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Master's Thesis

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National Militia:
Motivations for Walking to the Edge

Master's thesis

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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague, July 20, 2021 Miroslav Kerhart

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Abstract

A primary objective of this thesis is to identify, understand and explain motivations that lead individuals to join the National Militia. National Militia (*Národní Domobrana*) is a Czech paramilitary organisation that emerged in 2015 as a reaction to migration crisis and growing fear of "Islamisation". Shortly after its establishment, in July 2016, the organisation claimed to have over 2,500 members and began to regularly organise border patrols, military-like drills, but also political manifestations, openly criticising Czech foreign and domestic policies. Utilizing ethnographic methods of inquiry, the researcher conducted 11 semi-structured interviews with members of National Militia. In the subsequent analysis, the research identifies a set of push and pull factors as being most influential in individual's decision-making process, eventually being completed by a personal factor. Secondary findings identify also elementary demographical data, shared personality traits and militiamen mindset. From academical point of view, this study provides the reader with foundational data, necessary for further research, as the phenomenon is heavily understudied in Czech context. The specific contribution of the research resides not only in identifying the motivations, but also in offering the explanation for their shift/development over the time. Finally, findings of this thesis offer a contribution to a current Czech security debate, as ban of paramilitary organisations has been recently enacted (with efficiency since January 30, 2021) and members of organisation similar to National Militia has been arrested for supporting terrorism in Eastern Ukraine.

Abstrakt

Hlavním cílem této diplomové práce je identifikovat, pochopit a vysvětlit motivace, které vedly rozhodnutí jednotlivců přidat se k Národní Domobraně. Národní Domobrana je česká paramilitární skupina, založená v roce 2015, v reakci na migrační krizi a rostoucí strach z "Islamizace". Krátce po svém vzniku, v červenci 2016, organizace tvrdila, že má přes 2.500 tisíce členů a začala pravidelně organizovat hlídky v okolí hranic, vojenská cvičení, ale také politická shromáždění, během kterých organizace otevřeně kritizovala zahraniční i domácí politiku České republiky. Tato studie využívá etnografických metod výzkumu, v rámci kterých bylo realizováno 11 polostrukturovaných rozhovorů se členy Národní Domobrany. V následné analýze těchto rozhovorů pak byla identifikována množina *push* (externích tlakových) a *pull* (interních tahových) faktorů. Tato identifikovaná množina, eventuálně doplněná o *personal* (osobní) faktor, je považována za soubor faktorů, který měl největší vliv na rozhodovací proces jednotlivce (vedoucí ke vstupu jednotlivce do Národní Domobrany). Sekundární data (získaná výzkumem) potom přináší také základní demografické údaje, sdílené povahové vlastnosti a obecně zachycují mentalitu domobranců. Z akademického hlediska přináší tato studie základní data pro další výzkum, jelikož tomuto fenoménu obecně nebylo věnováno příliš pozornosti (v Českém kontextu). Specifickým přínosem této diplomové práce je potom přesah za pouhou identifikaci motivací, jelikož studie také nabízí vysvětlení změny (potažmo vývoje) těchto motivací v čase. Závěrem, data a objevy této studie mohou také přispět do současné české bezpečnostní debaty, vzhledem k tomu, že od 30. ledna 2021 je účinný "zákaz ozbrojených skupin" a vzhledem k nedávnému zatčení členů organizace blízké Národní Domobraně, za podporu a financování terorismu na východní Ukrajině.

Keywords

National Militia, Extremism, Radicalisation, Militia, Paramilitary organisations

Klíčová slova

Národní Domobrana, Extremismus, Radikalizace, Domobrana, Paramilitární organizace

Title

National Militia: Motivations for Walking to the Edge

Název Práce

Národní Domobrana: Motivace k cestě na hranu

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List of Abbreviations:

(Sub)RQ	(Sub) Research Question
CSSR	Czechoslovak Socialist Republic
ČSLA	Československá Lidová Armáda (Czechoslovak People's Army)
NM	National Militia
3Ps	Push, Pull, Personal
CVE	Counter(ing) Violent Extremism
CT	Counter Terrorism
BLM	Black Lives Matter
QST	Quest of Personal Significance Theory
BIS	Bezpečnostní Informační Služba (Security Information Service)
CQC	Close Quarter Combat
MFT	Moral Foundation Theory
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
EU	European Union
US(A)	United States (of America)
Resp. (1-11)	Respondent (1-11)

Introduction

"*In the course of our voyage through good and evil, I will ask you to reflect upon three issues: How well do you really know yourself, your strengths and weaknesses? Does your self-knowledge come from reviewing your behaviour in familiar situations or from being exposed to totally new settings where your old habits are changed? In the same vein, how well do you really know the people with whom you interact daily: your family, friends, co-workers, and lover? One thesis of this book is that most of us know ourselves only from our limited experiences in familiar situations that involve rules, laws, policies, and pressures that constrain us. We go to school, to work, on vacation, to parties; we pay the bills and the taxes, day in and year out. But what happens when we are exposed to totally new and unfamiliar settings where our habits don't suffice? You start a new job, go on your first computer-matched date, join a fraternity, get arrested, enlist in the military, join a cult, or volunteer for an experiment. The old you might not work as expected when the ground rules change*." (Zimbardo 2009, p. 6)

The primary objective of this study is the description, analysis and explanation of motivations that lead individuals to join the National Militia (NM), a Czech paramilitary organisation established in 2015. Studying the phenomenon through the optics of radicalisation studies, the research identifies a set of push and pull factors as dominating, eventually completed by a personal factor as well. In a thorough analysis, the emergence and context of these factors are explained, as well as the ways in which they interact with each other. What is considered to be a specific contribution to the field is the suggested explanation of motivational shift.

