGs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Super market bomb explosions in Burgas	TA
1985	PTEGs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	IED activated at the kinder playground	TA
1985	PTEGs	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Unsuccessful attempt to sabotage Karnobat train station	RE
1986	PTEGs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unsuccessful IED in Druzba hotel, Varna	TA
1986	PTEGs	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Poisoning of water instalations, Lyulyakovo village, propaganda	RE
1987	PTEGs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Kidnapping of two kids	TA

* REG – Religious Extremist Groups; PTEGs – Pro-Turkish Extremist Groups; RE – Religious Extremism; TA – Terrorist Action.

During the so-called Revival Process in Bulgaria (1984 – 1987), forty-two clandestine pro-Turkish groups were discovered, committed terrorist acts and sabotage. Some members of these groups have been convicted of sedition, planning or carrying out terrorism - bombings, sabotage

and sabotage contacts with Turkish MIT agents in Bulgaria. According to the investigation of State Security Agency only one group disclosed a case of the operational development “abominable” murder carried out numerous terror attacks.

In its tactics - two terrorist attacks in

two simultaneous attacks in different parts of the country and sabotage wave between them could be defined as a terrorist offensive campaign.

4.3. II sub period: from 1989 to

2004

The research results of the religious extremist activities during this sub period are presented in the table 4.

Table 4: 1989 – 2004 Religious Extremist & Terrorist Activities in Bulgaria

<i>Year</i>	<i>REG</i>	<i>E_{RE}</i>	<i>C_{RE}</i>	<i>I_{RE}</i>	<i>T_{RE}</i>	<i>Actions</i>	<i>RE/TA/CA</i>
1991	ITGs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	International terrorist group captured before blowing up 3 hotel in Sofia	TA
1995	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bomb explosion in the building of Maritsa Magazine, Plovdiv	CA
1996	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bomb explosion in the market center, Sofia	CA
1996	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bomb explosion in the Grand Mosque	TA
1997	Unknown	Yes	Yes	No	No	IED found close to the airport	CA
1998	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bomb explosion in the building of “Trud” Newspaper office	CA

* REG – Religious Extremist Groups; PTEGs - Pro Turkish Extremist Groups;
RE – Religious Extremism; TA – Terrorist Action; CA – Criminal activities.

On December 6 1996 - about 1:20 am an IED exploded in the porch of the Grand Mosque in Kazanlak. No casualties, doors are broken and stained glass. According to experts, most likely the blast was triggered by remote control. This is the only attack we can consider as a manifestation of religious extremism as a terrorist act against the Muslim minority in Bulgaria during the researched sub period.

The analysis shows that the existence of the MRF helped settling down the tensions between the Bulgarians and Turks in the country offering suitable platform of representation not only for Bulgarian Turks, but also other ethnic minorities such as Roma. The Roma themselves founded their own parties. In 1998, their well-known party was founded under the name of Euroroma, which also has a mixed membership.

4.3. III sub period: from 2004 till 2016 – the period of Bulgaria’s full

membership in NATO

The research results of the religious extremist activities during this sub period are presented in the table 5.

On 18 July at 17:23 in the parking lot of the in Burgas is an assault against three buses with Israeli tourists who had to be transported to the hotel “Chrysanthemum” in Sunny Beach. According to the Bulgarian authorities the investigation clarified that “no Bulgarian citizens were involved in the attack,” at least three people were found connected to the bombing, two of them with Australian and Canadian passports, lived in Lebanon.

Oktay Enimehmedov stormed the stage at the National Palace of Culture in Bulgaria’s capital Sofia on Saturday during a political conference and held the gun at the head of Ahmed Dogan, leader of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. Fortunately the weapon misfired giving him time to react and hit the would-be assassins

hand out of the way. Before he can attempt a second shot the unidentified suspect is

tackled to the ground by security guards and delegates attending the conference in Sofia.

Table 5: 2004-2016 Religious Extremist & Terrorist Activities in Bulgaria

<i>Year</i>	<i>REG</i>	<i>E_{RE}</i>	<i>C_{RE}</i>	<i>I_{RE}</i>	<i>T_{RE}</i>	<i>Actions</i>	<i>RE/TA/CA</i>
2012	Hezbollah	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sarajovo Airport	TA
2013	-	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Assassination attempt	CA
2014	ISIS - ?	Yes	No	Yes	No	12 imams detained for radicalism	RE

For the purpose of this research the REMM was applied for analysis of the current situation in Bulgaria. According to the US and Bulgarian Intelligence Services the following REGs elements will have

some interests in the region - Hezbollah, ISIS, Al Qaeda, Ansar al Islam, Chechens, KGK. The results of REMM are represented in the Table 6.

Table 6: Current Situation Threat & Risk Matrix

<i>REGs</i>	<i>E_{RE}</i>	<i>C_{RE}</i>	<i>I_{RE}</i>	<i>T_{RE}</i>	<i>T&R Level</i>
Hezbollah	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
ISIS	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	High
Al Qaeda	Yes	No	Yes	No	Moderate
Ansar al Islam	Yes	No	No	No	Moderate
Chechens	Yes	No	No	No	Low
KGK	Yes	No	No	No	Low
Others	Yes	No	No	No	Low

Conclusions

In conclusion we can underline that the proposed REMM (Religious Extremism Manifestation Model) is effective and gives relevant results which can be used for religious extremism Threat & Risk evaluation. The analysis of the current

situations shows the Threat & Risk vary from Low to High values.

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