



DeRadicalisation  
in Europe and Beyond:  
Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate



# Security Forces Radicalisation Report

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## Contents

Introduction	4
The Concept of Democratic Control of Armed Forces	5
Theoretical Framework/methodology	6
Tackling radicalization within armed forces (training programs etc.)	10
Perceived threat of radicalization in each country (Detection)	13
Constitutional background of armed forces and judicial implications	16
Case Studies	24
Germany	24
Serbia	26
France	32
Austria	33
Georgia	37
UK	39
Israel	40
Conclusion	43
Appendices	44
References	45

## Introduction

Recently, media headlines in countries such as United Kingdom, Germany, Austria and Israel have highlighted how far-right and Jihadist organizations have succeeded to infiltrate within the armed forces. In the United Kingdom, far-right young soldiers were found to have done their target shooting training on a picture of Jeremy Corbyn in 2019 (Quinn, 2021). When we examine the German case, we have recently observed that ex-German military officers sympathized with Nazis to plan to take down the German administration (Murray, 2022). Similar to the German case, we have also witnessed the organization of far-right groups within the Austrian forces (Hurst, 2021). In Israel, we also see rules and procedures that aim to target radicalism and extremism within the armed forces recognising that radicalisation within the armed forces is a currently topical in Israel (ISA, 2020).

Some countries covered in this report also show that Jihadist radicalism in the armed forces has become an identified security threat. France and Georgia show how Islamist groups have threatened the solidarity and unity of armed forces. In the French case, we observed Mehdi Hammami, born in 1986, a French sniper between 2005 and 2010, who was sentenced to five years for an attempt to join Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan (Centre d'analyse du terrorisme, 2019). In Georgia, there was the case of Tarkhan Batirashvili aka Abu Omar al-Shishani – once a war hero but subsequently blamed for adopting Jihadist values (Bender, 2015). The Serbian case underscored the impact of organized crimes and drug mafia in terms of radicalization within the armed forces (Donnelly & Steele, 2019). However, the Serbian military did not explicitly recognise the threat of radicalisation and extremism within the armed forces (Borger, 2018). That was why, extremism and radicalism did not get attention. Although the army was responsible from the internal security and democracy, it could become a threat for the constitutional order of a nation (DCAF Backgrounder, 2008). In that effort, we explore how radicalism and extremism within the military services could weaken the concept of Democratic Control of Armed Forces. Overall, our report highlights how political elites considered radicalized groups in the armed forces as security threats. This report also explores what types of mechanisms established by security forces and government in order to detect and tackle with the extremist and radicalized ideologies within the military service.

This report expresses how seven D.Rad countries; UK, France, Germany, Austria, Israel, Serbia and Georgia have tackled radicalism and extremism in their armed forces. Although these nations considered radicalism and extremism as security threats, they adopted formal or

informal policies in order to tackle with them. On the one hand, countries such as the UK which was an example for a formal policy established PREVENT mechanism in order to institutionalize de-radicalization process within the armed services (HMICFRS, 2020). On the other hand, nations such as Germany which was counted as an informal case aimed to tackle with the far-right radicalism by sending the soldiers into the Holocaust memorial places in order to display the destructive memories of Nazi past (Murray, 2022). Therefore, this report focuses on how political elites adopted informal/formal mechanism in order to combat with the radicalism or extremism within their armed services.

As our theoretical framework, we use securitization and constructivism IR (International Relations) theories to explore how political elites construct certain narratives and policies in order to define the perceived threat of radicalisation within their armed forces. First, we examine how securitization theory is relevant to examine the construction of security speeches and threat perceptions in the seven countries (Balzacq et al. 2016; Balzacq, 2005; Snetkov, 2017). Second, we underscore how constructivism determines the impact of identity in the threat perceptions of political elites or newspapers with regard to radical groups within the armed forces (Gulec, 2015; Gultekin, 2015; Kinnvall, 2004). This highlights how religion, history and culture triggered the “otherness” of certain groups in the armed forces. Moreover, the methodology section also explores how we selected, collected, and analysed data on radicalism from seven different countries.

The structure of this report begins with the introduction. The second section introduces the concept of Democratic Control of Armed Forces. The third section examines the theoretical framework and methodology. The fourth part explains how political elites tackle radicalization within the armed forces (training programs etc.). The fifth underscores how political elites perceived threat of radicalization in each country. The fifth underlines the constitutional background of armed forces and judicial implications that seek to prevent the radicalization and extremism within the military. The sixth explores our cases about the radicalization within the armed forces of seven different nations. In the last section, we summarize our findings and conclude this report.

### **The Concept of Democratic Control of Armed Forces**

This report examines how radicalism and extremism could weaken the democracies within the armed forces. In order to protect the internal security and democratic institutions, the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), an international

foundation, was established by the Swiss Government in 2000. DCAF aims to contribute to enhancing security sector governance (SSG) through security sector reform (SSR). The Geneva Centre's work to support effective, efficient security sectors which are accountable to the state and its citizens is underpinned by the acknowledgement that security, development and the rule of law are essential preconditions for sustainable peace (Backgrounder, 2008, p.1). Moreover, Democratic control of armed forces refers to the norms governing the relationship between the armed forces and society, whereby the armed forces are subordinated to democratically-elected authorities and subject to the oversight of the judiciary as well as the media and civil society organisations (DCAF Backgrounder, 2008, p.1). In other words, DCAF underscores the importance of civilian decision making over the military establishment. In that sense, DCAF seeks that the military-related decisions such as the organization, deployment, and use of armed forces should be made by democratic leadership (Lunn, 2002). In addition, the legislative body has a responsibility to scrutinize the military service in order to ensure popular support and the ultimate aim ensure that armed forces serve the societies they protect (Lunn, 2002, p.83).

Furthermore, DCAF is responsible from 7 key points which aimed the protection of democracy by controlling the military services within the country (DCAF Backgrounder, 2008, p.2). They were; (1) civilian control, (2) democratic governance, (3) civilian expertise, (4) ideological neutrality, (5) minimal role in the national economy, (6) effective chain of command and (7) respect for the rights of military personnel (DCAF Backgrounder, 2008, pp.2-3). Therefore, this report highlights how the D.Rad countries namely the UK, Germany, Austria, France, Serbia, Israel, and Georgia used their democratic control mechanisms such as military education, media, the judiciary, parliament, Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the government in order to detect, and tackle with the radicalized units within their armed forces. In the next section, we explain the theoretical framework of this report in order to discuss the impact of constructivism and securitization IR theories. In that sense, we explain how these countries detect and tackle with the radicalization and extremism within their armed forces.

## **Theoretical Framework/methodology**

This report discusses how political elites consider radicalism or extremism as a rising threat in the military services. Although constructivism and securitization IR theories could help detecting and tackling with extremism, they could not be able to explain why the armed

forces do not experience de-radicalization processes continuously. Thus, this section explores how these IR theories have an impact on the separate de-radicalization stages. First, constructivist IR theory is useful in order to underscore how identity plays a certain role detecting radical units within the armed forces. Second, securitization IR theory could help how governments and the military pursue securitization policies in order to tackle with the radicalized groups such far-right factions or Jihadist movements. Within this context, the present report uses securitization and constructivist IR theories that could help us to understand the role of identity and security-oriented policies in terms of fighting against radicalism and extremism within the armed forces.

Before entering the discussions on radicalism and extremism in the military services, we need to define securitization as it is used in IR theory. Balzacq (2005, p.173) contends that “securitization is a sustained strategic practice aimed at convincing a target audience to accept, based on what it knows about the world, the claim that a specific development (oral threat or event) is threatening enough to deserve an immediate policy to alleviate.” In addition, Balzacq et al. (2016, p.494) have stated “securitization theory seeks to explain politics through which (1) the security character of public problems is established, (2) the social commitments resulting from the collective acceptance that a phenomenon is a threat are fixed and (3) the possibility of a particular policy is created.” In that context, the political elite could play the role of a securitizing actor that presents an issue as a threat through a securitizing move. In other words, the linguistic construction of security issues has had a considerable impact on security studies (Balzacq et al., 2016, p.496). Laustsen and Waeber (2000, p.708) state that “[securitization] studies how security issues are produced by actors, who pose something (a referent object) as existentially threatened and therefore claim a right to use extraordinary measure to defend it.” Moreover, the role of audience has a significant impact on the securitizing narratives. Political elites have also been shown to adopt certain (de-)securitizing actions or narratives towards the military services in order to appeal to their domestic public audience.

Securitization is a product of an elite narrative, which aims to shape public feeling and emotions. Securitizing speech acts are results of interactions between a securitizing actor and its audience. Balzacq et al. (2016, p.496) have stated that “(...), the domain of (in)security is not predefined. It results from a time- and context-specific intersubjective agreement that something poses a vital threat to a community.” In other words, securitization theory is based on the premise that the word ‘security’ has a performative character – that is, it does not only

describe the world, but can also transform social reality (Balzacq et al., 2016, p.495). Thus, political elites can utilize securitizing speech acts to tackle with the far-right or Islamist radicalism in the military service poses threat for their society.

Holding state power shapes securitizing actions or narratives vis-à-vis the military services. Securitization has an impact on power relations and helps explain the gradual shift from the question of what security *is* to what it *does* (Balzacq et al., 2016, p.501). In other words, initial securitization debates focused in large part on the issue of the power of the elites to successfully carry out securitizing moves against the armed forces. In this respect, considering power as capacity, elite actors could designate a specific issue as a security threat and the power to deal with this issue in a particular way. Balzacq et al. (2016, p.501) state that “As a result, the issue of the increase in the power of successful securitizing actors has received considerable attention in the securitization literature to date.” Therefore, this report explains how some political elites are keen to tackle with the radicalism whereas the others aim to de-securitize extremist activities in the military services.

As mentioned above, political elites have adopted de-securitization narratives vis-à-vis far-right radicalisation cases in the military officers to protect the secrecy in the armed forces or sustain dark connections between the organized crime groups and state elites. This implies efforts to undercover the infiltration of certain groups such as far-right group movements, which can target minorities or culturally and religiously others, into their armed forces. As Coksun (2008, p.394) defines “de-securitization is best understood as the fading away of a particular issue from the security agenda when certain threats are no longer valid or have been replaced with more powerful threat perceptions.” Coskun (2008, p.394) has also highlighted that “the ultimate goal of de-securitisation is the achievement of a situation in which the issue in question is no longer seen as threatening and is thus no longer defined in security terms.” De-securitization thereby provides normalization of rising threats within the security establishments. After discussing the impact of securitization theory on tackling with radicalism, we explore how identity plays a significant role in terms of detecting extremism within the military services.