The hereby presented findings are important in two dimensions: a) in Czech the context and b) in context of the field of radicalisation studies. In the context of the Czech Republic, the research offers a pioneering study, providing foundational data for understanding the NM as an organisation and its members as individuals. Thereby it not only provides an eventual cornerstone for further research, but also general understanding of militiamen's mindsets, making certain forms (e.g. governmental) of communication with them easier. In the context of radicalisation studies then, the hereby presented findings and conclusion represent yet another piece of the puzzle, whose solving might allow for understanding of radicalisation. In this regard, the study

has a rather ambitious suggestion, offering a specific equation describing the effect of dispositional factors (especially personality traits).

As the primary purpose of the research is to collect the data and only consequently identify emergent patterns and analyse them, the research design has been chosen accordingly. To map the phenomenon chosen, the researcher used qualitative interpretative methodology, conducting 11 semi-structured interviews with members of NM, consisting of more than 25 hours of individual informal interviews. During interviews, the researcher has utilised observational protocols, fieldnotes and in some cases recordings, which were eventually subjects of the analysis spiral.

To present its findings, the text is structured as follows: Chapter 1 explains the complexity of the field of radicalisation studies, via mapping the path of the field, but also its history and primary introduced concepts. Chapter 2 conceptualises the theoretical standpoint, but also defines the "3P" matrix as a conceptualisation of the radicalisation process adopted by this study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and specific methods chosen and utilised to collect the data. In this part as well, limitations and the ethical dimension of the research is debated. Finally, Chapter 4 represents a first chapter of the empirical part, starting with introduction of the NM. Here, the actual activities, as well as the reactions of state and media are summarised. Chapter 5 then identifies the first patterns emerging from fieldwork, specifically demographical data, shared personality traits and a general "militiamen mindset". The core of the research, Chapter 6, finally lists and explains identified motivations. As a last part, Chapter 7 offers an analysis of presented empirical findings.

Finally, before proceeding any further, the complexity of the research and that of the human mind should be briefly discussed. As is many times recalled in this text, the selected research design bears several limitations. The first challenge here is the field, or rather fields, as the analysis is built upon concepts from psychology, sociology, international relations and others. These are complicated when taken by themselves, yet alone together. A second challenge then is represented by the methodology and methods of data collection, as it relies heavily on the current state of respondents, but more importantly on the researcher's capabilities – to access the data, to interpret them correctly and only then to analyse them. As a last comment then, as already suggested by Professor Zimbardo's quote at the beginning of this text, the researcher advises approaching this text within a broader perspective and with a figurative "open mind", as

only then the phenomenon can be wholly understood, moving the debate beyond its current binary set-up of “good/evil” dichotomy.

1. Literature Review

The purpose of the Literature Review chapter is to familiarise the reader with radicalisation studies: its complexity, issues, and concepts. By providing an overview of the debate over radicalisation, the researcher aims not only to introduce the reader to the field, but also to build foundations for further arguments presented in this thesis, e.g. the reasoning of selecting its specific conceptualisation and methodology. Knowledge summarised here will also be helpful while reading the findings described in the empirical part; as radicalisation studies and its concepts are complex and often complement each other (and as such some of these complementary concepts might be identified in data).

Following its purpose, subchapter 1.1 describes the development of radicalisation and understanding of it, explaining its roots, changes and eventually a path to current understanding and approach. Subchapter 1.2 then further explains the importance of radicalisation, but also reveals some blind spots (or rather blurred lines), by introducing related terms – extremism and terrorism, and related counter terrorism and countering violent extremism. Finally, subchapter 1.3 discusses specific concepts and models of radicalisation, building on different approaches suggested by experts of the field.

To summarise the content of this chapter, radicalisation studies face several challenges, from definition of basic terms to explanation of the process. Studies of radicalisation, countering violent extremism and counterterrorism all represent a rather modern field, which gained its significance after 9/11 and the declaration of War on Terror. Neither experts, states nor state agencies have agreed on the definition, let alone on an approach to address these issues. As for radicalisation concepts, experts have so far developed several explanations of how radicalisation happens. For the purpose of this study, the literature review distinguishes three main streams: 1) Tradition of French Sociology, that explains radicalisation as a mass phenomenon and result of cultural and societal changes; 2) Social Movement Theory, that suggests focusing on groups, group-level dynamics and networks (human connections) and finally 3) Individual (empirical) studies offer an overview of risk factors, root causes, pathways and personal traits that make the individual vulnerable to radicalisation. So far, none of these theories have

offered a complex, comprehensive model of radicalisation, allowing one to address it substantively.

1.1 On Radicalisation: The Path of a Concept

The primary interest of radicalisation studies is conceptualization and understanding of radicalisation – yet these are exactly the issues there is no consensus on. As already noted in the Introduction, radicalisation studies emerged in order to address the issues of political violence and "home-grown" terrorism. Despite numerous efforts to explain the phenomenon, however, there are two common issues which experts and academia face: definition of an issue and adoption of a model allowing for understanding it. The root cause of the dispute (over definition and particular model) is based on different cultural and historical experiences, but also on political interests of individual countries, and eventually institutions.

Historically speaking, the term "radicalism" usually referred to *"something that differs from the normal, ordinary, traditionally sanctioned world-view prevalent in any society and that this is not a difference of degree but a juxtaposition of opposites*" (Bittner, 1963, p. 929). Giving examples of those who were referred to as "radicals" at one time, he lists liberal movements demanding fundamental human rights (especially for slaves) or women's suffrage (Neumann 2013, p. 877). First attempts to understand the process that leads to "radicalism" are then documented in the 1960s and 1970s[1], e.g. by removing the brain of Ulrike Meinhof[2] in hope that the neuropathologist might discover physical clues as to why she gave up her successful career and choose a path of terrorism (Kundani 2012, p. 4.). Both the understanding and framing of the process have come a long way since then, but not without crucial misinterpretations.

