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СОЦИОЛОГИЯ КУЛЬТУРЫ И ДУХОВНОЙ ЖИЗНИ
SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

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Monitoring of the new identities (Salafi and Sunni) in Islam and the role of Social conflicts

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Abstract. Increased conflict proneness contributes to profound changes in the socio-political stratification and structure of society. Islamist movements are a political phenomenon that should be analyzed similarly to other political phenomena, and the Islamic fundamentalism should be examined as a consequence of social conflicts. As a result of the coexistence of the modernization-directed and traditional attitudes, expressed in the emergence of „new Salafi and Sunni identities", modifications take place among the second/third-generation of Muslims. The aim is to justify the need to monitor the „new identities" in Islam and social conflicts as a prerequisite for radicalization and extremism and to develop methodological tools for analysis and prevention of the Islamic radicalism and extremism in support of governmental institutions and policies. The research approach assumes that the stability of a social system is seen as a temporary balance of powers, and a conflict plays the role of a mechanism affecting this balance and turning it to a new state of equilibrium and a new balance of the powers. A phenomenological approach and Social Movement Theories have been applied to issues related to the Islamic activism, social movements and the radicalized form of religion reduced to a religious ideology. In conclusion, the need to predict the trends for the formation of a new religious and political situation in order to transfer new knowledge to promote the development of social sciences for the benefit of society is outlined.
Keywords: Islam; radicalism; identities; social conflicts; monitoring

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Мониторинг новых идентичностей (Салафи и Сунни) в исламе и роль социальных конфликтов

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Аннотация: Усиление конфликтов приводит к глубоким изменениям в социально-политическом расслоении и в структуре общества. Исламистские движения – это политическое явление, которое необходимо анализировать подобно другим политическим явлениям, а исламский фундаментализм рассматривается как следствие усиления социальных конфликтов. Изменения происходят среди мусульман второго и третьего поколения иммигрантов как результат сосуществования противоположных установок, направленных на модернизацию и на сохранение традиционных ценностей, что проводить к появлению «новых идентичностей салафитов и суннитов». Цель статьи состоит в том, чтобы обосновать необходимость мониторинга «новых идентичностей» в исламе, показать роль социальных конфликтов в возникновении радикализации и экстремизма, а также разработать методологические инструменты для анализа и ограничения исламского радикализма и экстремизма путем поддержки государства и его политики. Автор утвеждает, что стабильность социальной системы является только временным балансом сил, а конфликт играет роль механизма, который разрушает этот баланс и приводит к новому состоянию равновесия и к новому балансу сил (Козер, 1999). В статье делаются ссылки на феноменологический подход и теорию социальных движений, которые используются для объяснения исламского активизма, социальных движений и радикализованной формы религии, сведенной к религиозной идеологии. В заключение подчеркивается необходимость прогнозирования тенденций в развитии религиозной и политической ситуации с целью формирования новых знаний, которые способствовали бы развитию социальных наук в интересах общества.

Ключевые слова: ислам; радикализм; идентичность; социальные конфликты; мониторинг

Introduction. The politicization of Islam is not directly related to religious sentiment, but rather to its use in politics, where it serves to justify and legitimize political actions. Islamist movements are a political phenomenon that should be analyzed analytically, similarly to other political phenomena and in the context of local social conflicts. Political Islam and the new media environment, which is rapidly changing attitudes towards Islam and religious authorities (Eickelman, 1999), impose the need to monitor the „new identities" (Salafi and Sunni) in Islam. The Kozer's research approach in exploring conflicts as-

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sumes that the stability of a social system is seen as a temporary balance of powers, and a conflict plays the role of a mechanism affecting this balance and turning it to a new state of equilibrium and a new balance of the powers (Kozer, 1999: 28). The methodological approach of Prof. A. Ignatenko in studying the activity of the religious and political groups in the Islamic world from the second half of the 20th century, phenomenological approach and Social Movement Theories were used.

The aim of the present study is to justify the need to monitor the „new identities" in Islam, to explore the role of social conflicts as a prerequisite for radicalization and extremism and to develop methodological tools for analysis and prevention of the Islamic radicalism and extremism in support of governmental institutions and policies. The radicalized form of religion, which is reduced to a religious ideology and adapted to the political and tactical tasks of the radical movements, was examined.