The constructivist approach aims to explain the impact of identity or ideologies to highlight how countries detect radicalized soldiers within their armed forces. Gulec (2015, p.13) emphasises that “ideational structures ascribe meaning to actors’ identities through infusing them with a sense of who they are, what social roles they are expected to play, and how they



should relate to other actors around them.” Gultekin (2015, p.11) underlines that “constructivist theory claims that agents and structures continually influence each other inter-subjectively.” Thus, he (2015, p.11) highlights that constructivism is interested in the key concepts of norms, rules, identities, and how they affect the conceptions and interpretations of the world. For example, the securitization of Islam in the armed forces is part of a long, historical process of the formation of secular modes of subjectivity in the West (Balzacq et al., 2016, p.515; Laustsen & Waever, 2000, p.720). As a result, norms referring to religion, history, culture and ideology are used to explain how political elites (including media) can detect radicalized movements in the army.

Retaining a cultural, ideological and religious “other” determines far-right or Islamist radicalism threat perceptions within the armed forces. The cultural and religious norms have significant impacts in terms of shaping identity perceptions of political elites regarding their armed forces as well. Kinnvall (2004, p.286) argues that religion can be used as a tool to reproduce the anxieties between the majority and the minority. Herzfeld (2005, p.3) explains that cultural identity can be considered a source of external embarrassment but that it nevertheless provides insiders with an assurance of common sociality. Furthermore, constructivism also underscores the impact of ideology and history on identity construction of political elites (Leira & Carvalho, 2016; Dormer, 2017, p.55). Therefore, political elites are influenced by cultural, historical, ideological, and religious norms in the context of building their securitizing speech acts vis-à-vis the “other” radical groups within the armed forces.

To follow up on these theoretical assumptions, this report collected qualitative data on security forces from seven countries: France, UK, Germany, Austria, Serbia, Georgia and Israel. We needed our partners to answer the questions listed below: 1) How do security establishments tackle radicalisation, including any training programmes? 2) Is radicalisation perceived as a threat within security forces? 3) What mechanisms, if any, exist to detect radicalisation within the security forces? 4) What is the constitutional background of the military as an instrument of security, how many security forces are there (this can include police)? 5) Can the state be held accountable for radicalisation within the security forces, what are the judicial implications including courts system and practice for security forces? In addition, we told our partners to explore 2 case studies on radicalization or extremism within the armed forces. Theoretically, we used constructivism and securitization IR theories in order to analyse the role of identity and security perspectives in terms of detection and tackling with the radicalization cases.

However, we are also aware about the limitations of studying radicalisation within the armed forces. In that effort, we cannot be sure that all incidents have been released to the public. In addition to that, the military forces in general are not always transparent regarding their failures which can result in limitations to our research. For example, it is difficult to access to the personal background of soldiers who are convicted for involving extremist activities. After concluding this section, in the following section, we trace how political elites from various countries use certain methods in order to tackle with radicalization.

## **Tackling radicalization within armed forces (training programs etc.)**

This section highlights how securitization IR theory is influential in terms of tackling with the radicalized units within the armed services. German authorities established the secret service MAD (Military Counterintelligence Service), which focuses on radicalism within the military service. The MAD's main "tackling methods" are infiltration via undercover agents and through informant recruitment. In addition, this agency also investigates denunciations coming from whistle-blowers within the military and investigative journalism reports. The German authorities established specific programs in order to train security personnel. German political elites also use the Nazi past as a shameful period in order to prevent far-right organizations in the armed forces – giving credibility to securitization theory assumptions (Balzacq et al., 2016). For example, both police and military officers have to visit Holocaust memorial sites in order to take stock of fascist history in the country. Similar to the German authorities, Austrian political elites have acknowledged the presence of far-right groups within the armed factions. In that effort, the Austrian Armed Forces have cooperated with the Mauthausen Committee, whereby soldiers in basic military service are obliged to visit the Mauthausen concentration camp memorial or the sub-camp in Melk for one day as part of their training in ethics and legal issues. Therefore, political elites have used visits to historical sites in order to tackle far-right ideologies within the armed forces.

The British police have participated in the PREVENT programme in order to tackle radicalism and extremism inside the police. For example, they established mandatory PREVENT training to increase knowledge awareness about far-right threats and other extremist ideologies such as the far-left and radical Islam within the Police (HMICFRS, 2020, p.2). However, as HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire &

Rescue Services) explained, not all the police officers had completed the training because they do not monitor compliance” (HMICFRS, 2020, p.1). The Police forces do not always recognise vulnerability to radicalisation as a significant issue (HMICFRS, 2020, p.17).

The UK MoD (Ministry of Defence) also adopted the PREVENT strategy in order to tackle far-right radicalism within their armed forces. The UK government coordinated with the Home Office to launch the CONTEST strategy in order to counter terrorism and extremism in July 2011. PREVENT is one of the four strands of CONTEST, often referred to as the 4 Ps, that is, prevent, pursue, protect, and prepare (HMICFRS, 2020, p.4). PREVENT also seeks to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism (HMICFRS, 2020, p.4). It aims to recognize and safeguard individuals that are vulnerable to being drawn into radicalisation before they have entered criminal activity. In that effort, if individuals referred to PREVENT later comply with the necessary intervention, they can be re-educated and could continue to serve (Briggs, 2019). Indeed, public pressure and scrutiny pushed the MoD to identify extreme right-wing infiltration as a serious issue (Koehler, 2019, p.10). Referring troops to the PREVENT programme is part of a drive by the armed forces against far-right infiltration, whereby officers work alongside police and the Home Office teams to stop personnel joining neo-Nazi groups (Briggs, 2019). In that effort, military personnel connected with far-right ideologies must be investigated in terms of continuing his/her military service (Quin, 2021). In addition, the British Armed Forces have begun to introduce unique prevention measures (e.g. mandatory training, cooperation with counter radicalisation programs, guides for the detection of extremist ideologies) in order to prevent the infiltration of extremists (Koehler, 2019, 10; Briggs, 2019). Moreover, they are keen to justify far-right extremism as actions of isolated, 'lone-wolf', cases.

Our report highlights how Israel established a security mechanism to prevent radicalisation in the army. The ISA (Internal Security Authority) is responsible for tackling radicalization and extremism within the Israeli military forces (ISA 2020). The actions of the ISA have a vital role in counter-radicalisation, managing units specialising in the surveillance and capture of individuals and groups that threaten Israeli democracy. In that way, the Israeli military authorities used anti-extremist rules in order to punish the soldiers who involved into the far-right radical activities such as racism against the Palestinian civilians (Balzacq et al., 2016).

Our findings suggested France and Georgia treat jihadism as a rising threat while stating that far-right extremism is usually isolated, in 'lone-wolf', types of cases. These countries aim to

pursue securitization narratives vis-à-vis Islamist soldiers in order to define their “radical threat perception” (Ibid; Laustsen & Waever, 2000). Thereby, securitization again plays a significant role in terms of expressing the role of threat definition (Balzacq, 2005). Although the French authorities consider both far-right and Jihadist terrorism as security threats, our cases mainly focus on the securitization of Islamist militants within the armed forces. In line with securitization theory, it appears that securitizing actors prefer security discourses which resonate among the public audience (Laustsen & Waever, 2000; Balzacq et al., 2016) more comfortably. The French case is also another example of how elites exploit Islam as a threat narrative in order to appeal to the secularist and Euro-Christian French domestic public audience. In order to detect Islamist terrorism and far-right radicalism within the armed forces, the French elites established the Directorate for Intelligence and Defence Security (Direction du Renseignement et de la Sécurité de la Défense - DRSD) that collaborates directly with other intelligence services and is part of the French Ministry of Armed Forces. In cases of terrorist threats, the responsibility is transferred to the General Directorate for Internal Security (Direction Générale de la Sécurité Intérieure - DGSI), which is subordinate to the Minister of Interior (Centre d’analyse du terrorisme, 2019). Furthermore, the DRSD carries out investigations of potential radicalisation both prior to and during military service. It screens all candidate profiles, including the national reserve forces, attempting to evaluate the candidates’ “degree of trust,” by examining such parameters as criminal record, background, and social contacts. When informed of a potential case of radicalisation of an individual during their military service, the DRSD is authorised to carry out an administrative investigation to estimate the potential level of threat.

The political elites’ securitization narratives vis-à-vis Islamist factions within the armed forces operate in Georgia similar to France. The Military Police is responsible for the investigation of crimes within the army, as well as for the safety and security of the facilities and territories used by the Ministry of Defence. The Military Police is also responsible for the execution of court decrees as well as prosecutor’s and investigator’s decision with respect to arrest or detention (Legislative Herald of Georgia 2007). Furthermore, the activities of the Military Police are supervised and overseen by the Parliament of Georgia in the forms and procedures provide by the Construction (Ibid). Later, the investigation of crimes within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence is carried out with the supervision of the General Prosecutor’s Office. However, Georgian political elites also claim that there are Islamist soldiers, who joined Jihadist networks, who can create a security problem for the operation of

the armed forces. This resonates well with the securitization theory and how culture and religion generate an impact on threat definition (Gulec, 2015; Gultekin, 2015; Laustsen & Waever, 2000). Moreover, we also show that anti-government sentiments also led to radicalization within the Georgian armed forces. In that context, we underscore how a group of armed officers staged a coup attempt against the Saakashvili government due to its pro-US foreign policies in Mukhrovani on 05 May 2009 (Blomfield, 2009).

In the Serbian case, the authorities implemented specific laws to prevent the radicalization and extremism within the Serbian forces. Although they adopted the National Strategy for the Prevention and Countering of Terrorism for the 2017-2021 period, they still did not recognize radicalism and extremism which were related with organised crimes as a threat within the Serbian armed forces (Maričić, 2022; B92, 2020). In the next section, we explore how the political elites (including media) from the seven partner countries perceived the threat of radicalization in order to understand the political underpinnings of threat detection for the security forces.

## **Perceived threat of radicalization in each country (Detection)**

### **- Germany and Austria:**

Radicalisation within the military is perceived as a direct threat to the country's constitutional system and political stability. The country's main training facility (the Center for Inner Command) for military personnel clearly identifies in its publications and overall approach the need to prevent radicalisation, in particular the far-right radicalisation. The debate among political parties is not so much whether there is radicalisation in the military, but how systemic it is. Left-wing parties consider it a broader problem generally affecting the military, while conservative politicians - and military representatives - present the problem as affecting specific units rather than the army in general. Identity of political elites play a significant role in order to detect the types of radicalism within the armed forces (Gulec, 2015). Moreover, constructivist theory indicates that ideational norms play a significant role in terms of detecting far-right radicalism as a threat (Ibid.). The rise of Neo Nazi networks increased anxieties over far-right radicalism and relatedly insecurities within the leftist ideology (Donnelly & Steele, 2019, p.15). The discovery of the Hannibal network, as an example in order to understand how leftist newspaper such as Die Tageszeitung were keen to uncover far

right factions within the armed forces (Schwarz, 2022). More broadly, all central (national) and regional media heavily report and reflect on cases of far-right radicalisation in the military. In addition, investigative journalists and whistle-blowers represent key mechanisms in uncovering radicalisation, pointing out the lack of detection mechanisms in terms of radicalisation within the security forces beyond secret service investigations. These sources have indicated the existence of numerous cover-up attempts, showing that there is a systemic tendency in the army to hide and minimise radicalisation instances rather than ensure transparency and protection of whistle-blowers. Similar to the German case, Austria is also another example where we can identify the far-right radicalism as a main threat within the armed forces.