Shortly after 9/11, radicalisation into violent extremism was assumed to be a matter of education, poverty, criminal record and Islam(ism).[3] The increased importance

[1] In 1960s and 1970s, academia begins to conduct research on extremism and terrorism, as a result of the "internationalisation of terrorism" (Hoffman 2017, Chapter 3). While political violence as such was not unprecedented, the scale and means were. Due to technological advancement (in communication and public transport), terrorist groups could have attacked basically anytime, anywhere. As a result, counter-terrorism units began to study not only modus operandi, but also the wider context of this phenomena.

[2] Ulrike Meinhof was a member of the Red Army Faction (RAF), a far-left terrorist organisation. After her capture and execution, her body was studied, in hopes of understanding the neurological dimension of an extremist/terrorist mind.

[3] Islamism, a term often used as a synonym for political Islam, refers to an ideology based on Islam that has the ambition of guiding both the personal and public (e.g. political) life of an individual. The conceptualisation of the term itself is problematic, as some see Islamism as a natural evolution of Islam, an ideology equal to e.g. Liberalism (for more see e.g. Azeri 2017, March 2015), others categorise

of and interest in radicalisation studies was highlighted by the attack on the WTC and its aftermath. During the initial phases of the "War on Terror", public discussion surrounding causes of terrorism was largely curtailed on the assumption that there could be no explanatory account of terrorism beyond the evil mindset of the perpetrators (Kundani 2012, p. 4) As such, terrorism was dominantly viewed as an "evil ideology" that required no further analysis (Johnson 2002); and in accordance with this assumption, terrorists were generally assumed to be uneducated criminals, lunatics or poor[4]. An interesting feature of these early phases, which still significantly affect radicalisation, is the common association of terrorism and extremism with Islam. According to some, the "Fourth Wave of Terrorism"[5] stems directly from Islam and its basic tenets, which thereby represents an "evil ideology" itself (Kundnani 2008). Yet all of these assumptions have shortly proven to be underestimations of the complexity of radicalisation (or complete misunderstandings), as the U.S.-led campaign entered the insurgency phase instead of achieving conventional victory[6], and as current models were incapable of providing an explanation for the rising threat of domestic terrorism worldwide.[7]

Currently then, radicalisation is mostly referred to as a process leading to acceptance of violence in a political struggle, and the understanding of the process is essential for CVE (Countering-Violent Extremism) and CT (Counter-Terrorism) programs. As the purely military solution revealed itself as capable of reaching only limited results, the actual campaign in MENA region moved from "force approach" towards what is usually referred to as "Hearts and Minds"[8]. A similar shift in approach

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Islamism as politicised religion, which in an ideal case should not interfere in politics (Western model of secular state) (Asad 2003).

[4] Although previous criminal record, mental illness or poverty might affect individuals' radicalisation (or extreme behaviour), there are not key, nor necessary, for the process to take place.

[5] According to some theorists, historically four waves of terrorism can be identified, based on dominant ideology: 1) Anarchism (1880s-1920s), 2) Anti-Colonial (1920s-1960s), 3) Left Wing (1960s-1990s) and finally 4) Religious (Islamic) (1990s-presence) (for more see: Rapaport 2004, pp. 48-52)

[6] As a part of the "Global War on Terror", the U.S. launched a military campaign against Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. In terms of conventional war, both of these wars were decisively, quickly won by the U.S. and its allies. Nevertheless, both conflicts continued, in "insurgency phases" (asymmetric wars).

[7] E.g. Bali (Indonesia, 2002), Beslan (Russian Federation 2004), London (UK, 2005), Karachi (Pakistan, 2007) or Mumbai (India, 2008). In the European context, one should mention also Madrid (2004), Brussels (2014) and Paris (2015).

[8] Hearts and minds refer to the counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy based on political engagement, psychological operations and generally minimum use of force (Dixon 2009, p. 359). This approach generally addresses insurgencies and other violent political struggles primarily as a political struggle (support of the population is required), rather than military struggle (military victories are necessary). An alternative, utilising primarily fear, is then the "brutalisation" COIN strategy, known especially from the

was enabled even for domestic security (and social) programs, given the incapability of original assumptions to fully explain the rising terrorism, not to mention their impotency in addressing it. Building on psychology and sociology, empirically based studies quickly proved previous assumptions wrong (e.g. poverty, criminal experience or Islamism) (e.g. Sas et al., 2020), or at least as not of primary importance and definitely not providing sufficient explanation of the phenomenon. Various understandings, listing different concepts and methods were introduced (further described in Subchapter 1.3), mostly agreeing on a basic concept – that radicalisation is a process leading to acceptance of (or engagement in) political violence (e.g. Horgan 2008). To understand the ongoing debate over exact mechanisms and even the definition of the term, one must understand related terms (especially extremism and terrorism) and the interests of different actors (especially those of states and counter-terrorism institutions).

1.2 On Radicalisation and Related Terms: Extremism and Terrorism

To further explain and understand radicalisation, its role and importance, one should be introduced to the related terms – extremism and terrorism.[9] All three, extremism, terrorism and radicalism (or radicalisation) are terms that often overlap in their definition, general conceptualisation, but also in the public discourse surrounding them. Whereas in some regions, political violence is addressed mostly by preventing actual crimes from happening, in other regions, the very core of extremism/terrorism – the ideology – is confronted and addressed. Once this already wide array of understanding radicalisation is complemented by media, political parties and public discourse, it becomes very challenging (or entirely impossible) to clearly define and distinguish the three. Nevertheless, for at least a basic understanding of radicalisation studies, its role and importance, even a general conceptualisation of related terms should be made. For this purpose, this subchapter discusses the relation between radicalisation and extremism, radicalisation and terrorism and eventually the consequences of these relations (via analysing available literature).

Caucasus and Russian use of Kadyrovtsy (for more see e.g. Byman 2016 or Souleimanov and Aliyev, 2016)

[9] With the exception of CVE programs and violent behaviour, this thesis usually refers to extremism and not to violent extremism. Extremism is here considered as a more general term, allowing for further developing the discussion regarding its relation to radicalisation. Thereby, the researcher aims to stress the ideological (or cognitive) dimension of extremism (and not the behavioural).