Western European research focuses more on preventive measures preventing terrorist attacks, deradicalizing extremists, control of special services on Islamic religious communities, while the Russian research emphasizes the need for theoretical and methodological tools and assessment of Islamic fundamentalism as a consequence of social conflicts in the context of modernization. A similar type of analysis leads to the study of social processes and phenomena. The ideological crisis of modern society, marginalization, the difficult social situation of large groups of people, and the lack of sense and vision for the future lead to the crisis of identity and search for an alternative, a new identity, which is expected to solve these problems. Political practice further encourages conflicts, and Islamists offer utopias and critiques of the modern world, which should not be underestimated.

In the Sunni Islamism, during the last 20 years a new religiously, doctrinally and ideologically motivated paradigm was developed, which is presented as a new model of

resistance (revolutionary and populist) for the region and considered a part of the trend of global jihadism. The Lebanese political scientist Amal Ghorayeb calls this version of Sunni Islamism „anti-systemic"[1]. In parallel with this trend, a narrower *Sunni confessional model* is developing, which is sponsored by the Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey and has political goals. This model is closely linked to ruling elites and fears of the Shiite threat. The Wahhabis anti-systematists deny monarchical rule and want a return to the Islamic caliphate (a trend, which is mostly manifested by the Islamic State (IS)) (Al-Rasheed, 2009).

Gilles Kepel assesses the influence of Wahhabism on the Sunni Ummah as follows: „Until 1973, local religious traditions were successfully preserved, embodied both in the religious ideas of theologians from the various schools of Sunni law and in the Shiite clergy. They are suspicious to the puritanism of the Saudis because of their sectarian nature. The Wahhabis aim to make Islam a major force at the international stage and to reduce the numerous interpretations of this religion to the traditions of Mecca. Their fervor spreads everywhere through the geographical boundaries of Islam and reaches the West, where Muslim immigrants become the target of Saudi proselytism. This makes it possible to defend the monarchy and to see the Saudi Arabia as a country of charity and religiosity. That is why, the Kingdom needs American military protection and support for the regime" (Kepel, 2004).

Sunni protests are used by extreme radical extremists to increase their own influence. However, they, in turn, undergo modifications among the second and third generation of young Muslims in Europe which gives us grounds to speak about the formation of *a new Salafi identity*. A new identity is formed, which supported by an ideological framework significant for the individual. Today, Salafism manifests itself in two trends: *revolutionary-conservative* and *governmental*. Lost illusions and expectations for changes make many

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[1] Islamic studies (2016), 7(4), 5-15.

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young Muslims to consider the „return to their roots" the only opportunity for change.

Methodology and methods. *New Salafi identity.* The Salafi and Wahhab doctrines form *a new Salafi identity*. Its success is due to the intellectual and organizational weakness of traditional Islam, as well as the lack of academic voices and new intellectual pursuits. The idea of ideological purity, expressed in the slogan „*Returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah*", is one of the leading ones and is an indirect allusion to the respective impurity or a deficiency of purity among the non-Salafi Muslims (Svensson, 2012). This call for textual return is accompanied by constant citations by scholars from the Saudi Arabia, such as the late Abdul Aziz Ibn Baz (1910-1999), Muhhamad ibn al-Uthaymeen (1925-2001), Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani (1914-1999) and contemporary such as Saleh al-Fawzan (born 1933).

Epistemologically, the new Salafists oppose the possibility of rational knowledge, textual ambiguity and metaphoricity, and reject the possibility of interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith by people outside the narrow circle of Salafist scholars. *Theologically*, they draw from the narratives of their *Aqeedah* and freely follow the early Ahmad ibn Hanbal which is evident from the exact textual reproduction and rejection of any philosophical, theological speculation of the Qur'an or Divine attributes (For more details, see Winter, 2008).

Methodologically, this new trend of Salafism relies on literalism and the constant opposition of *Tawhid* (monotheism) to *Shirk* (polytheism), of *Sunnah* to *Bid'ah* (innovation). They reject a large part of the Muslim intellectual heritage, modernity and liberalism claiming that they pollute Islam. They even developed several categories of Tawhid: *Tawhid al-Ruhuhiyya (Oneness of Lordship), Tawhid al-Uluhiyya (Oneness of Godship), Tawhid al-asma Wa-l-sifat (Oneness of Names and Attributes)*.