- Serbia and Israel:

In Serbia, we see how organized crime-related radicalism or extremism is not considered as a main threat by the political elite. Both the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019 and the Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019 highlight strengthening of ethnic, political and religious nationalism as a threat to the entire region. When it comes to the threat to the security of the Republic of Serbia, however, extremist activity is primarily associated with separatist aspirations in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija and southern Serbia (Shtuni, 2016; Stevanovic, 2015). In that effort, Serbian officials consider Islamic radicalism apparent among some Serbian citizens as their main radicalisation problem. Meanwhile, the Serbian authorities have not explicitly recognised the threat of radicalisation and extremism within the armed forces. Although there were organized crime-related radicalization events within the armed forces, the Serbian military authorities sought to downplay these radicalization cases (Donnelly & Steele, 2019). There are no studies or publicly available reports regarding the impact of radicalisation among military personnel in Serbia. Besides internal control, security checks, and mechanisms of democratic and civil control, which are mainly focused on the legality and constitutionality of the work of security forces and adherence to political, interest and ideological neutrality, we could not find specifically designed indicators and tools for detecting radicalisation and countering violent extremism inside armed forces. Even in the media, it is difficult to find articles dealing with radicalisation and extremism inside the SAF (Serbian Armed Forces). The director of the Military Security Agency, general Cvetković, attended a lecture at the Faculty of Security Studies of the University of Belgrade, where he was asked whether there was religious extremism inside the Army. He stated that there were no indicators of the

existence and impact of religious extremism on military personnel. “Members of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces express their religious feelings in accordance with the regulations both in military facilities and outside them (NSPM, 2017).” Unlike the Serbian case, our Israeli case study also finds that radicalisation and extremism are perceived as a direct threat by Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and internal security authority (ISA). In other words, our cases explore how the Israeli defence authorities consider the far-right ideology within the ultra-Orthodox Jewish soldiers as a security problem (Malach, 2019). Thus, the Israeli cases are relevant examples about the far-right radicalism which underscored the importance of religion and identity (Kinnvall, 2004; Gulec, 2015).

In the French case, the military aimed to detect radicalism and extremism within the soldiers. In response to one journalist investigation, the Ministry of Armed Forces stated that the army “fights against all types of radicalism” and that “[a]ny proven case is the subject of a disciplinary procedure leading to an immediate and strong sanction”. Yet, the Ministry also considers the military ranks to be affected by far-right radicalisation only “in a very limited way” and sees “these reprehensible behaviours [as falling] within the domain of individual drift” (Bourdon et al., 2021b). More attention and consideration have been paid by military agencies to jihadist radicalisation, despite its relatively negligible scope and level of threat (Centre d’analyse du terrorisme, 2019). As constructivist IR theory suggests, the norms such as religion and culture could be used as a tool in order to detect security threats (Laustsen & Waeber, 2000, p.708; Kinnvall, 2004, p.286). In that case, the fear of radical Islamist terror has shaped the threat perceptions within both French political elites and domestic public audiences. According to a 2019 report submitted to the National Assembly, “[w]ithin the army, radicalisation, whether Islamic or political, appears marginal. The proportion of suspected radicalisation is evaluated at 0.05%” and the army leaves “little room for behaviour incompatible with the service of the nation and republican values” (Diard and Poulliat, 2019). This reflects the general state of mind of the French government, which concentrates its security, surveillance and deradicalisation efforts, almost exclusively, on jihadist extremism, and is not preoccupied with the processes of extreme-right radicalisation in the country (Sawyer and Zinigrad, 2021). In other words, identity and religion has impacted on the French recognition of extremism or radicalism within the armed forces (Kinnvall, 2004).

In Georgia, both identity and ideologies played a significant role in terms of the evolution of radicalization within the armed forces. Although the Georgian defence ministry did not adopt rules or laws to detect radicalised officers, we observed both Islamist and anti-government

led radicalised cases in the armed forces (Blomfield, 2009; Akhmeteli, 2014). It could be attributed to the fact that in relatively low-income countries the issue of radicalization in the military remains outside of the focus of state policies (Franc & Pavlovic, 2021).

The British political elite consider right-wing extremism as a serious threat for national security. However, they also do not want to increase investigations to harm the structure of British armed forces. In that effort, the MoD (Ministry of Defence) aimed to be secretive towards the exposed radicalization cases in order to protect the unity in the armed forces (Donnelly & Steele, 2019). Firstly, the MoD underscored that the far-right activities were pursued by individuals not a group of military personnel. Second, it also neglected to be transparent in terms of dealing with allegations of the far-right activity within the military ranks (Briggs, 2019). For example, five military personnel, who had a picture with Tommy Robinson<sup>1</sup>, have been referred to the UK Government's counter-terrorism intervention programme, but the Ministry of Defence has refused to state whether they are still serving in the armed forces (Briggs, 2019). In the next section, we present the constitutional background of armed forces and judicial implications in these seven countries in our project in order to give legal and policy substance to the detection mechanism even further.

## **Constitutional background of armed forces and judicial implications**

Democratic control should always be a two-way process between armed forces and the state. In a democracy, firm constitutional guarantees should protect the state - including the armed forces - from two types of potential dangers: from politicians, who have military ambitions, and from military with political ambitions (Barany, 2012). Hence, democratic control is imperative in order to pose sensible restriction on the military, including judiciary duty, which should give reasonable protection from extremism within the armed forces.

In tackling radicalisation within the armed forces, we discuss how different states relate to maintaining firm control over the military and the constitutional guarantees support the prohibition of extremist personnel or de-radicalisation measures among the security forces.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Christopher Yaxley-Lennon. He was born on 27 November 1982. He is known as Tommy Robinson. He is a British far-right, Islamophobic activist, and convicted criminal on multiple counts of violence and fraud as well as other crimes (Olsen 2019).



- *Serbia:*

After the dissolution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006, the security sector has undergone many changes and a comprehensive reform – and a re-organisation as the Republic of Serbia subsequently became independent. This required introducing mechanisms for democratic and civil control over the armed forces and security services as the country pursues a membership of the European Union. With regards to the military alliances, the status of Serbia is neutral as it was declared in the *Resolution of the National Assembly on the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity and constitutional order of the Republic of Serbia 2007*.

The *Constitution of the Republic of Serbia 2006* is the supreme legal act in the country and it defines the status of the military as a security force. In article 139, the Constitution stipulates that the military's main mission is to defend Serbia against external armed threats, relying upon national laws and principles of international law. The Serbian Armed Forces also perform other missions as defined in national legal acts. When it comes to the use of the military outside Serbian borders, only the National Assembly can decide on such use as per article 140 of the Constitution. This provision has been elaborated on in more detail in a separate act – the *Act on the Engagement of the Serbian Armed Forces and Other Defence Forces in Multinational Operations outside of the Republic of Serbia Borders 2009*.

Besides the Constitution, the most relevant legal acts that regulate and guide the defense system are the *Law on Defence 2007*, the *Law on the Serbian Armed Forces 2007*, the *Law on the Bases Regulating Security Services of the Republic of Serbia 2007*, *Act on the Military Security Agency and the Military Intelligence Agency 2009*. As for the strategic documents, some of the most relevant examples are the *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019* and the *Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019*.

Furthermore, the position, organisation and jurisdiction of the Serbian Armed Forces have mainly been regulated by the *Law on the Serbian Armed Forces 2007*.

- *Germany:*

The German military's legal mission represents a sensitive area for the German public, reflecting the post-war (and Cold War) approach that the military's power needs to be curtailed as much as possible, by forbidding any involvement in operations abroad and any use of weapons on German soil. The rationale for this has been that the military had been

part of the National-Socialist takeover and exercise of power. Up until the early 2010s, German judges and left-wing parties blocked center-right attempts to broaden the military's mission to also tackle interior security threats. The existence of far-right networks of the Hannibal-type (see below) might shift this debate to favoring a limited mission, but this not very likely, as the trend is one of relaxing the limits on the military.

Radicalization within the German military has not, so far, led to cases where military personnel carried out violent attacks. However, state authorities have been held accountable for having mismanaged the investigation of far-right groups (see the case of the NSU, National-Socialist Underground, covered in reports 3.1. and 3.2. and in our D.Rad-blog), and held responsible for radicalisation within the army. Furthermore, authorities have also demonstrated on several occasions that they are ready to lead investigations against military personnel and even against the above-mentioned military intelligence service MAD (Military Counterintelligence Agency). State prosecutors, for instance, extended their investigations to also include MAD personnel in the Hannibal case<sup>2</sup>, suspecting that MAD personnel might have tipped off far-right extremists in the Hannibal network about ongoing investigations. Nevertheless, the discovery of the most important case of far-right radicalisation in the German military's postwar history (the Hannibal network) is the work of investigative journalists, not state authorities. For example, a team from *Taz (Die Tageszeitung)* journal did several research about right-wing networks in Mecklenburg and throughout Germany (Schmidt & Erb, 2019). They talked to many stakeholders, to sources in the authorities and in politics, and they were able to see investigative documents about this radical network (Ibid.). Although the journalists discovered that some of far-right policemen involved into this network, a state interior minister knew little or pretended to do so (Ibid.). Furthermore, magazine called *Focus* also played a significant role in order to reveal the far-right and armed Nordkreuz group which linked to the Hannibal network<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Hannibal was a network of far-right groups and individuals operating in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland which was founded in 2015. They used chat service Telegram in order to communicate each other. This group usually targeted the Left Party, the Greens and the SPD (Social Democratic Party). The network was subject to an investigation by German authorities in 2017, at which time its founder ordered the deletion of the chat groups (Schmidt & Erb, 2019). However, government investigations into members of groups affiliated with "Hannibal" are ongoing.

<sup>3</sup> Morningstar online (2020, August 13). *morningstaronline*.

<https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/f/germany-nazi-problem-hannibal-secret-army>

- *Austria:*

In Austria, the constitutional framework for the *Bundesheer* (Austrian Armed Forces) can be found in Arts 79 to 81 *Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz* (B-VG - Federal Constitutional Act). According to Art 79 para 1 B-VG, the Austrian Armed Forces are responsible for national military defense and is to be established according to the militia system. In addition to this task, the *Bundesheer* is responsible for the protection of constitutional institutions (such as the parliament), securing the democratic freedom of citizens and the maintenance of public order and interior security in general, insofar as the lawful civilian power makes use of its cooperation (Art 79 para 2 B-VG).

In addition to the armed forces, Austria has federal security authorities (Arts 78a to 78d B-VG). The supreme security authority is the Federal Minister of the Interior, to whom the provincial police directorates are subordinate, and to whom, in turn, the district administrative authorities are subordinate. According to the *Sicherheitspolizeigesetz* (SPG - Federal Security Police Act) the executive service is provided by the organs of the public security service for the security authorities. Two different guard bodies and, in addition, members of certain other services are eligible. Guard units are armed or uniformed formations or formations otherwise set up along military lines to which police tasks are assigned (Art 78d para 1 B-VG). The members of the federal police are the central guard unit. In addition, the members of the municipal guard units are also to be mentioned.