1.2.1. Radicalisation and Extremism

Definitions of extremism differ between academia and state-institutions, but also between individual states. Whereas the former usually stresses the acceptance of violence as means to a political end [10] (e.g. Hafez and Mullins 2015, p. 960), states usually include the "antagonistic (to some values) aspect" in their definition[11] (e.g. UK). A result of these variations is especially apparent in the variation of CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) programs, but also the variation among groups listed as "extremist".

Reviewing the relation of extremism and radicalisation, radicalisation is perceived as a mechanism leading to acceptance of extremist ideologies. Understanding radicalisation as a process, it actually becomes a key instrument in CVE programs, as preventing or reversing radicalisation processes is often the ultimate objective of such programs (see e.g. Clark 2019; Gunaratna and Bin Ali 2009; Daugherty 2019).

Finally, as for CVE programs, given different definitions of extremism and thereby different lists of extremist groups, CVE programs often vary from country to country. In theory, CVE focuses mainly on prevention of radicalisation, on support of disengagement from extremist groups and rehabilitation/resocialisation of former extremists. However, in practice, the understanding of CVE varies. The biggest difference between actual approaches can probably be found between the approach of the U.S. and that of Saudi Arabia, where the former historically focuses more on police work – the prevention of any illegal activity based on extremist ideology (Neumann 2013, pp. 885-888)[12], the latter focuses on ideology and tries to "re-educate" identified extremists (Casptack 2015).[13] In the case of Europe, most CVE programs focus on addressing the "root causes", prevention of radicalisation or support of disengagement

[10] Hafez and Mullins define extremism as a worldview, "one that is rejected by mainstream society and one that deems legitimate the use of violence as a method to effect a society for political change" (p. 960)

[11] British Government defines extremism as "vocal or active opposition to our (British) fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas, as extremist." (Home Office (UK), 2015, p. 9)

[12] The Anglo-Saxon (but U.S. especially) approach to Counter-Terrorism was for a long time defined by its long tradition of almost absolute freedom of speech. Should any organisation be prosecuted for exercising this right, it might be considered as a violation of the constitution. Lately, there has been a slight redevelopment of this approach, however its historical legacy still resonates in the Anglo-Saxon world.

[13] In Saudi Arabia, counter-terrorism and CVE programs focus on "leading the radicals to the right path". While in the program, their ideology is debated with scholars, who seek to show them the "true" interpretation of Islam. This approach is much affected by the basic tenets of Islam, which dictate to spread the true word of God, thereby leading others to the right path (in this relation, leading extremists back to the "right path").

by rehabilitating extremists into society, yet (mostly) without confronting their beliefs (e.g. EXIT programs).[14] As suggested, even these variations and differences are based on different perceptions of "the right approach"; as a result, the classification of and approach to extremist organisations differs. This trend is even more obvious in the case of terrorism.

1.2.2. Radicalisation and Terrorism

Whereas extremism is primarily determined by whether the ideology approves violence, terrorism is usually classified by action; radicalisation is then the process of justifying and eventually conducting such action. Specific definitions of terrorism (yet again) differ based on its conceptualisation. Whereas some conceptualise terrorism as a strategy in military struggle (e.g. Merari 1993), others frame it primarily as a political concept: *"Terrorist: (b.) Anyone who attempts to further his views by a system of coercive intimidation; spec., applied to members of one of the extreme revolutionary societies in Russia."* (Rapoport 1992, pp. 1061-1062). In sum however, one might conclude, that definitions of terrorism usually include elements of: 1) the use of violence (or threat), 2) political objectives and 3) the intention of sowing fear in a target population (Schmid and Jongman 1988); in the most recent years, a fourth point has also been added, "non-state actor", stressing the difference between violence committed by terrorist organisations and states (Hoffman, 2017). In relation to radicalisation then, radicalisation is a process leading to individuals' engagement in terrorist organisation, or even in committing acts of terrorism.

As for CT programs, they might be overwhelmingly complex, as well as very narrow. As definitions and thereby the complexity of terrorism varies, so do CT programs. In theory, CT includes a whole collection of strategies and tactics that seek to thwart terrorism (Forest 2015, p. 2). In practice then, CT policies consist of CVE programs, as well as specific CT strategies, e.g. those focusing on inter-department and inter-agency (international) cooperation; monitoring and studying of terrorist groups – generally trying to decrease (or disrupt completely) terrorist's capabilities to operate by

[14] Nordic EXIT programs supported disengagement of extremists from their networks. These programs aimed at resocialisation of these individuals into mainstream society, though the ideology itself was for a long time left intact (see Daugherty 2019). In Europe generally however, there is a historical resentment towards far-right ideologies, often banning their symbols and punishing individuals for spreading them.

installing both passive and active measures[15] (e.g. Lum, Kennedy and Sherley, 2006). The focus on either side (policing versus CVE) is then highly dependent on the specific country and organisation.

1.2.3. Biased Radicalisation: Politicisation, Securitisation, and Interpretations

Finally, in the resulting framework where extremism, terrorism and radicalism are mutually interchanged, these terms are often used for political purposes, rather than precise academic descriptions. Getting to the point suggested here many times, based on these variations in definitions of extremism and terrorism, various organisations have been labelled as terrorist or extremist, without properly fulfilling the specific definitions; or, on the contrary, they have not been treated as terrorist, despite corresponding the definition. This phenomenon has been recognised already during the Cold War, during which (e.g.) Yugoslavia adopted the policy of "every nation has a right to its state", under which several (recognised by Western states as) terrorist organisations have been treated as nationalist revolutionaries (Akrap 2020). Especially after 9/11, terms such as terrorism and extremism became increasingly affected by securitisation, politicisation and misinterpretation.