In terms of ritual practice, there is nothing more important for them than practicing the Sunnah. It is followed by an accurate reference to the authentic Hadiths (Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani), which set the behavior of the believer. They blame other Muslims for allowing innovations that alter the integrity of the Sunnah and religious syncretism. As the French expert on Islam Oliver Roy points out, "modern Salafists seek '*deculturation*' of Islam, practiced by the majority of Muslims, removing popular beliefs from it, removing it from the context of the national and regional cultural conventions, emphasizing strict constructivist interpretation of Qur'an and the Sunnah as easy to understand and clear to follow." (Citation of O. Roy by Bernard Haykel in Meijer, 2009: 3).

True Salafists must not associate with unbelievers, including also Shiites (called *Rafidis* [apostates] because of parts of their dogmas and the refusal to recognize the political legitimacy of the first three caliphs), and Sufis (Sufism, according to them, is an innovation related to innovation and polytheism). The practical dissemination of these ideas takes place through the newly built by Saudi Arabia mosques in Europe (especially in Britain[2] – Salafi Institute and Green Lane Mosque-Birmingham, Brixton Mosque, Masjid Tawhid, Arab al-Muntada Al-Islami-London, Islamic Center – Luton, Makki Masjid, Masjid Furqan-Manchester), literature, websites, media, magazines (Al-Jummah), translations of the Qur'an, training of young Muslims in Saudi universities, after which they return as teachers in Europe. The new Salafists are a part of those created in the late 90s of the last century – YM (Youth Muslims), JIMAS[3], HISAM (Harakat Islah al-Shabab al-Muslim). Their distinction from other religious organizations is based on a methodological and conceptual level.

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[2] About 1600 of their mosques are in the territory of Great Britain.

[3] The clash of ideas between the Director of Al-Hijrah Muslim Girls School, Abdul Karim Saqib, and the leader of HISAM, Abu Muntasir, led to the creation of JIMAS and the rise of British Salafism. The JIMAS strong positions are due to the personal commitment of the influential scientist and founder of the UK Islamic Shariah Council, Dr. Suhaib Hasan.

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Such identity markers form the image of the new Salafists, as well as their feeling of the „*saved community*". The claim to authenticity through the use of hyper-textual methodology is their trademark which makes them attractive in today's world of crisis and uncertainty. Quintan Wiktorowicz, the explorer of *Islamic Activism*, explains this Salafi hermeneutics, which rejects or minimizes the role of the human intellect, as the invention of an opportunity for people to find a new religious identity, which is free from popular beliefs or imaginary alternatives. A sense of the importance of religion, which is attractive to young people, the second generation of Muslims in Europe, especially South Asian Muslims, is formed.

„Salafism is strong because it reveals the discrepancies between religion and culture, it is clear, simple, related to classical Islam and the messages of the Qur'an and the Sunnah" (Wiktorowicz, 2006: 207-39).

The risk for young Muslims or converts is that adopting a Salafi identity, they become followers of a „de-ethnicized" supranational identity linked to a process of changing and rewriting religious symbols and practices. Also, his typology (Ibid.), which highlights three major global Salafist trends based on the main distinctions of the Salafists between „*puritans*", „*activists*" and „*jihadists*", is useful.

Theologically, they share the same ideas and differ in the analysis of the problems, which Muslims face today, and the way they are solved. „*The Puritans*" or „*scholastic Salafists*" are known for their loyalty to the Salafi *Akida* and the Saudi state and oppose the attempts to change the power of the ruling Muslim governments. They believe in the individual changes, correction of faith and ritual practices, and are better known as the followers of the Saudi scholar Rabee al-Madkhali (1931). For them, any form of political activism is *Haram* (forbidden) because it leads to *Fitna* (chaos). Using the Salafi credo, the „*activists*" still insist that the changes in the socio-political reality must be taken into account and that a political reformist methodol-

ogy following the example of „*Muslim Brotherhood*" has to be introduced. The „*Jihadists*" Salafists are often called Takfirs because of their habit of using violence against „apostate governments" and jihad against the West. They do not agree with the existing order and use terror and violence to change it. With the emergence of their websites *(Salafitalk.net)*, their influence intensified, due to which the „*puritans*" boycott them. A struggle for power and delegitimization of the followers of other Salafi trends began. The followers of Abu Khadeejah began to call themselves „*super-Salafists*". Suicide bombings are a part of their tactical struggle, as well as the killing of innocent people, including Muslims. What sets them apart from the other two trends is their „open code of incitement" and the attack on European interests outside Muslim countries.