Regarding accountability, there are two mechanisms, one internal in the form of a disciplinary procedure and one external based on legal and political control instruments. The Army Disciplinary Act (HDG) regulates the sanctioning of members of the Military. Professional soldiers (military persons, professional officers, civil servants, and contract staff in the exercise of a non-commissioned officer function, military-VB) as well as conscripts of the militia and reserve ranks, are subject to the disciplinary law of the armed forces. The HDG aims at sanctioning breaches of duty by members of the armed forces, such as actions that damage the reputation of the armed forces and the public's trust in national military defence as well as criminal acts in general. The disciplinary law of members of the armed forces is regulated in the Army Disciplinary Act 1985, Federal Law Gazette No. 294. Therefore, those civil servants of the General Administration and those in manual service who are called upon to perform a non-commissioned officer function, as well as professional officers and soldiers on compulsory military service, are exempt from the application of the BDG 1979 with regard to disciplinary law. (Fellner 2022).

Disciplinary proceedings may be conducted as commanders' proceedings or, in more serious cases, as proceedings before the federal disciplinary authority. In the former, all members of the disciplinary panel are members of the army, in the latter, the composition is according to the Federal Civil Service Law (BDG). However, this procedure has been a point of critique due to several reasons: First, it foresees primarily internal punishing mechanisms such as degradation. Art 4 of the law does provide for a criminal complaint to be made to the public prosecutor's office if there is a suspicion of a judicially punishable offence to be prosecuted *ex officio*, but this is by no means absolute as Art 4 also states: "The obligation to report does not exist if and as long as there are sufficient reasons to assume that the judicial punishability of the offence will cease within a short period of time by means of measures to remedy the damage".

Second, large parts of the procedure remain hidden from the general public. Art 34 (1) stipulates the following: "Communications to the public about the content of disciplinary measures and disciplinary proceedings shall be prohibited unless otherwise provided for by this Federal Act." Therefore, only selected and anonymised decisions of the disciplinary authority can be found in the federal legal information system. Third, all involved parties are members of the armed forces. The Ministry of Defence appoints disciplinary lawyers (Art 19 HDG) who are military officers and who act as an internal prosecutor, representing the interests of the military service in proceedings before the Federal Disciplinary Authority. These lawyers are bound by instructions of the Ministry and are entitled to appeal against decisions of the Federal Disciplinary Authority to the Federal Administrative Court and at a later stage to the Administrative Court. The identity of the officers who function as disciplinary lawyers remains hidden and due to a strong *esprit de corps* it has proven problematic in some cases that members of the Military decide upon the severity of penalty<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, there are several other mechanisms, which in practice are of less importance. In cases of misconduct by members of the armed forces, criminal complaints can be made to the Public Prosecution Service (*Staatsanwaltschaft*), which decides after a preliminary investigation whether or not they bring charges (Berka 2021, p. 245f). As discussed earlier, this only applies in a minority of cases. The state can only be held legally accountable in a circuitous manner. If there are victims or injured parties as a result of the misconduct of state organs or state employees, they can file a liability claim. The legal instrument of public

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the Austrian weekly newspaper *der Falter* most recently published an article on a case of sexual harassment where the disciplinary lawyer only demanded a fine of 1500 Euro but it did not lead to dismissal.

liability is laid down in the Public Liability Act (*Amtshaftungsgesetz -AHG*).

Finally, there is the aspect of political responsibility. Here, the parliament exercises both political and legal control. Members of Parliament have several instruments to expose and resolve maladministration and political responsibility, such as the right of interpellation, the motion of no confidence or the establishment of a court of enquiry. Regarding legal control, there is the instrument of ministerial impeachment. The National Council can bring charges against members of the federal government before the Constitutional Court for culpable violation of the law. A member of the government can be held responsible if he or she has violated provisions of the Federal Constitution or laws in the course of his or her official duties. This instrument has not yet been used in the history of the Second Republic.<sup>5</sup>

- *Israel:*

Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and internal security authority (ISA) perceive radicalism as a direct threat. Each security institution has a judicial mechanism for examining cases that violate state laws and/or core values. The activities of the IDF are subject to the authority of the civil government of Israel (IDF, 2022). According to "Basic Law: The military-1976", it is subordinated to the government, whereas the ministry of defense is in charge of the ISA (clause 2) (Nevo, 2021). The Military Prosecution (MP) enforces the law against ISF personnel who have committed offences within the military system or related to military service discussed in the military justice system. The military court can impose sentences of imprisonment. MP also prosecutes residents of the West Bank region who committed crimes under the jurisdiction of the military courts. MP Officers handle cases involving criminal offences, e.g., direct or indirect involvement in terrorist activity, participation in disturbances, and inciting harm to Israeli citizens.

- *Georgia:*

The main military force of the Georgian state is the Defense Forces of Georgia (*sakartvelos tavadatsvis dzalebi* in Georgian) that combines Land Force, Air Force, National Guard and Special Operational Forces. Defense Forces of Georgia are under the control of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia (MOD) and are headed by the Chief of Defense Forces. The Commander-in-chief of the Georgian forces is the President of Georgia, who also has a right to appoint and dismiss the Commander of the Defense Forces upon the nomination by the

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<sup>5</sup> In May 2019, a motion of no confidence by the National Council dismissed the government Kurz I after the Ibiza affair. However, this motion was directed at the government and not at singular Ministers.

government. In Georgia, there is a special institution that is, the Military Police, which is responsible for investigation of crimes within the army as well as for the safety and security of the facilities and territories used by the Ministry of Defense. The Military Police is also responsible for the execution for court decrees as well as prosecutor's and investigator's decision with respect to arrest or detention (Legislative Herald of Georgia 2007). Activities of the Military Police are supervised and overseen by the Parliament of Georgia in forms and procedures provided by the Construction (ibid). The investigation of crimes within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense is carried out with the supervision of the General Prosecutor's Office.

### *France*

In the French constitution, the Prime Minister is the main responsible from the national defence. According to the article 13, he should have power to make regulations and shall make appointments to civil and military posts (Zoller, 1996, p.46). In France, parliamentary authorization is also needed for a declaration of war and the continuation of domestic state of emergency (Aurescu et al, 2008, p.50). The French constitution underscores that “no armed force may act on the territory of the Republic for the purposes of civil defence and security without a lawful requisition (Article L1321-1). In accordance with the provisions of Article L. 214-1 of the Internal Security Code, when the maintenance of public order requires the use of the specific military means of the national gendarmerie, their use is subject to authorization under conditions defined by decree in the Council of State (Article L1321-1).

Furthermore, the French constitution also expresses the obligations and responsibilities as follows; (1) the Active military personnel may not engage in any gainful private activity of any kind on a professional basis (legifrance, 2016). (2) The soldier is subject to the obligations required by the military state in accordance with the second paragraph of Article L. 4111-1. He or she shall perform his or her duties with dignity, impartiality, integrity and probity (Ibid.). In other words, the command authorities are responsible to ensure compliance with these obligations in the formations, directorates and services under their authority. (3) A soldier shall report to the judicial authorities facts constituting an offence or crime of which he has become aware in the performance of his duties in accordance with the second paragraph of article 40 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Ibid.). He may report the same facts to the administrative authorities.

(4) A soldier may report to one of the hierarchical authorities to which he belongs facts

likely to be qualified as a conflict of interest, within the meaning of Article L. 4122-3, of which he has become aware in the exercise of his duties (Ibid.). He may also testify such facts to the competent ethics referent mentioned in Article L. 4122-10. (5) A soldier may not be the subject of any measure concerning recruitment, training, tenure, appraisal, discipline, promotion, assignment, transfer, remuneration, retraining, striking off executives or controls, or any other measure mentioned in 11 ° and 13 ° to 15 ° of II of Article 10-1 of Law No. 2016-1691 of 9 December 2016\_on transparency, the fight against corruption and the modernisation of economic life, nor threats or attempts to use them, for having (Ibid.).

## *UK*

The UK Prime Minister (acting with the Cabinet) makes the key political decisions on the use of the armed forces. Cornford (1991, p.33) states that the head of state should appoint such military officers, members of a public service and other persons whose appointments are, under this Constitution or an Act of Parliament, required to be made by the Head of State. Cornford (1991, p.113) mentions that “One of the major areas of concern relating to the current legal framework for military deployment is the power of the Executive to declare war or peace without reference to Parliament.” In other words, government should seek parliamentary approval if they propose to deploy British forces outside the UK (House of Lords, 2013, p.4). “Parliament may also deny funding for the conduct of a war, although presumably the Armed Forces could conduct military activities for a lengthy period of time before the necessity to levy further taxation to fund hostilities would arise (Cornford, 1991, p.113).” Although both Prime Minister and Parliament could make key decisions for the use of military, the King remains the supreme authority of the military (Mills, 2018). “This legal power is currently a Royal Prerogative by the Executive in the name of the Crown. Although it is, properly, a political decision, prior Parliamentary approval is not now required before a state of war is declared. In practical terms, Parliament can, of course, pass a motion of ‘No Confidence’ in the government which has thus declared war (the Monarch actually signs a Royal Proclamation, but constitutionally follows the advice of her Ministers) (Cornford, 1991, p.113).”

After concluding this section, we discuss 7 different cases about radicalism in the next section. In that effort, we explore how countries adopted detection mechanisms in order to tackle with the radicalized military people.

## Case Studies

### *Germany*

#### Case 1 Scandal in the KSK (Special Forces Command)

Case 1 is about one of the first scandals to surround the KSK (Special Forces Command), the 2007 allegations that some of the high-ranking officers to have led the unit might have radicalised to foster far-right convictions. As a detection mechanism, a left-wing party (Die Linke) began its allegations against the KSK unit. These allegations, coming from Die Linke and leading to a parliamentary inquiry, concerned a book written in 2005 by former KSK commander and retired general Reinhard Günzel together with a former Nazi officer. The book claimed that the KSK stands in the tradition of the WWII Brandenburg division, a military unit operating behind enemy lines during WWII and accused of war crimes. The left-wing party inquired whether the KSK as a unit indeed follows that tradition, and whether the former general's (Günzel) relationship to Nazi Germany is sufficiently clarified. As constructivist IR theory underscores the insecurity about Neo-Nazi ideology within the leftist politicians pushed them to question the far-right units within the military (Gulec, 2015; Laustsen & Waever, 2000). The German government rejected any allegations about the general's far-right convictions (or radicalisation) and denied any links between the KSK and the WWII unit, arguing that the general's views are his private convictions. In order to tackle with the far-right ideology, however, back in 2003, it was the government that dismissed the general after he had written an official letter of support for Martin Hohmann, a (then) conservative MP (now far-right) that had called "Jews... a nation of perpetrators", referring to October Revolution bloodshed. In other words, securitization theory explains that the government recognized the presence of far-right radicalism within the military, and it aimed to prevent the spread of far-right organisation (Balzacq, 2005). In other words, in 2007 the government could hardly be convinced of the general's far-right convictions, treating these as private and irrelevant for his former unit. Overall, this case was an example which showed how the effective detection mechanism and the interest to tackle with the far-right ideology could lead the de-radicalization of armed forces in Germany.