Starting with interpretation, in media, in public but also in political discourse, both "extremist" and "terrorist" have been assigned automatically negative emotional value and were often misinterpreted. As documented by Hoffman (2017), both terms are often used as synonyms by media and more often than not were replaced by other words in media headlines: illustrated by individual events, when eight headlines of articles reported the same incident, six used the word "guerrillas" and only two used "terrorists", showing either ignorance or misunderstanding of the terms (p. 29).

This trend has become even more obvious in terms of the politization of both terms as by labelling the organisation as terrorist or extremist affects the general public, as well as international community. Probably the most notorious example of such an organisation is PLO,[16] which over the time has been recognised as a terrorist

[15] Passive measures refer to e.g. concrete barriers, AI supported surveillance systems, or specific detectors; active measures then refer to the adjusted methodology of security forces, increasing ETA's of first reaction units and establishing coordination liaisons.

[16] Palestine Liberation Organisation is an organisation with the purpose of the "liberation of Palestine". Given its historical ties to several actors committing acts classified as terrorist, even PLO has been considered as terrorist by some states.

organisation by different states. In more recent history, Hezbollah[17] is repeatedly labelled as such by Israel (among others), in hopes of Hezbollah losing most of its financial support as a result (IDF 2021). According to some, another act of "politization" of extremism and terrorism is the classification of Antifa as a terrorist organisation by U.S. president Donald Trump[18] (Speckhard and Ellenberg, 2020), which as at least disputable according to others (LaFree, 2018).

Lastly, in terms of securitisation, both "terrorism itself" and the labelling of some organisations as terrorist are assumed to be used to legitimate certain policies. An example being the 'War on Terror', which has been used as an accepted justification of severe policing restricting personal freedom (Beck 2007, p. 69). It has also been used to legitimate more specific acts, e.g. using the threat of terrorism as a reason to force down a passenger plane to arrest an opposition journalist, as carried out by Belarus in 2021 (Cohen 2021). And finally, the securitisation of political violence includes even individual agencies, which sometimes reflect their priorities and particular interests into accepted definitions, e.g. to increase their perceived importance to the state (Hoffman 2017, p. 33)

1.3 Radicalisation Concepts

Radicalisation studies have tried to explain radicalisation via three main optics: 1) the tradition of French sociology, 2) Social movement theory and Network theory and 3) via individual processes. While French sociology explains radicalisation on the level of a whole society (e.g. a nation), Social movement theory / Network theory stresses the importance of interpersonal connections and group dynamics. The last of the three, the individual process, then offers data from individual case studies, adopting methods of ethnography, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and many others. While reading these lines, it is important to realise, that so far, no complex, multi-level, comprehensive model, integrating analysis and enabling the adoption of working policies has been introduced so far. However, in this literature review, an overview of

[17] Hezbollah is an organisation with political and military branches located in the MENA region (mainly Lebanon). Although it is classified as a "terrorist organisation" by (e.g.) Israel, even academia suggests historical development/transformation of Hezbollah into a hybrid between a political party and a terrorist organisation (if not political party only, with certain influence over other military organisations): see Wiegand 2009.

[18] Anti-Fa (Anti Fascist) is a leftist organisation claiming to fight far right tendencies. In 2019, Donald Trump labelled the organisation as terrorist, given alleged organising of politically motivated violence.

these approaches is offered, though the purpose of this subchapter is not only to offer an overview of knowledge on radicalisation thus far. It provides a context within which the conceptual framework of this study might be understood better. Eventually, it offers a further understanding of the coding used in empirical part of this research.

1.3.1. Tradition of French Sociology

The tradition of French sociology deals with radicalisation on a mass level – it analyses cultural changes, increasing pathological phenomena or establishing beliefs. In terms of radicalisation, the roots can be traced, e.g. to Friedrich Nietzsche, claiming the Western society to be searching for moral guidelines since "killing god"[19]. While doing so, it slowly dismantles traditional communities and identities in the process (Nietzsche 2014). Or, as summarised by Dalgaard-Nielsen, supporters of the French sociology approach suggest that radicalisation is not a reaction to political repression or economic deprivation in any simple sense; instead, it is a demonstration of individuals seeking for lost identity in a perceived hostile and confusing world (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, p. 799).

Being prompted to search for identity and meaning, an individual might accept stereotypes and prejudice as they offer order in the world around (Koomen and Pligt 2016, pp. 100-105), and when these stereotypes and worldviews are shared, communities emerge. Some of these communities provide "deeper answers" to individual's problems, by pointing out "decadence" and "corruption" of European societies, permitting their members to see their situation not as a result of their actions, but as a result of a hostile entity – in this case, of a decadent West. Additionally, reactive systems often also offer the "fixed value system", the most profound of which are Caliphate or Traditional society (Khosrokhavar 2005, p. 32). This generally hostile, morality-lacking Western world is perceived as more stressful, the more traditional society an individual comes from; as e.g., in case of (even 2nd or 3rd generation of) Muslim immigrants in Europe, who are no longer part of their community, yet neither

[19] In sum, Nietzsche suggests that the Western society has lost its ultimate moral authority (God) by questioning his existence. By doing so, an individual eventually began to question also those beneath the God (kings, emperors, authorities in general) and rules set by them. As a result, moral and cultural traditions and rituals become a matter of the dispute and with them the collective and individual identity. In relation to radicalisation studies, Nietzsche's thesis supports the assumption of identity seeking and desire for safety as essential factors in the radicalisation process.

feel part of Western society, resulting in a "double sense" of non-belonging (Roy 2004, p. 193). Although the theory offers a rather optimistic conclusion, that (e.g.) violent political Islam does not represent a strategic challenge to Western society, as it offers no coherent and convincing alternative (Kepel 2004, p. 290), the limitations of the theory are substantial. Why is it that only a small minority of individuals exposed to the same structural influences eventually turn to violent groups? And of those who identify themselves with the ideology, who are those who actually engage in violence? And why? An answer for these questions is offered by the other two groups of theorists. In reading those, it is suggested to accept them as complementary rather than competitive or challenging each other.