The competition between these organizations, the internal battles for influence in politics and coming to power, as well as for sources of funding, led to the emergence of the so-called „*Reformed Radicals*", new liberal Muslim voices seeking their audibility in the public sphere. This trend is intensified, especially after Salafism was linked to terrorism by the media. A new social sphere is emerging, which presents Muslim activism as modern, exciting, non-related with the interests of minorities, however, expressed through cultural forms such as the art (the first participant in a hijab for the contest „Miss England – 2018 "Sara Iftekhar from Pakistan), fashion (fashion designer Eli Saab), widespread distribution of Islamic products and services, media technologies.

Having in mind the social dynamics, Prof. O. Roy points out their transformations in the last twenty years, as a part of 3 paradigms – *religious, social and political*. As a result, we witness *a new global generation, a change in political culture and a new religiosity* (Roy, 2011). With regard to the new global generation, there are a number of trends that shape it: more women have higher education and work, young people marry later and have fewer children, the „cell family" re-

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places large households. All of this, accompanied by free access to the Internet, mobile phones and satellite television, is changing young people's attitudes towards their own religion, culture and societies. (For more details, see Herrera and Bayat (2010), and Cole (2014).) The emergence of this new global generation is also changing the political culture of young people, who are less excited about totalitarian ideologies than about being nationalists or Islamists. This generation also demonstrated a new religiosity, which grew out of the phenomenon of „re-Islamization" in the last 30 years – a visibly increased attendance at mosques (more women wear hijab) and, in parallel, growing individualization and detachment from the religious sphere. Many traditional religious leaders have lost their legitimacy at the expense of young, independently thinking „entrepreneurs" who can be found on the Internet. A new way of thinking about the meaning of the life as a Muslim in the modern world, as well as new diasporic, local forms of „living Islam" are formed. The global generation is well informed, has many choices and the opportunity to try them out in person, as well as to introduce an avant-garde approach to religious practices. Of course, different internal and external forces influence these trends, pushing them to flexibility, adaptability, a change of their organizational structures, goals and mode of action. These social changes cumulatively affect the social purity, in which Islamic trends are developed. We are also witnessing attempts to reconcile and integrate the faith of Muslim minority communities in the secular, postmodern European societies.

We see similar transformations in the „Young Muslims" (YM), who are beginning to identify themselves as a part of the „Global Islamic Movement" which allows them to share their views on the global network – „in Europe we feel ourselves ignored, restrictions and injustice prevail at the expense of the absence of Islam [...] that is why, it is our duty to present Islam to the people in these countries, but not as a „Saracen religion" or as a „threat to the West" „, or as a remedy against all types of infirmity and injustice [...]"[4].

Among other Islamist groups, the Young Muslims are most closely to post-Islamist positions[5].

Dogmatic Islamism has been abandoned for pragmatic reasons influenced by secular terms, liberal attitudes, opportunities for direct access to the ideas of modern Islamic scholars and various Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals (journalists, academia, politicians). We can define their representatives as a mature generation of young Muslims who have kept their personal devotion to the faith, however, participating in the debate on Islam in Europe in a sophistic way.

Focused on the media and political control, as well as new anti-terrorism laws, the followers of *JIMAS* are trying to be more self-critical and explain to society the difference between terrorism and jihad. From an incubator of British Salafism, today, they are a volunteer charity organization that seeks to build bridges with non-Muslim organizations, demonstrating a commitment to civic causes. The lectures given by their representatives include Western rhetoric, references to Western philosophers and history, and promote the development of interreligious dialogue. In contrast, „*the puritans*" remain loyal to Salafi vocabulary and symbolism, as can be seen from their websites: *salafimanhaj.com; salaf.com; salafpublications.com; islam4kids.com.* The presence of this pro-Salafist literature contributes to the promotion of Salafism in a public religious discourse. Some researchers call them „*Salafi literalists*" because of their strategy to focus on Salafi

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[4] Young Muslims UK, "About Us", available at: http://www.ymuk.net/index.php?Itemid=26&id=12&option=com_content&task=view (link was closed by May, 2015)

[5] Here, the term post-Islamist is used in accordance with the original concept of "post-Islamism" by the sociologist *Asef Bayat* in his book "*Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*" to describe the pragmatic orientation and Islamic socio-political projects launched in Egypt in the mid-1990s.

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motifs in language and literature and to use phrases such as *„Orthodox Islam“, „normative Islam“*, to prove their own loyalty.