#### Case 2: The KSK & the Hannibal Network



15 years after Günzel's dismissal, the KSK would again make it into the media headlines, this time in Germany's largest political scandal and case of far-right radicalisation. Research carried out by the daily newspaper leftist *Die Tageszeitung* from 2018 uncovered a terrorist network called "Hannibal" (after the nickname of one of the primary suspects), organised within the special military unit KSK, but reaching well into other structures and professional groups, from police special forces to judges and retired personnel. In other words, *Die Tageszeitung* also played a detector role in order to uncover the far-right Hannibal network. Again, the leftist ideology of the newspaper pushed it to uncover the far-right extremist cases within the security network (Dormer, 2017). In total, the network seems to have comprised around 200 former and active soldiers. It had set up ammunition stashes, drawn up enemy lists, and prepared for the assassination of political opponents (politicians) on so-called 'day x'. In addition to former and active elite soldiers, the network also included lawyers and officials from the criminal investigation department, intelligence agencies, and security firms. It is possible that only a fraction of the network has been identified and prosecuted, with cells extending across Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. The discovery of "Hannibal" greatly changed the public debate about military radicalisation in Germany, confirming previous suspicions about the KSK, going back to early 2003 (Case 1 above). In terms of tackling radicalism, the conservative (CDU) defence minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer initiated a legislative change to make it easier to expel far-right soldiers from the army. This is also an attempt to adopt security-oriented policies in order to combat the radicalised officers (Balzacq, 2005). But still, this change actually was a key demand coming from MAD (not the CDU), showing that the country's largest political party lacks an own position and agenda for countering radicalisation. The 2020 legislative offensive to counter far-right radicalisation pushed the main intelligence agencies to cooperate with the government in terms of detecting far-right cases in the military. In summary, this case explored that the effective detection mechanism and the interest to tackle with the far-right extremist could strengthen the de-radicalization within the military.

### Case 3: The *Reichsbürger* 2022 plot to take over political power in Germany

December 2022 saw German authorities launching a nation-wide raid targeting a far-right plot for a violent take-over of political power in Germany. 3,000 police agents descended on 150 locations throughout the country (in 11 out of 16 states) (Flade, 2022). This time the police played a significant role in order to detect a far-right plot against the government. As

constructivism suggests that the traumatic memories of Nazi Germany alerted both the German coalition government and military establishment to uncover this plot before they staged a coup attempt (Leira & Carvalho, 2016). As tackling this far-right extremist case, they charged 51 people and arrested 25 members of the Patriotic Union, a network connected to the *Reichsbürger*, a far-right milieu largely specific for Germany with a certain similarity to the UK Freeman on the Land<sup>6</sup> (Linham, 2017). This could be considered as a securitization policy in order to prevent far-right organisation within the military (Balzacq, 2005). The *Reichsbürger*, or Citizens of the Empire, are a loose milieu of around 20,000 individuals, believing in the conspiracy theory that the German Federal Republic does not exist as there was never a peace treaty ending World War 2 that confirmed the birth of the new republic. This conspiracy follows that for the Reich citizens, the existence of the national-socialist state has never ceased and it should be regarded as the only legitimate state power in Germany. This means that the German Federal Republic is allegedly a hoax or even a private company. Following the raid, the German media and public focused mostly on detailing the network's bizarre ideas and extravagant members including a prince and a judge - with the latter being affiliated with the far-right AfD party (Röbel, 2023). They also noted the large amounts of cash and guns found in various locations. Still, the expansive links of this network with the police and the army with around four of the 25 arrested were former police and army officers that had served in Special Forces units were notable. Little is known about the radicalisation of the Patriotic Union's members, most of those scrutinised by the press seem to have been active *Reichsbürger* for around two decades. An exception is a police officer that was drawn into it during the Corona protests and the press generally argued, using MAD data, that the pandemic might have increased *Reichsbürger* numbers by 10% each year, portraying the case of the police officer as indicative of a broader trend of radicalisation in which the pandemic must have played a crucial role. Overall, this case underscored that the effective detection mechanism and the interest to tackle with the radicalism could prevent the far-right coup attempt against the German government.

## ***Serbia***

### Case Study I: "Topčider" case

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<sup>6</sup> The Freeman on the Land movement believes that people are only bound by the contracts and laws they have consented to. This movement argues that they are bound by statute laws only if they consent to those laws. In that context, it also assumes that people can declare themselves independent of the government and the rule of law.

On October 5, 2004, Dražen Milovanović (21) and Dragan Jakovljević (21), soldiers of the Guard Unit of the Yugoslav Army, were found dead in the military facility “Karaš” in Topčider barracks, in Belgrade, while they were on duty at their guarding posts. The first investigation was carried out by the armed forces and Court Martial (later dismissed). The official military investigation claimed that it was a homicide followed by suicide. Vuk Tufegdžić, magistrate of the Court Martial at the time in charge of the investigation, went to the crime scene and nominated experts in forensics and ballistics, who participated in expertise that initially claimed that Milovanović killed Jakovljević and then committed suicide. However, as that version turned out to be impossible, the military investigation led by Tufegdžić quickly changed the claims stating that Jakovljević killed Milovanović and then committed suicide, dismissing the possibility that they were killed by a third person (Blic, 2021). As military investigation suffered from many inconsistencies, discrepancies and contradictions, an independent investigation was carried out.

The independent state investigation, conducted by the National Committee, which was led by attorney Božo Prelević, showed that the Guardsmen were killed by a third person (B92, 2008; Maričić, 2022). As military and independent investigations resulted in disparate conclusions, there was a need for third-party expertise. After examining the material traces from the crime scene in “Karaš”, the FBI Laboratory “Quantico” in Washington sent the report to the District Court in Belgrade in late 2007, confirming the second version of the events, that is, that the soldiers were killed (B92, 2008). Both Steve Casper, who conducted ballistic expertise, and Ljubomir Dragović, a forensic expert from the USA, ruled out the homicide-suicide version of events. During the presentation of the 3D reconstruction of the events in 2016, Nenad Šipka from the Centre for Forensic Investigations dismissed the military version of homicide followed by suicide due to technical unfeasibility (Maričić, 2022). “[...] All the bullets, except for one, were fired at the soldiers from the distance of 3.35 meters”, thus confirming that both soldiers were killed inside the military facility by a third person or persons (B92, 2008). “According to research, both were disarmed and then shot” (Blic, 2021). After receiving the FBI report which confirmed his findings, Prelević, in charge of the independent investigation stated that “what was completely incredible was that three and a half years later, nobody is looking for the killer” (B92, 2008). Despite the obvious cover-up of the crime, the magistrate Vuk Tufegdžić kept insisting it was a homicide-suicide case (B92, 2017).

During the preliminary criminal investigation, the families of the deceased soldiers requested that Boris Tadić, the President of Serbia at the time, and Vuk Jeremić, his advisor, to give

their statements as Branko Krka, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces at that time, had been informed by the Cabinet of the President on the tragic events, raising the question as to how they got that information before anyone else in the chain of command (Maričić, 2022).

The parents of the murdered Guardsman Jakovljević filed a lawsuit in 2012 before the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg against the Republic of Serbia in order to determine the responsibility of the state as the right to an effective investigation regarding the right to life and fair trial by an independent court was violated by acquitting judge Tufegdžić (B92, 2020). In November 2020, the Court dismissed the lawsuit stating that national legal remedies had not yet been exhausted. Previously, in 2008 the Serbian Court dismissed the lawsuit filed by the parents of deceased Jakovljević against military judge Vuk Tufegdžić, for damaging the honour and reputation of their son (B92, 2020). In 2019, the families of both soldiers filed a petition before the European Court of Human Rights against Serbia “about the non-execution of the decision of the Constitutional Court of Serbia from 2013 in the part related to the investigation of their murder” (B92, 2020).

The Commission established to determine the facts regarding this crime in 2016 by the Government of Serbia has not made any significant progress in discovering the truth. As one of the lawyers of the families said, “the government commission did nothing” (Beta 2022). Vuk Jeremić and Boris Tadić were interrogated once again and on that occasion, Tadić stated that he “proposed opening an investigation into the connection between the regime and organised crime and drug mafia” (Maričić, 2022). Reportedly, the focus of the investigation was to uncover those involved in concealing the traces “which led to the top levels of state leadership” (B92, 2017).

So far, there have been many different theories and investigation conclusions as to why the Guardsmen were killed, especially in the context of the existence of a secret tunnel in the military facility, which brings out different motives like “hiding Hague fugitives, cooperation with the mafia, drug smuggling” (Blic, 2021). Following the death of Vukašin Maraš, the former Deputy Minister of Defence of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2008, news about his involvement in covering up the investigation was published in the Montenegrin media (Maričić, 2022). One of the most speculated versions of the events is that the murdered soldiers discovered the Hague fugitive Ratko Mladić, the former General of the Army of the Republika Srpska, who was supposedly in hiding and was later convicted of war

crimes (Maričić, 2022). The father of Jakovljević said that they had received a letter where Mladić was accused of ordering the murders of the two soldiers as they had seen him while he was hiding in their military facility (Ristić, 2014a). This version of events was rejected by the former war crimes prosecutor, Vladimir Vukčević, who claimed that there were no Hague fugitives in the barracks at the time when the soldiers were killed (Ristić, 2014b). Božo Prelević said that there were no DNA traces of Mladić (B92, 2008). When asked about the killed Guardsmen, Ratko Mladić denied involvement in the events and said that Branko Krga, the Chief of the General Staff, was a key witness of the events that took place in Karaš (Ristić, 2014b).

Eighteen years after this crime, the perpetrators have not been discovered. Furthermore, nothing has been done to clarify the case and bring the responsible persons to justice. “The case is still in the pre-investigation proceedings before the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade” even though there is sufficient evidence to proceed (Beta 2022). Furthermore, as stated by the lawyers of the victims’ families, it looked as if there was no interest of the military and the state to discover the perpetrators as there were many obvious omissions during the autopsy and investigation as well as the destruction of the crime scene and traces (Blic, 2021). To conclude, we shall quote the mother of the murdered Dražen Milovanović: “No one is doing anything, neither the Army nor the State... I only know that the Army killed them” (Ristić, 2014a).

Although the parents of deceased soldiers aimed to uncover these murder cases, the state authorities including military tried to not push the detection mechanisms to cover the real reasons of these murders (Ristić, 2014a). Due to the lack of a detection mechanism, constructivist IR theory could not explain that the soldiers were killed due to the identity-related reasons (Gulec, 2015). In opposite, the organized crime groups who had connections with the state could execute these soldiers to pursue their economic and political benefits within the military (Maričić, 2022). As we saw, the real perpetrators of these killings were not uncovered by the state. That is why, the military was not keen to tackle with the radicalized soldiers. In other words, they adopted de-securitization policies in order to downplay with the radicalism threat which could be related with the organized crimes (Coskun, 2008, p.394). Therefore, de-radicalization processes failed due to the lack of detection and tackling mechanisms within the Serbian military.