1.3.2. Social Movement Theory

"Social Movement Theory" and theories derived from it mainly point to group-level variables, such as the dynamics of social networks and in-group and inter-group interactions. Distinguishing two main subgroups, this subchapter describes the Framework Theory of Wiktorowicz and Sageman's, Neumann's and Rogers' Network Theory.

Network theory claims radicalisation to be about "who you know"; it focuses on inter-group dynamics and stresses the importance of existing and emerging interpersonal connections. Network theory believes that terrorism does not emerge from a vacuum, but rather is connected to larger protest movements and countercultures (Neumann 2013, p. 884). Although the interaction between the groups is important, it is not the key to understanding political violence. According to Sageman, neither psychological disorder, nor problems nor poverty is a primary motivation behind terrorism, but knowing affiliated individuals is. In other words, already-existing personal bonds and interaction in small peer groups are the main drivers of terrorism and radicalisation (Sageman 2008, pp. 125-146). Similarly to most, Sageman conceptualises radicalisation as a process, during which an individual must proceed through a certain number of phases (e.g. moral outrage, identification of the enemy, alignment) and only then reach out to individuals they believe can connect them with violent groups (bottom-up principle) (Sageman 2004, pp. 69-76)

Wiktorowicz presented a four-component developmental model, based on frame-alignment, describing a process from openness to indoctrination. According to Wiktorowicz, an individual must go through phases of openness to new worldviews (cognitive opening), see the specific ideology as a path to find meaning (religious seeking)[20] and only then meet the group and its narrative, which "make sense" (frame alignment); only then the group turns him into a fully indoctrinated radical (Wiktorowicz 2004, pp. 12-16). According to Wiktorowicz, this shared frame (beliefs and values) of its members represent the main factors in the establishment of such groups, together with shared grievances and attributional tendencies. This combination of ideology, grievances and in-group dynamics have found a solid base of empirical evidence among other authors as well (Souleimanov 2018; Odag, Leiser and Boehnke 2019; De Koster and Houtman 2008), yet it only vaguely explains issues like "lone-wolf terrorism" or "self-radicalisation".

1.3.3. Individual Level

Individual (or empirical) approach draws conclusions from case studies; it analyses (even former) extremists and terrorists via methods of ethnography or even psychoanalysis. Beside the offered explanation of an individual process, these studies also offer a partial answer for the question of "lone-wolf" terrorism or "self-radicalisation", which are (mostly) unaddressed by the previous two groups of theorists. In this subchapter, four different groups of scientists are described, based on their focus and/or findings: 1) root causes or suggested factors that increase the risk of radicalisation, 2) suggested phases that an individual passes through in radicalisation, 3) needs one addressed by radicalisation and 4) suggested personality traits, that are either typical for those already radicalised or those who are more likely to become radicalised. As this study focuses on the individual, this part of the Literature Review has received the greatest focus.

1) Factor based theories explain radicalisation as a process affected by different root-causes and triggers, which interact with each other and often react to each other. According to Horgan (2008, pp. 85-88), there is a specific set of factors, namely *push*

[20] The terminology (religious seeking) refers to development of radicalisation studies – which, by far, has been dominated by the effort to understand the radicalisation of Salafi jihadists (as already explained in this chapter). Nevertheless, the models based on analyses of Salafi jihadists are assumed to be applicable even to other ideologies.

and pull factors, which increase the probability of radicalisation of an individual that is exposed to their effect. In sum, push factors represent external forces that affect the individual, while pull factors represent a set of virtues that make a certain group attractive to them (Horgan 2005, pp. 75-77). While deciding whether or not to actual join such a group, Altier, Thoroughgood and Horgan (2014) offer to utilise Rusbult's investment model, in which satisfaction, alternatives and investments decide the resulting preference (or lack thereof) for a group. As one might already assume, these factors are also suggested to be working the other way around in deradicalisation processes, when push factors consist of dissatisfaction or disillusion with a group's policies, and pull factors consist of attraction to the "normal" world or other groups (Horgan 2016). Lastly, Horgan's conceptualisation fully recognises the difference between cognitive and behavioural radicalisation. Other authors, like Wolfowitz et al. (2019) have suggested a list of risk factors stimulating the probability of radical behaviour, with traits like thrill-seeking, deviant-radical peers, low self-control or authoritarianism/fundamentalism on the top of the list. Nevertheless, it still requires further empirical data, as a clear pattern of transcendence from attitudes towards behaviour is nowhere to be found (Derfoufi 2020). As this is the conceptualisation chosen for the purpose of this study, it is further described in chapter 2.2 Conceptualisation.

2) Phases / Pathways based studies suggest the individual must complete certain phases. Some claim the phases follow in a specific order, some acknowledge they do not necessarily need to. According to Moghaddam, for example, the terrorist act is the final step on a narrowing staircase. What precedes are steps of 1) deprivation, 2) solution seeking, 3) aggression aimed at an "enemy", 4) moralisation of violence, 5) recruitment and eventually 6) the act itself or training for it (Moghaddam 2005, pp. 161-162). A similar explanation is then offered through the concept of "pyramid" by McCauley and Moskalenko (2008), who offer 12 recognised mechanisms leading to radicalisation. According to their "Pathways" concept, individuals radicalised either on a) individual level (personal victimisation, political grievance or slippery slope), b) on group level (power of love, shift in like-minded groups, isolation, competition with group or state) or c) on mass level (by jiu jitsu politics, hate, martyrdom or within-group competition) (see McCauley and Moskalenko 2008, p. 418). A simplified version of "Pyramid" is then also offered by Venhaus, who recognises four primary types of

recruits to terrorist organisations: revenge seeker, status seeker, identity seeker and thrill seeker (Venhaus 2010). Last but not least among pathways concepts, Sageman (2008) presents "four prongs", that is, a process (not necessarily linear) during which the individual undergoes four stages: 1) a sense of moral outrage (e.g. in response to perceived injustices done to fellow Muslims around the world), 2) introduction to specific interpretation of the world (which might justify violence as a tool), 3) resonance of the interpretation via personal experience and 4) mobilisation through networks (of already existing relations to extremist / terrorist organisations) (Sageman 2008, p. 72)