Many of their imams, such as *Haitham al-Haddad[6], Muhammad Alshareef, Yasir Qadhi[7]*, offer professional online training as well as religious packages, imposing their own approach to religious revival. They issue certificates, organize conferences, one-week courses, online media programs. They use modern pedagogy of training, data analysis, create their own corporate structures, applying a good marketing approach to certain target groups and young people from selected locations.

Research Results and Discussion. *The New Sunni identity.* Following the proposal of Prof. A. Ignatenko (2003) for a methodological approach, defined as „neoclassicism“ in the Russian studies of Islam, to explore the activity of the religious and political groups in the Islamic world from the second half of the 20th century, the present study attempts to analyze the current dynamics of the social environment and the role of *the new Sunni identity* directly affecting the security environment in the Balkans, Russia and Central Asia.

As an ideology, the new Sunni identity emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries and also served as a manifestation of the radical and extremist groups not only fighting against governments but also performing ethnic and religious cleansing, imposing their control and order over the conquered territories. The main factor for instability are the political groups religiously connected with the Sunni trend in Islam.

Of interest for the analysis are the representatives of the Gulenists or the so-called *„FETO“*, who stand for the change of man

and society through education. Born in 1938, *Fethullah Gulen* built his own concept of Islam, which combines free market and modernity. For him, Islam is both a self-consciousness and a moral system. His followers are middle-class members (who quickly improved their lifestyles after 1980), who build a network of cultural foundations, charities, a powerful media empire, with the aim to change the political discourse in Turkey. The „business model“ created by them was similar to that of the American Missionary Schools, which operated during the late Ottoman Empire. In the Western Balkans territory, some of the madrassas sponsored by the Saudi Arabia were subsequently given to the Gulenists through the mediation of Qatar. In other words, there is a direct transfer from the Arab Salafist networks to the Turkish foundations. This situation creates conditions for *increase in the religiosity* of the Muslim population. Since 1992, with the tacit support of the Turkish government and solid Turkish investment, they have begun to build their Balkan network of influence, in parallel with a similar network in Central Asia as a consolidation of the Turkish presence in the region. The agents acting on behalf of Turkish government (Diyanet, TIKA) have focused their efforts on strengthening the Islamic Ummah through a medium-term goal of forming the Balkan Islam according to Diyanet understanding of Islamic doctrine and practice, which are close to local traditions, to legitimize it as the successor of the Ottoman *Meşihat (Şeyh-ül Islam) – as the largest and most centralized service in the world on religious issues,* as well as the restoration of the Ottoman religious and architectural heritage. On the other hand, Turkish religious foundations are replacing the former Gulf donors, serving a wide range of education, from secular colleges and universities to Qur'an reading courses. Trained fellows form new Turkish networks of well-trained people, who are dedicated to Turkey.

The goal of the Gulenists is to win hearts and minds, and according to the French anthropologist Bajram Baldji – to restructure

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[6] He is affiliated with Arab Salafi Al-Muntada al-Islami London, author of Islam21.com, and works closely with iERA and the AlMaghrib Institute.

[7] He graduated in the Saudi Arabia; Visiting Professor of Islam at Rhodes College, Memphis, USA. In "On Salafi Islam" he describes the various Salafi trends, see: Muslim Matters.org, 22 April 2014, available at: http://muslimmatters.org/2014/04/22/on-salafi-islam-dr-yasir-qadhi (Accessed 14 May 2015).

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society through the training of elites, in which they resemble the Jesuits (Balci, 2003). The role of these elites is to mobilize the historical heritage as a basis for the dynamic development of society, in the context of the idea of undulating development. The concept of "undulating development" offers interesting solutions for the effectiveness of modernization actions. It insists on innovation and stabilization cycles: the periods of introduction of innovative technologies has to alternate with the stabilization of social development on the basis of reproduction and use of tradition (Pantin, 1997).

Traditional values such as family, clan and all the factors strengthening the group solidarity and identification receive rehabilitation. The unified notion of a model of political action in the process of modernization has been replaced by a multi-component approach: it is obvious that the pace and consequences of modernization in different countries depend on the traditions, political culture, mentality and standard of living. It is no coincidence that the German conflictologist Dahrendorf (1990: 21) claims that if six months are enough for constitutional reforms, while decades are not enough for economic reforms, then cultural transformation requires a change of several generations.