Case Study II: Military shooting range and people from the criminal environment

In February 2017, the Serbian Military Union filed a criminal complaint for the abuse of office against brigadier general Zoran Veličković and lieutenant colonel Dejan Nikolić under the suspicion that they had enabled the criminals Veljko Belivuk and Aleksandar Stanković and Nenad Vučković, a former member of the Special Brigade of the Armed Forces and actual personnel of the Gendarmerie Unit, to use the military shooting range and weapons at the “Rastko Nemanjić” Barracks in Pančevo after working hours to practice shooting (Vojinović, 2018c). The complaint also stated that the mentioned trio were accompanied by the General Secretary of the Government, Novak Nedić, who protected Belivuk's gang (Vojinović, 2018b; Pavlović, 2022). As stated by Novica Antić, the President of the Serbian Military Union, the MoD and military officials did not react to internal complaints previously filed by the members of the unit, which is why the Military Union reacted and fulfilled its legal obligation to report this misuse in the Armed Forces (BIRN, 2017; Vukosavljević, 2017).

Reportedly, the events took place between 2015 and 2016 when the accused high-ranking military officials falsified official records thus illegally obtaining more than one million dinars (Radivojević, 2017; Vojinović, 2018a). Interestingly, while the Prosecutor did not begin investigating the allegations from the criminal complaint, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said that they carried out detailed checks that showed the absence of an abuse of the official position and illegal obtainment of the army's assets (Marković, 2017; Vojinović, 2018a). This statement of the MoD was issued only two days after the Military Union had filed the complaint, but the statement did not mention whether the military shooting range had actually been used by the criminals to practise shooting (Marković, 2017; Radivojević, 2017).

Stanković, who was killed in 2017, had been sentenced to prison in a drug-trafficking case, but he never served the sentence as the Court postponed the execution of the sentence twelve times due to health issues allegedly despite his regular attendance at football matches (Radivojević, 2017; Vojinović, 2018a). Also, Belivuk is standing trial for several other crimes, including murder and illicit use of weapons and ammunition, and there is evidence showing that they were close to Vučković (Radivojević, 2017; Vukosavljević, 2017; Jovanović, 2018; Vojinović, 2018b). In October 2016, the Minister of Interior, Nebojša Stefanović, confirmed that Vučković had worked in the Armed Forces before being transferred to the Gendarmerie (Vojinović, 2018a). When asked about the connections between Vučković and the criminals from the Belivuk's gang, the Minister said “that being a

football fan was not a crime and that Vučković has passed a security check before joining the force” (BIRN, 2017). The Minister trivialised the whole case by reducing it to speculation and pretending not to see the criminal ties of the members of the Gendarmerie.

Vučković took part in many violent acts related to criminal football supporters’ groups that were never investigated (Jovanović, 2018). Also, even with the intervention of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance, Rodoljub Šabić, the Ministry of Interior did not provide the requested information on whether the internal control checked the criminal ties of Vučković (Jovanović, 2018). The internal control of the Ministry of Interior omitted to react and, and eventually told to the journalists of the Crime and Corruption Reporting Network, KRIK, that “there was never a procedure against Vučković to check his connections with criminals” (Vojinović, 2018a). Nenad Vučković was interrogated as a citizen by the Military Police where he said that he worked for the Special Brigade of the Armed Forces until June 2016 (Vojinović, 2018b). Novak and Belivuk were never interrogated by the Prosecutor in this case (Vojinović, 2018b).

In January 2018, the Public Prosecutor in Pančevo dismissed the complaint against the accused due to the lack of evidence (Vojinović, 2018a; Vojinović, 2018b). The investigation did not make any progress from March to December 2017 as the military police, in charge of collecting evidence, did not give information to the Prosecutor (Radivojević, 2017).

According to the president of the Military Union, Novica Antić, the truth is being covered up as evidence has disappeared, referring primarily to the disappearance of two pages from the reception diary containing records of visits to the barracks (Vojinović, 2018b; Vojinović, 2018c). Also, the CCTV footage was overwritten (Vojinović, 2018b). Antić further highlighted the fact that the Prosecutor intentionally did not take into account the statements of all witnesses, especially those suggested by the Military Union that could confirm the allegations that Vučković visited the shooting range accompanied by the criminal gang members (Vojinović, 2018c). According to the Prosecutor, out of 22 witnesses, only one confirmed that he had seen Vučković visiting the barracks with other people whom he could not identify as they were in a car with tinted windows (Vojinović, 2018b; Vojinović, 2018c). This presents a significant neglect of military duties as the guards were obliged to check and inspect the vehicle that was entering the barracks and request identification cards. Article 51 of the Law on the Serbian Armed Forces 2007 states that “for access to military facilities and official premises used by the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces, temporary identification cards are issued to persons outside the Serbian Armed Forces and the Ministry

of Defence who, based on the approval of the Minister of Defence, may have access to these facilities”.

Overall, this case was a significant example which showed the lack of military authority in terms of detecting the radicalized soldiers and their relationship with the organized crimes. Although the Serbian Military Union tried to open a case against the criminal soldiers, the military officials sought to cover up the relationship between the organized crime groups and soldiers (Radivojević, 2017; Vukosavljević, 2017). In other words, the military adopted de-securitization policies by protecting the criminal soldiers in order to downplay with this radicalized case (Coskun, 2008). This also prevented the state mechanism in order to tackle with the organized crime extremist cases within the military. Thus, it underscored that the lack of interest to tackle with the extremism failed de-radicalization within the armed forces.

### ***France***

#### Case Study 1 - Mehdi Hammami

Mehdi Hammami, born in 1986, a French sniper between 2005 and 2010, was sentenced to five years imprisonment for an attempt to join Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. The conviction was based on evidence of his journey “to the combat zone in Afghanistan,” in particular because of his travel path through Turkey and then Iran, “usually followed at the time by jihadists,” his long stay in “a house of smugglers affiliated with an Al-Qaeda-type network” in Iran, and his arrest in the company of “an emblematic figure of jihad in Afghanistan” (N.Be. and AFP, 2014). According to a report, Hammami’s comments during his military service and his refusal to go on a mission to Afghanistan “so as not to have to kill his religious ‘brothers’, prompted the DPSD [a precursor agency of the DRSD] to conduct an investigation. The investigation led to the discovery that [Hammami’s] father had links with the radical Islamist movement” and later to a criminal trial (Centre d’analyse du terrorisme, 2019).

Overall, this case was an example which explored how both military and judiciary were keen to investigate the radicalized soldiers in the military. In this case, the military authorities detected a radicalized soldier who had connections with Al-Qaeda. As constructivism expressed that the French fear on the Jihadist threat played a significant role in terms of uncovering the radicalized soldier (Gulec, 2015). In terms of tackling with the radicalism, the judiciary took an action to arrest the radicalized soldier. This also expressed how the authorities securitized the Islamic terrorist threat in order to prevent further cases (Balzacq,



2005). Therefore, this case revealed that the military used a detection mechanism and interest to tackle with the jihadism in order to de-radicalize the armed forces.

#### Case Study 2 – Boris V.

Boris V., member of the French Airborne Parachute Commando, joined the army, according to his own testimony, while already undergoing a process of jihadist radicalisation. During his service he resolved to join ISIS and started gathering “military know-how” that would later serve this cause. However, while on a mission in Chad, he alerted the suspicion of his superiors who banned him from external operations and confiscated his weapons. Having consequently left the army, Boris V. travelled to Syria, joined the Islamic State, and considered committing a terror act in France but was killed in combat, in 2016 (Thomson, 2016; Centre d’analyse du terrorisme, 2019).

The military succeeded to detect a Jihadist soldier in this extremist case. Again, the Islamist identity of this soldier played a key role in terms of uncovering this radicalism case (Gulec, 2015). Although they led him to join ISIS instead of arresting him to learn his possible Jihadist connections, they successfully banned him from the military services (Balzacq et al., 2016). Therefore, this case highlighted that the impact of detecting mechanisms and tackling strategies in order to provide the de-radicalization within the armed forces.

#### *Austria*

The most recent case regarding radicalisation within the armed forces, came to light in October 2022. A sergeant sewed SS runes on a patch and the Reich eagle and swastika on two patches for the "purpose of making an SS uniform" that he wore at least five times - sometimes in public together with a helmet carrying a visible swastika. He also took photos of himself to display his uniform online. Furthermore, the same army serviceman is also alleged to have shown the Hitler salute several times, for example in the canteen of the sports club and at the football field and in front of comrades in the barracks. In addition, he is said to have taken firecrackers from the army stock home with him. He confessed to all charges before the authorities but claims to have committed all acts while under the influence of alcohol.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This section is based on newspaper reports on the case. Please find a selection of the most relevant ones:

Schreiber, D., & Möchel, K. (2022, October 12). Unteroffizier ging in SS-Uniform spazieren - kein Entlassungsgrund Kurier (Online). *kurier*. <https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/nazi-unteroffizier-ging-in-ss-uniform-spazieren-kein-entlassungsgrund/402178806>

In terms of tackling right-wing extremist activities, the National Socialist Prohibition Law (*Verbotsgesetz*) and the norm ‘incitement to hatred’ determined under Section 283 of the Criminal Code (StGB) are the most relevant legal provisions, as most of the criminal acts in connection with right-wing extremism are usually subsumed under either or both of the two norms. The National Socialist Prohibition Law (*Verbotsgesetz*), which has had constitutional status since its adoption in 1947, forbids any activity in the spirit of National Socialism (denial, trivialisation, approval, and justification), including the denial of the Holocaust. The *Verbotsgesetz* is unique in its form and has proven fruitful to prosecute activities in the spirit of National Socialism. However, it has been difficult to prosecute contemporary forms of right-wing extremism as not all right-wing extremist activities are part of the realm of Neo-Nazism. If members of the military are criminally reported within the framework of the disciplinary proceedings according to Art. 4 HDG (initiation of the judicial prosecution of a criminal offence), this is mostly done on the grounds of the *Verbotsgesetz* in the case of right-wing extremist activities.

In the case described above, disciplinary proceedings were initiated, but when a criminal charge under the *Verbotsgesetz*/Prohibition Law followed, the disciplinary procedure was interrupted. The court found the man guilty and sentenced him to a conditional prison term of ten months due to his National Socialist activities. A sentence of 12-months or more would have automatically resulted in a loss of office. However, in this case the soldier was not dismissed from service, the soldier was fined 4,968 euros in the disciplinary procedure.