3) **Needs** theory, specifically the Quest of Personal Significance Theory (QST), suggests the radicalisation process is a result of a general urge for gaining/restoring significance, addressing the themes of deficit, justification and social support. In his original thesis, Kruglanski builds on Maslow and his self-actualisation concerns at the apex of motivational hierarchy; he suggests that individuals who experience threats to their personal significance attempt to restore lost significance through their attachment to a social group and defence of that group (Kruglanski and Oherek 2011, p. 162). In the general desire to matter or to be someone, individuals might even shift toward collectivism to gain importance, Kruglanski claims. As for activation, Kruglanski et al. (2015) suggest that the pursue of significance might not be activated at all, as initially it might be substituted by the pursuit of comfort, survival or health (Kruglanski et al. 2015, pp. 73-75). Yet when there is a loss of significance (deprivation, humiliation), anticipated loss of significance (avoidance) or opportunity for significance gain (hero, martyr), an individual might accept this quest (Kruglanski et al. 2013). Similarly, QST recognises that radicalisation might be only one of the results of seeking significance. On this account, it is argued that accepting radical belief and engaging in extreme groups requires further variables: a) specific ideology (providing goals and ways to achieve them) and b) social processes of networking and group dynamics (offering empowerment and self-confirmation among others) (Kruglanski et al. 2014). In the updated version of this theory, Kruglanski and Bertelsen (2020) offer an S-P Theory (Situation-Person). According to them, a combination of specific needs, projects-motivated life skills (Person) and social, cultural and societal facilitation (Situation) might eventually lead to the activation of Quest for significance or eventually for Quest for life significance; leading to vulnerability to radicalisation. The eventual probability is then again supported by network and narrative (ideology).

4) Traits theory and observations that suggest an extremist to demonstrate specific types of personality or mindset. Although earlier attempts to reveal the "terrorist personality" have been largely abandoned, there still are some suggestions of who is more likely to support such groups and ideologies. In the following lines, suggested personality traits, mindset and cognitive capabilities are briefly summarised.

a. Personality traits studies of radicalisation and extremism claim to find shared traits like authoritarianism, narcissism or black-and-white types of thinking. Observations made by these studies clearly state that extremists tend to show less certainty and positive emotions (Alizadeh et al. 2017), use more negative language and feel threatened for most of the time (Frimer et al. 2018). As for virtues, extremists are assumed to be rather authoritarian personalities (Altemeyer 1998), often advocating for social dominance (e.g. Koomen and Plight 2016). A small-sample based theory by Pavlovic and Wertag (2021) suggests that extremists tend to show Dark triad personality traits. This psychological term is assumed to consist of narcissism (grandiose self-concept, striving for domination), Machiavellianism (reflected in cunningness and instrumentality) and psychopathy (impulsivity and coldness) (Jakobwitz and Egan 2006).

b. Extremist mindset studies offer assumptions of what beliefs and tendencies are shown by individuals engaging in or support extremism. For example, Stankov et al. (2018) speak of 3 notions typical of militant extremists: nastiness, grudge and excuse (Stankov et al. 2018, p. 93). Additionally, they also offer 20 beliefs of extremists in a general listing: sacral Machiavellianism, puritanism, readiness for (self-sacrifice), Manicheism, anti-modernism (-democratism, -capitalism), desire to be recognised, feeling of anomie, intolerance of different views, feelings of repression and injustice and others. In sum, these studies usually specify and name what frustrates the individual, how it is to be changed, via what means and how it will be justified.

c. **Cognitive capabilities (**–focused) studies of extremism usually point to the specifics of the extremist mind. In this regard, e.g. Zmigrod suggests that those supporting extremist ideologies show lower cognitive flexibility**.** In his case studies, Zmigrod claims to have found a pattern of

lower cognitive flexibility, that is, the ability to adapt to novel or changing environments and a capacity to switch between modes of thinking (Zmigrod et al 2019). In practice, extremists manifest the deficit by persisting with previously established rules of behavioural patterns, even when it is maladaptive, and see politics in more simplistic terms (and believe in simplistic solution). Eventually, Zmigrod and Goldenberger (2020) also observed slower perceptual strategies and poorer executive functions in their studies datasets of those believing in radical or extremist ideologies.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The importance of this chapter resides in the need to conceptually and theoretically anchor the whole research project. By offering a theorical framework, the study clearly states its ontological and epistemological stances (which guide the selected methodology), as formal requirements dictate. The conceptual framework that provides an explanation of the basis on which the researcher analysed the data – and what the researcher looks for while doing so. Additionally, the conceptual framework even offers a suggestion of how the research design and research questions were constructed. From a broader perspective, by describing these frameworks, the data, findings and conclusion, can be validated by following the inquiries.

In order to reach its objective, this chapters starts with describing the adopted theoretical framework, where the lenses framing this research are defined. In subchapter 2.2, the conceptualisation of radicalisation and the radicalisation process are provided, explaining the researcher's optics through the former and key concepts for analysis through the latter.

In summary, the research has adopted interpretivism as its theoretical stance, aiming to understand and interpret the actions and beliefs of respondents based on their testimonies. Before analysing the data, however, the necessary conceptualisations of Radicalisation and the Radicalisation process are introduced. As for the former, radicalisation is here defined as changes in beliefs, feelings and behaviour in the direction of increased support for political conflict, while the latter, the radicalisation process, is understood as a process affected by the matrix of 3Ps: Push, pull and personal factors. These factors are assumed to be interrelated, often overlapping and usually interacting with each other.

2.1 Theoretical Standpoint

Having the ambition of entering the field *tabula rasa*, as this research is from its nature pioneering, there is no theory to be tested or challenged. As such, the theoretical framework of this research is represented by a paradigm or a philosophical standpoint, anchoring the epistemological and ontological assumptions and guiding the way "along which to look" (Schwandt 1998, p. 221).