The idea of reinterpreting tradition in the spirit of modern reforms is the task of the political elite, which must show people the relevance of historical heritage, which has to serve as a basis for the dynamic development of society, giving it the necessary motivation for adequate political actions. However, modernization through reinterpretation hides two serious challenges to the political elites of the Balkans, Russia and Central Asia – to open the doors of neo-Ottomanism or neo-conservatism all the way. Tanaskovic (2010) defines neo-Ottomanism as a philosophy of history, a civilizational paradigm and a worldview common to the majority of the modern Turkish nation, and especially to its intellectual elite. Brzezinski (2004:89) warned against underestimating the danger of a *"renewal of Islamic religious and political tradi-*

tions with a following radical change in the Ankara's international course".

Turkey strengthens its positions through economic investments and joint projects in the field of education and culture, because these are „*the Ottoman Balkans*", „*the Ottoman heritage*", „*the cradle of Turkish civilizational identity*"! What is the vision for the future, for the neo-Ottomans – a common Balkan culture, „*a modernized hybrid model in the spirit of Ottoman syncretism, with a profound Islamic matrix*" (Tanaskovic, 2010: 138). Neoconservatism, set in a location prepared by neoliberalism, gives birth to a new political form, a specific kind of government and citizenship.

This only shows the need for an urgent anthropology and monitoring of „new identities" in Islam, as well as *an assessment and analysis of the dynamics of the social environment*. New social structures are being formed, new strata and groups are emerging within the local population, which also should be a subject to monitoring and analysis.

Islamic activism and the radicalization of religion. The synergy between reflection, planning and action of the participants in *social movements* should also be analyzed. Theories of the political and cultural influence of Social Movements (Social Movement Theories, SMTs)[8] help us understand the discourse of the politically oriented national and transnational organizations (usually reformist) fighting to Islamize laws and societies, aiming at the return to faith within the Islamic world, but not towards the acceptance of the faith by non-Muslims (Esposito, 2007: 85).

According to the anthropologist Talal Asad, „*Islamic discursive traditions are characterized by their own rationality or way of thinking – embedded in their texts, history and institutions*" (Anjum, 2007: 662). These traditions are both loaded with history and influenced by the intellectual, cultural and political conditions of modernity. Such a vari-

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[8] The first developments in this direction of social scientists such as Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, Mayer Zald are essential.

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ety of trends allows manipulating tradition and imposing one's own interpretation as the most authentic and correct reading of religion. This acts as a religious filter in terms of traditions and their applicability at a given place and time.

The majority of studies on the Islamic activism are related to functionalist social psychology concerning mass behavior, according to which collective action is a consequence of exogenous structural forces, systemic imbalance, and accompanying pathologies (anonymity, alienation, marginalization, and uncertainty) (Wiktorowicz, 2005:11). According to them, existing frameworks cannot explain how people organize themselves into social movements based on faith and understand the rational strategic decisions made by their leaders. Research into the Islamic activism has become popular since 1990, when certain specialists sought opportunities to link the faith-based activism to social science theories of collective action. Accordingly, SMTs focus on the interaction between ideology, leaders and members, analyzing social movements through the prism of the approach, by which Islamic activists rationalize their own missions and mobilize their own organizations. They practically downsize the specifics of Islam and remove its uniqueness as the basis for identity and collective action. The Quintan Wiktorowicz's study (2004) offers a different use of „case studies" to elucidate the Islamic activism in a different context (Meijer, 2005:279-91). Wiktorowicz studied the extremist group *Al-Muhajiroun* (AM), which operates in the territory of the United Kingdom. By applying the ideas related to „search for the religious", „mobilization resources" and „decision-making process" he shows how social networks and media are used to convey messages of the respective movements. Mobilization resources show how Islamic activists act as rational actors rather than individuals driven towards religious ideology by pure dogmatic motives. Thus, the „decision-making process" is both a tactical and strategic process of evaluation of

risk and means, and not only the ideas of piety and theology.

The reasons for „searching for the religious" are also important: for some individuals, religious observance of the rules makes everyday life meaningful, for others a meeting with a close, highly religious friend or relative, listening to sermons of local imams in mosques or the decision to perform Hajj (annual worship in Mecca) proves to be a turning point. Islamophobia, racism, and social exclusion are also a motive, and social networks and media contribute to increasing receptivity to the messages of certain religious groups (For more information see Choudhury, 2007 and Kundnani, 2014).