The case was made public due to an investigation of the newspaper liberal Kurier (2022) and caused controversial public debates in which the actions of the army were heavily criticized. The Federal President, who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the Austrian Armed Forces, spoke out on Twitter: "I am shocked by the Nazi re-enactment of a soldier in the Austrian Armed Forces. Those who work within executive authorities should have a special responsibility. Any form of glorification of National Socialism must be condemned in the

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Schmitt, M, C (2022). Unteroffizier bleibt trotz Tragens von SS-Uniform im Dienst, Der Standard (Online) available at: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000139954907/unteroffizier-bleibt-trotz-ns-wiederbetaetigung-im-dienst?ref=rec>

Wiener Zeitung (2022). Aufregung um Unteroffizier in SS-Uniform (Online) available at: <https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/politik/oesterreich/2164844-Aufregung-um-Unteroffizier-in-SS-Uniform.html>

strongest possible terms and has no place in the civil service or in our society.” (Van der Bellen, 2022).

The Ministry of Defence emphasised in its response to the "Kurier" that it "does not tolerate any National-Socialist activities, takes a firm and unequivocal stand against it and takes all possible legal steps against it". The speaker of the Ministry of Defence, Michael Bauer, gave some further insights on the case on Twitter: "Neither the court nor the disciplinary authority, which is the only one responsible for this, obtained a dismissal, in this case, the Federal Disciplinary Authority was the highest instance for civil servants and that its decisions were binding on the Armed Forces as there is no other instance over this. The armed forces have to accept this decision.” (Bauer, 2022). Nevertheless, the Ministry stated that the person concerned was "immediately relieved of his duties" as a soldier and will be "used in a non-military function within the framework of his civil service relationship". Constitutional lawyers have contradicted the ministry's account and see substantial room for manoeuvre that could have led to the dismissal of the sergeant. For example, the disciplinary authority always keeps a margin of discretion, and the disciplinary lawyer could have demanded dismissal – even if the sentence was less than twelve months. Moreover, the competent minister could have issued a directive.

The decision of the Federal Disciplinary Authority includes the closing statement of the disciplinary lawyer and here it becomes clear that the disciplinary lawyer, who is representing the interests of the Armed Forces, refrained from demanding a higher penalty. The decision reads as follows: “in the closing words, the disciplinary lawyer at the BMLV [Ministry of Defence] stated [that] according to the case law of the VwGH [Administrative Court], the disciplinary penalty of dismissal comes into consideration due to the loss of loyalty. For general preventive reasons, in this case a fine was sufficient. The criminal court could have caused the loss of office by imprisonment for more than one year but refrained from doing so. It therefore wanted to leave the decision to the senate of the BDB [disciplinary authority] as a "comrades' court" or give the disciplinary accused a second chance; he [the disciplinary lawyer] was inclined towards the second.” (Rechtsinformationssystem Des Bundes, 2022)

The Minister of Defence, Claudia Tanner, reacted to the case with a press release stating that there is “zero tolerance according to right-wing extremism” (OTS, 2022). The Minister established a commission, which shall combat "anti-state tendencies” and investigate

loopholes in the disciplinary procedure and in the penal code. The minister told the newspaper STANDARD that "unfortunately, misconduct on the part of individuals" would occur again and again, which would be dealt with "with full force". The head of the commission is Barbara Glück from the Mauthausen Memorial Committee, and members are, inter alia, Danielle Spera (former director of the Jewish Museum) and Gerhard Baumgartner (Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance and Right-Wing Extremism) (Bauer, 2022). The commission is currently working out the necessary legal measures to prevent such cases as well as trainings and workshops. Finally, the spokesperson of the Ministry published an instruction of Minister Tanner directing that (a) all bodies and authorities in the military and civilian disciplinary process make full use of the penal framework of the law; (b) all superiors must take steps to ensure that disciplinary and criminal incidents, and in particular those of religiously and politically motivated extremism, are prosecuted; (c) reporting requirements on extremism and sexism have to be increased (Bauer, 2022).

In the meantime, the opposition has criticized the Ministry of Defence. Sabine Schatz (SPÖ) submitted another parliamentary question to the Ministry of Defence, whose response is still pending. Of the governing parties, the Minister of Justice Alma Zadić (Greens) and the Minister of Constitution Karoline Edtstadler (ÖVP) announced that in the future every legally binding conviction under the Prohibition Act should automatically lead to a loss of office for civil servants - irrespective of the disciplinary steps involved. A proposal to this effect is currently being negotiated by the government. All these measures and demands have one thing in common that they call for the amendment of the legal framework in such a way that any kind of activities in the spirit of National Socialism automatically leads to a dismissal.

The case also led to a follow-up procedure against one of the superior officers to the sergeant. It appeared that he warned the soldier of an upcoming police raid due to the judicial prosecution showing another good example of the esprit de corps within the armed forces. As a result, the superior was reported for violating official secrecy. He was given a diversion and has already paid the fine. Here, again, the Ministry did not share information about the result of the subsequent disciplinary procedure, which remained hidden from the public (Schreiber, Möchel, 2022).

The above case illustrates some of the points made in the first part of the report. Although the liberal Kurier newspaper were eager to detect the far-right radicalism, the Ministry remains

rather reluctant to be transparent about internal procedures and much remains hidden due to secrecy in the realm of national military defence (Gulec, 2015). Besides its secretive position on radicalism, the Ministry adopted security-oriented policies in order to tackle with the far-right extremist views (Balzacq, 2005). Furthermore, the esprit de corps is high and it has proven to be problematic that members of the armed forces prosecute the offences of comrades. Penalties are, consequently, rather low, and predominantly fines. Finally, the role of right-wing extremism has been downplayed in the past. However, this time, the Ministry was keen to detect the far-right extremists within the military. Therefore, this case illustrated the significance of detection mechanisms and tackling strategies in order to increase de-radicalization within the armed forces.

## ***Georgia***

### Case 1 - Tarkhan Batirashvili

Tarkhan Batirashvili was born in 1986 in the family of Christian ethnic Chechens in Pankisi Gorge - an impoverished region in Georgia. In 2006, Batirashvili joined the Georgian military and distinguished himself as a “perfect soldier” during the trainings received from American special forces units (Bender, 2015). Batirashvili also played an important role in a Russo-Georgian war in August 2008, as his unit caused asymmetrical damage to the Russian forces (ibid). In 2010 he was dismissed from the army due to health-related issues and despite trying, never succeeded in reenlisting, or getting a job at the local police station, leading to his disillusionment (Cullison, 2013).

Later in the same year Batirashvili was arrested for the illegal possession of weapons and served almost two years in prison – an experience, that according to him, had a transformative impact on him (ibid). After his release from prison, he left Georgia, and was discovered in Syria in spring 2012. He identified himself as fighting for ISIL and by mid-2014 became a senior ISIL commander (Akhmeteli, 2014). His father attributed his radicalization to both poverty and desperation (ibid). Despite multiple reports of his death over the years, in 2016 the ISIL officially confirmed that Batirashvili was killed in battle in Iraq.

Although the military succeeded to detect the criminal behaviour of Batirashvili, it failed to uncover the Jihadist connections of him until he was shot in Syria. Due to the lack of

tackling mechanisms, securitization policies were not adopted by the military (Balzacq et al., 2016). Overall, the lack of detection mechanism and interest to tackle with him could not enable de-radicalization within the armed forces.

#### Case 2 - Mukhrovani Mutiny

On 5th of May 2009, amidst the anti-government protests in Tbilisi organised by the opposition, the news of mutiny broke out. According to the Government officials, around 500 troops at a military base outside the capital were involved in the rebellion (CNN, 2009). According to the President of Georgia at the time, Mikhail Saakashvili, it was a “serious threat” that was aimed at destabilizing the country and targeting the Georgian government’s Euroatlantic foreign policy (BBC News, 2009). The investigation also suggested that there was Russian involvement in the incident as NATO training activities were to be held in Georgia in that very week (CNN, 2009).

The mutiny ended without violence, as most of people surrendered, including the commander of the battalion. Three of the suspects escaped, but later in May one of the group were killed, while two were wounded in a shootout with police forces (Civil.ge, 2009). While the incident did not have a major implication, it illustrated the potential of radicalization among the army that is driven by domestic political developments. The Mukhrovani Mutiny coincided with largescale civilian protests in opposition to the government. This raises questions over whether it was the mutiny organizers seizing the moment or, as some politicians believed, it was the ruling party’s attempt to distract the attention of the public from the ongoing manifestations (BBC News, 2009).

These two cases suggest that there are several aspects that are driving forces behind radicalization in the Georgian army. On the one hand, the case of Batirashvili illustrates the role of economic poverty and the lack of employment perspective that drives radicalization among the military (Franc & Pavlovic, 2021). The Mukrhovani Mutiny, on the other hand, suggests that domestic political discussions could trigger the extremist behaviours within the armed forces (CNN, 2009). This time, the military succeeded to tackle with this mutiny by using judiciary and security forces. The government adopted security-oriented narratives in order to blame these soldiers for being anti-American and working for the Russian interests (Dormer, 2017; Balzacq, 2005; BBC News, 2009). However, the military officials failed to detect the putschists before the latter’s coup attempt. Although this case ended up with the

arrests of soldiers, it also clearly demonstrated that a weak detection mechanism could also complicate de-radicalization processes in the future.

## ***UK***

### **Case I-Mikko Vehvilainen,**

Our first example case for radicalization within the British armed forces is the story of Afghan Army Veteran, Lance Corporal Mikko Vehvilainen. Mikko Vehvilainen appeared to be a member of Neo-Nazi terror group - the National Action while serving as a member at the time of the Royal Anglian Regiment. He was found to be actively attempting to bring other soldiers into the National Action group, which he was involved in (Jones, 2019). He believed in the race war theory and had been stockpiling weapons including pump-action shotguns for what he perceived as a coming fight. He expressed a desire to create a National Socialist haven within several villages in Wales (Jones, 2019). When police raided Vehvilainen's accommodation in Sennybridge Camp, Powys, in September 2017, they found swastika flags, Nazi memorabilia, some CDs of Third Reich music, and stockpiles of knives, guns and other weaponry (Dearden, 2022). As a result, Vehvilainen was jailed for eight years in 2018 (Dearden, 2022).” After Vehvilainen's trial, the British military produced an internal guide and training module for officers to recognise a potential extreme right-wing radicalisation process in late 2017 after the highly publicised Vehvilainen arrest (Koehler, 2019, p.10).

In summary, this case was an example which explored how both the military and judiciary were keen to investigate the radicalized soldiers in the military. In this case, the military authorities detected a far-right soldier who had connections with National Action group. As constructivism expressed that far-right ideology triggered radicalism (Dormer, 2017; Gulec, 2015). By arresting this radicalized soldier, the British authorities were also keen to tackle with the extremist and violent cases. This also highlighted how the authorities securitized the far-right threat in order to prevent further cases (Balzacq, 2005). Therefore, this case explained that with the help of a detection mechanism, the military succeeded de-radicalization within the armed forces.