Protecting one's own culture strengthens religious identity. This leads to the so-called „*cognitive opening*", which calls into question previous beliefs and seeks new alternative views and ideas, as well as openness to new Islamic trends. Through them, Muslims feel free both to transcend cultural, ethnic and conservative views (distributed mostly in mosques) and to offer an alternative subculture and social assistance institutions. The Justin Gest's study (2010) (a comparative analysis between Muslims in East London and Madrid) showing how social alienation from democratic processes leads to what he calls „*aparthism*" (an active or passive form of social exclusion), is valuable. Some imams preaching in the territory of Europe share the view that if there is no racism in the West, there will be no conflict of identities and consequently this will aggravate the situation of Islamists (Wiktorowicz, 2005). According to them, the factors leading to this cognitive opening and recruitment of volunteers for the cause of Islamists are: the feeling that the Muslim world is constantly under attack, the policy of double standards, the understanding of political Islam as a panacea for all Muslim problems, the lack of alternative academic voices against the background of escalating hate and propaganda from the media and the

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Internet.[9] However, the activism of the new Islamists is different from the behavior and understanding of religion of their parents, which today are presented as archaic and insufficiently informative. Islamist activism consolidates on rituals and traditions devoid of „*political import*" which promotes self-identification with an Islamic identity, which differs from the „other" or the identity of non-Muslims. The result is a network of identities and values that change the dominant cultural code, or, as Alberto Melucci (1996) calls them, the „*networks of shared meaning*" or „communities of *true* believers", *united by a shared interpretation of Islam and a high-grade opposition to the common religious understanding* (Wiktorowicz, 2005: 17).

„*Islam is the solution*" is the slogan of the activist organizations (Islamic Propagation Center International, IPCI[10] and the Salafi-oriented „*Assembly of Muslim Youth*" – WAMY). The goal of Islamic activists is to convince humanity of the need to return to the primary religion (*Deen al-Fitrah*). The focus on these two trends – „*Islam is the solution*" and „*Becoming a good Muslim*", emphasizes the idea that Islam is the last universal religion. This universality and a society based on faith are the two defining characteristics of religion that make Muslims declare kinship with other believers around the world at an emotional level – „*We are one Ummah*"!

Political activism against Islam only strengthens this conviction of the „*dream society*" and assists the creation of the real and virtual connections between believers living in difficult circumstances (Anderson, 2006). Western intervention in countries such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan only strengthens the

sense of shared responsibility to the people there, for moral and political support for the creation of a single and universal Muslim Ummah, which, for many Muslims, is an emotional process associated with religious identification, motivating them to awakening, charity and physical participation in conflict zones (we observed it in the 1980s in Afghanistan, in the 1990s in Bosnia, and today in Syria).

The role of social conflicts. The construction of any Islamic trend has to be understood in the context of its relationship with its creators: how their ideas grow locally and are renegotiated depending on the dynamically changing environment and circumstances. There is a significant lack of expertise in the development of the socio-political situation in society, early prevention and the prediction of possibilities for conflict. It is important not only to prevent escalation of tension, but also to prepare how to react properly in the event of a threat of conflict situation. The results of various governance policies regarding radical Islam and extremism need to be critically assessed and analyzed. In this regard, it is important to study and regulate the various reasons (economic, political, religious, social) for tension, at the local, regional and global levels.

In the last few years, economic immigrants in Europe, refugees seeking political asylum with different nationalities from North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia have also changed the religious and cultural landscape of Europe. They bring their religious practices, culture and customs with them. Sometimes this also creates tension between newcomers and settled Muslims, and heightens the European fears of new waves of migrants, especially against the background of increasing numbers of mosques and religious institutions as a sign of religious mobilization. The growing number of converts in recent years should not be ignored, too.

Poverty, marginalization, poor living standards, and migration are prerequisites for the activation of local leaders and radicals, political movements and programs, which ex-

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[9] An interview of the author performed in Manchester in Masjid Furqan-Manchester on 20.07.018.

[10] **IPCI** is based in Birmingham and distributes freely speeches and video messages of the South African author Ahmed Deedat (1918-2005), with numerous followers among Muslims around the world. Some of the titles are: *Ressurection or Resuscitation? Crucifixion or Cruci-Fiction? and Combat kit against Bible Thumpers*. His ideas were further developed by the Imam Dr. Zakir Naik, who is of Indian descent, using the satellite channel "Peace TV".