### **Case II - Jeremy Corbyn Target Shooting**

The second case exemplifying radicalization within the British forces was a video showing how British paratroopers used pictures of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn for target shooting

practice (Quinn, 2021). Corbyn said: “I’m shocked, obviously, that this sort of thing has happened. I hope the Ministry of Defence (MoD) will conduct an inquiry into it and find out what was going on and who did that.” In response, a statement was released by the MoD, “The Ministry of Defence has launched an urgent investigation after a video emerged via social media that shows members of the parachute regiment firing at a poster of Jeremy Corbyn at a target range in Kabul (Sabbagh & Weaver, 2019).” The MoD insiders said they believed the video – which had the caption “happy with that” – was genuine, but inquiries were taking place to establish why an image of the Labour leader, studded with bullet marks, was used (Sabbagh & Weaver, 2019).” Brig Nick Perry, the commander of 6th Air Assault Brigade, acknowledged the video showed a “serious error of judgment” that was “being fully investigated”. He added: “The army is, and always will be, a totally apolitical organisation (Sabbagh & Weaver, 2019).” Although these soldiers have been disciplined, the MoD refused to sack them (Duncan, 2019).

Although the military authorities were not keen to be transparent in terms of revealing the personnel information of the radicalized units, they detected far-right soldiers (Duncan, 2019; Dormer, 2017). In terms of tackling mechanisms, the Ministry fined those soldiers who involved into the extremist activity (Ibid.). As constructivism expressed that a far-right ideology triggered radicalism within the British forces. This case also explored how the authorities securitized the far-right threat while they tried to cover up the radicalized case (Balzacq, 2005). In summary, this case was an example which showed the impact of detection mechanism and interest of tackling with the far-right ideology in the armed forces.

### *Israel*

#### Case 1 the "Netzah Yehuda" Battalion

This case pertains to improper conduct in which soldiers serving in the "Netzah Yehuda" Battalion, part of Israel Defense Forces (IDF) ground forces, demonstrated excessive violence and humiliation of Palestinian detainees outside the scope assigned to them by the order. Since the state's establishment in 1948, political arrangements excluded the ultra-Orthodox population from the mandatory military conscription service of the general population. The basis of the religious order does not allow military service as a way to fulfil the values of the Jewish Torah. Over the years, repeated attempts have been made to enact laws regulating compulsory conscription for Ultra-orthodox including constitutional and governmental committees. The "Tal Committee", appointed in 1999 to investigate the recruitment of the ultra-Orthodox to the IDF, decided to develop several units that would be



adapted to the ultra-Orthodox way of life, such as the "Netzah Yehuda" battalion (Malach, 2019).

The company was established by the rabbis of the Netzah Yehuda Association in cooperation with the Social Security Division of the Ministry of Defense and the Personnel Division of the IDF. The battalion currently serves under the Kefir Brigade and operates in the Benjamin sector (Ramallah), holding approximately 1000 soldiers at all stages of operative work, training and reserve (Netzah Yehuda, 2022). All see in the military as an opportunity to be part of the Israeli mainstream (Kan 11, 2022). The battalion has official route characteristics for those who wish to join it (e.g., Full adherence to an ultra-orthodox lifestyle; Tora lessons; Strictly kosher food; Gender service environment), women excluded (Netzah Yehuda, 2022). Nowadays, about 10% of the Ultra-orthodox population joins customized military service (Kan 11, 2022).

In 2012, during the "Pillar of Defense" operation, it was transferred to the border in the Golan Heights, foiled a significant attack by extremist rebels on the plateau border in a special operation, entitled it to receive an excellency badge from the IDF commander in chief (Zayton, 2022) as well as in 2014 (Netzah Yehuda, 2022). Over time, it was reported that some soldiers and commanders had lost connection with the religious environment and some do not come from these sectors, which makes its characterization as an orthodox battalion, a little overrated (Sherki, 2015).

In 2018 the battalion warriors stood against the backlash of multiple miss conduct cases within their operational work in Judea and Samaria sections, specifically in Givat Asaf, Ofra and Beit El. One case was the abuse of a Palestinian father and son, captured in the village of Abu Shahid on suspicion of assisting other terror attack perpetrators, in which two of their unit friends were killed (Kan 11, 2022). This also revealed the significance of far-right religious identity in terms of perpetrating radical action against the Palestinians (Kinnvall, 2004). In other words, the dangers of religious fanaticism also pushed the security officials to detect this extremist case. Five soldiers were accused of abuse. The condition of one of the two detainees was so severe that he could not be interrogated. Four soldiers were convicted of abuse under aggravated circumstances and served six months in prison. Another soldier was convicted of abuse and was sentenced to two months in jail claiming his part in the acts was "relatively small" (Kobowitz, 2019). This also explored how the military adopted security-oriented policies in order to tackle with the radicalized units in the armed forces (Balzacq et

al., 2016). In that sense, the military prisoned the far-right soldiers who were racist towards the Palestinians. In the footage the masked soldiers are seen hitting two blindfolded detainees in the head with their hands and telling them to "Say hello" to the camera, making them watch each other (Kan 11, 2022; Kobowitz, 2019). In a recent interview The soldiers expressed regret, explaining their acts: "It was not something that we were able to control"; "Our judgement was impaired due to the everyday pressure of terror attacks"; "We lost it"; "We saw nothing but a 'black screen'" (Kan 11, 2022). Overall, this case expressed the impact of detection mechanisms and tackling strategies in order to increase de-radicalization within the armed forces.

#### Case 2 the death of Abed Al-Majid Assad

On January 2022 another misconduct case was revealed by the military prosecution, investigating the death of Abed Al-Majid Assad, an 80-year-old Palestinian. Assad was arrested in a spontaneous night check-post near Galgilia village after refusing to soldiers' demand to identify himself. They then took him with three more arrestees to an isolated shed and covered his mouth. After releasing the detainees, they left the scene, though Assad did not show signs of life, and died from a heart attack (Zaton, 2022). Two commanders were dismissed, and the battalion commander was severely reprimanded by the chief of staff (Bohbot, 2022). On August 2022 four soldiers were suspended after they were documented hitting Palestinians near Ramallah. It was then decided by the IDF to transfer the battalion's operative employment to the northern Israeli border, attempting to depart its repetitive and intensive duty within the West Bank region (Harel, 2022).

Following the above, Prof. Yagil Levy, a critical scholar on the military-society relations field in Israel, pointed out that the very existence of the battalion was based upon particular religious and political inherited perceptions; therefore, it needs to be disassembled (Levy, 2022). Accordingly, it has lost its primary goal of opening mandatory military services to the Ultra-orthodox population, claiming that in practice, very few ultra-Orthodox serve in the battalion. It consists of mid-high class Yeshiva students who dropped out of school, young rebellions, and "Youth of the Heels", in a sterile service environment from women, young people from poor families and other religions. This homogeneity departs it from the mainstream military cultural perception, holding a risk to fusion processes that the army wishes to progress. The political dimension expresses within "The broad common denominator of the soldiers is the perception that policing the Palestinians is a "sacred" task

[...] This sanctity translates into the formation of a unitary culture that encourages eagerness to use violence." (Levy, 2022).

Overall, this case was another example for the impact of religious radicalism in the military service. As constructivism suggests, identity played a critical role in terms of detecting racist or extremist behaviour (Leira & Carvalho, 2016). In that context, this case was relevant in order to understand the religious reasons of radical behaviour within the Israeli security units. However, the military authorities were not silent on extremism as we saw in the above case. In that manner, they adopted security-oriented policies to suspend the soldiers who involved into this radical case (Laustsen and Waever, 2000). Due to the presences of detection mechanism and tackling strategy, the Israeli security units succeeded to implement de-radicalization policies within their armed forces. In the next section, we summarize our findings and conclude this report by giving some recommendations.

## **Conclusion**

While countries have developed constitutional legislation, special training programs and detection systems to tackle radicalization in the armed forces, their measures have not proved effective in preventing radicalization cases. Our finding is that although countries were keen to prevent radicalization in the armed forces, they lacked detection mechanism or interest to tackle with radicalism. Depending on this finding, the theoretical assumptions (constructivism or securitization) also could not explain the whole concept of de-radicalization processes. Furthermore, formal/institutions or informal ways to counter radicalization also could not enable de-radicalization within the military. On the one hand, the German authorities sought to use the Holocaust past as a training project in order to make the soldiers aware of dangers of fascism. On the other hand, the UK Ministry introduced a training program called PREVENT in order to detect and tackle with radicalized groups in their armed forces. However, in both cases, the countries could not provide sustainable de-radicalization processes within their armed forces. Indeed, far-right radicalism activities are largely attributed to 'lone-wolf' perpetrators in preference to larger investigations into the origins of far-right organizations within the army. In addition, we found that political ideology plays a relevant role in terms of detecting and tackling far-right groups within the

military forces. For example, left-wing political elites, and newspapers typically recognize far-right movements within the armed forces as a serious threat while conservative or right-wing political elites prefer to cover up these extremist threats. Therefore, we could say that the military forces do not represent democratic structure whereas they are responsible to protect the constitutional order.

Overall, our findings can help policymakers who are eager to receive recommendations on detecting and tackling with extremist ideologies within the armed forces. Our first recommendation is that political elites from both left- and right-wing should acknowledge the presence of radicalized views such as far-right or Islamist groups within their armed forces. Second, political elites should be more transparent in terms of combatting far-right ideologies within their security establishments. Finally, political elites should develop better education systems to train young soldiers about the threat of radicalisation.

## Appendices

The key points of effective system of democratic control:

- 1) **Civilian control.** Civilian authorities have control over the military's missions, composition, budget and procurement policies. Military policy is defined or approved by the civilian leadership, but the military enjoys substantial operational autonomy in determining which operations are required to achieve the policy objectives defined by the civilian authority (DCAF Backgrounder, 2008, p.2)
- 2) **Democratic governance.** Democratic parliamentary and judicial institutions, a strong civil society and an independent media oversee the performance of the military. This

ensures its accountability to both the population and the government, and promotes transparency in its decisions and actions (DCAF Backgrounder, 2008, p.2).

- 3) **Civilian expertise.** Civilians have the necessary expertise to fulfil their defence management and oversight responsibilities. This is tempered by respect for the professional expertise of the military, in particular as civilians often have limited operational experience. • Non-interference in domestic politics. Neither the military as an institution nor individual military leaders attempt to influence domestic politics.
- 4) **Ideological neutrality.** The military does not endorse any particular ideology or ethos beyond that of allegiance to the country (DCAF Backgrounder, 2008, p.2).
- 5) **Minimal role in the national economy.** The military may be the largest national employer and have links to defence-related economic sectors. This does not, however, dilute the military's loyalty to the democratic civilian leadership, undermine its primary mission or lead to disproportionate competition or interference with the civilian industrial sector (DCAF Backgrounder, 2008, p.2).
- 6) **Effective chain of command.** There is an effective chain of command within the military that ensures accountability to society and its oversight institutions, promotes respect for all Evolution of the military-society relationship civil-military relations democratic control of all the armed forces democratic control of the military democratic governance of the security sector Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces 3 relevant laws and regulations, and seeks to ensure professionalism in the military (DCAF Backgrounder, 2008, p.2).
- 7) **Respect for the rights of military personnel.** Members of the armed forces are free to exercise their rights (DCAF Backgrounder, 2008, p.3).

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