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acerbate the situation at the local level and lead to social and psychological tension. As a consequence, there is a radicalization of local movements using extremism and separatism. The general dissatisfaction of various social strata of the population, as well as the irrational socio-economic policy pursued by a government are very often a prerequisite for radicalization and extremism. We are witnessing how the social structure of society is radically changed transforming itself into a new quality. New forms of ownership appear and the differentiation between people deepens. We no longer speak about a conflict between „poor and rich", but about the danger of conflicts of a new nature. Not only immigrants, but an increasing share of the local population exists on the brink of subsistence which is a prerequisite for growing social and political tension. It is necessary to study the effectiveness of countering Islamic extremism and the intensifying reactions of Islamic organizations in the context of the relationship between the poor standard of living of the population and extremism. A similar comparative analysis is partly found in the Matt Qvortrup's study (2012) and his empirical data on Western Europe.

A large part of the highly qualified and educated population is changing its status and failing to cope with the new trend of „dissolving the middle class" and depersonalization of the intellectuals, which changed its professional status or immigrated to other countries during the transition to market capitalism. This is a loss of professionalism and competence, a prepared and trained intellectual and moral fund (For more details, see Yankevich, 2004: 43). The question of the reproduction and preservation of the intellectual potential (domestic and foreign) is underestimated, as a priority is given to scientific-technical or technological training at the expense of the humanitarian education. The majority of the trained staff go to work in business or government agencies, which reduces the scientific potential and the opportunity for scientific expertise in support of government policies. This requires the development of meth-

ods for studying and analyzing the emerging and ongoing conflicts, as well as technologies corresponding to their specifics in order to regulate and overcome them.

Today, the domestic situation in a given country is more explosive and much lesser predictable; there are no schemes for operational and dynamic modeling of, for example, regional conflicts and identification of prevention measures based on the assessment of respective participants. The anticipatory expertise on the nature of the ongoing critical processes in the various (economic, political, ideological, interethnic and interreligious) spheres of social life ought to come from scientific research. An action-oriented approach and the creation of interdisciplinary training units of specialists philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, ethnologists, economists, who could prepare the necessary expert assessment of the state of conflict in a given area/region, prevention, forecasting and management, are required. The main focus should be put on social conflicts as a prerequisite for radicalization. Monitoring and management of their sources, level and dynamics of tension, nature and peculiarities of the parties participating in them are required and the mechanisms and methods for stabilization of social relations has to be developed on the basis of the results obtained. Such methodological tools can be: expert assessment, sociological and socio-psychological methods, the method of active monitoring, the method of social modeling, monitoring of social networks and social movements to allow systematization, optimization and processing of information flows. National policy needs adequate models and scenario forecasting of conflictogenic factors, especially the factors, which exacerbate nationalist sentiments, as well as the exposure of the destructive and destabilizing consequences of them. Positive socio-cultural traditions and customs ensuring the effective interaction of individual social groups and ethnicities, as well as the economic and socio-political environment, have to be preserved.

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Conclusions. Socio-political conflicts caused by objective reasons such as the differentiation of the political system and the formation of new social groups and strata in society, which have different social, economic, political, religious, cultural and moral interests, are a prerequisite for radicalization and extremism. They become a prerequisite for the economic, political and spiritual conflicts. This requires an analysis of the role of social conflicts, as well as the development of methodological tools for assessing, analyzing and forecasting the risks of radicalization.

Today's trends in the study of political Islam are related to European jihadism as a transnational phenomenon and to the new challenges such as underestimation of the role of terrorist networks and the emergence of „new players" and „new identities", which form terrorist cells in the territory of Europe.

Guidelines for combating radicalism must include the preparation and implementation of a comprehensive program of the political, socio-economic, informational, educational, organizational, legal and other measures to identify, avoid and prevent extremist activity, minimizing its consequences, monitoring of the causes and conditions that cause it, on behalf of governments and competent authorities.

Prediction of the trends for the formation of a new religious and political situation is required for the transfer of new knowledge by solving this global problem which could promote the development of social sciences for the benefit of society. The tasks of the scientists are the elaboration of a theoretical-methodological model, which would offer universal and specialized criteria for effective counteraction to the radicalization of Islam and extremism; the formulation of a conceptual-categorial, terminological, instrumental (methodological) apparatus and the approbation of the methodology in a complex analysis of the religious-political situation and social conflicts at a local level; the development of targeted recommendations for overcoming the social and value crisis that all humanity is facing today.

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