The theoretical standpoint of this study is that of interpretivism, aiming at understanding by interpreting certain actions and beliefs. By adopting an *interpretivist* paradigm this study accepts the world as socially constructed by meanings assigned to it. This world can be understood by particular attention to language and other symbolic systems, in what is sometimes termed "culture" in the literature (Weeden 2009, p. 81). Stemming from the reactions of neo-Kantian German historians and sociologist and the historical challenge of the positivist approach, interpretivism rose from the debate over differences between social and natural sciences. Interpretivism claims to be based on *Verstehen* (Understanding), unlike natural sciences, whose main objective is *Erklären* (Explain) (Schwandt 2000, p. 193). As such, the essence of interpretivism is embodied in the need to *interpret* actions and actors in a particular way, to be able to say that one understands what a particular action means (Schwandt 2000, p. 191). Finally, to access such knowledge (or its interpretation) requires grasping subjective consciousness or the intent of the actor, e.g. through qualitative interview (Ibid., p. 192).

Interpretivists are somewhat flexible in methods, assigning greater importance to the actual data. Perhaps surprisingly, interpretivists view knowledge, including scientific knowledge, as historically situated, and entangled in power relationships (Weeden 2009, p. 80) and to understand it and interpret it, the matter of concern is rather the knowledge and not the method to gain access to it per se (Schwandt 1998, p. 222). As Schwandt claims, not only are methods the most unremarkable aspect of interpretive work, but a focus on methods (techniques of gathering and analysing data) often masks a full understanding of the relationship between method and inquiry purpose (Ibid.). Simply put, at base, all interpretive inquirers watch, listen, ask, record and examine, although one may feel professionally compelled to use special language for these procedures (participant observation, informant interviewing, etc.).

Assumptions of interpretivism are reflected not only in the methodology chosen, but also in the following chapter, which conceptualises radicalisation. Additionally, the notion of interpretivism is also embodied in the general assumption of the research – that it could be the different interpretation (or understanding[21]) of reality acquired by

[21] According to the Interpretivist paradigm, the interpretation is the understanding. From the perspective of Interpretivism, understanding represents knowledge. For more, see Schwandt (2000, p. 192).

members of National Militia, framing their beliefs and values as explained in the previous chapter,[22] which eventually leads them to join National Militia.

2.2 Conceptualisation

The content of this subchapter defines radicalisation and the accepted conceptualisation of the radicalisation process. Understanding radicalisation as a process of changes in beliefs, feelings and behaviour in the direction of increased support for political conflict, this study aims to eliminate negative biases associated with other definitions. In terms of the process, this study adopts the 3P concept, offering a complex matrix of Push, Pull and Personal factors, where each "P" interacts and complements each other. In sum, push factors represent external pressure (like frustration or alienation), pull factors represent group dynamics (such as collective identity or need for belonging) and personal factors consider the actual individual (their personality traits or states of mind).

These concepts were utilised while constructing the research, the interviews and also while evaluating the data. Whereas the theoretical paradigm provides a way of seeing the world, a researcher must also identify variables in his field of study and his understanding of the field itself. Concepts introduced provide an explanation of what the researcher was looking for and what he/she has eventually found. In the case of this study, the framework chosen was utilised during two phases: first during the preparation phase, when questions and topics of interview(s) were defined and second, during (de-)coding of interviews and eventual categorisation of findings. As such, their understanding is necessary to understand the conclusions made.

2.2.1. Radicalisation

This research understands radicalisation as a process affected by various factors. It differentiates between cognitive and behavioural engagement in extremism, and it suggests approaching radicalisation without a priori negative bias.

Briefly introduced already in the Literature Review, radicalisation does not have a universally accepted definition and bears several burdens. The earliest mention of

[22] For more see the reference to Wiktorowicz 2004 in previous chapter.

"Radical" in The Oxford English Dictionary dates from the 1830s, applied to American political groups that favoured democracy and opposed slavery (Bailey and Edwards 2017, p. 259). Ever since, the term was used to label rather non-conservative movements and ideas, where there has been enough contradiction between two viewpoints that "politics as usual" did not suffice. Since the 20th and 21st century, the term is frequently associated with extremism and terrorism and security in general (Ibid.).

Radicalisation is here understood as a *process* of "*changes in beliefs, feelings and behaviour in the direction of increased support for political conflict*" (McCauley and Moskalenko 2010, p. 82). This definition provides enough operational space in three dimensions. *First*, the distinction of Cognitive radicalisation (belief and worldview) and Behavioural radicalisation (actions in accordance with those beliefs) is made (Horgan 2016). *Second*, the notion of political conflict being deliberately broad implies no particular end point and no value judgements, as noted by Bailey and Edwards (2017, p. 262). It rather supports the claim of Neumann (2013, pp. 876-877), that radicalisation can lead people to non-violent and legal activities, just as to violent or illegal activities, and may be judged in the long-term as a force for bad or for good, based on the current historical and social context. *Third*, by accepting this idea of "de-demonised" and "de-politicised"[23], radicalisation provides more operational space, even to state institutions (among others). It puts stress on pragmatic assessment of the real nature of the threat and simultaneously enables addressing a wider array of organisations, even those previously unconsidered, in threat-analysis, without the risk for security forces of the accusation of "being politically motivated" (Neumann 2013, pp. 877-878).

2.2.2. Radicalisation Process

The actual framework (adopted by this study) utilises the concepts of Push, Pull and Personal factors, which are assumed to affect an individual's radicalisation process. All these factors interact and often supplement each other. Whereas the Push factors consist of societal pressures (e.g. frustration), Pull factors represent attractive traits of

[23] Not to be mistaken, this study does not suggest that radicalisation should not be studied in the security dimension. What it does suggest, is to be temperate about it. That is, to avoid rushing to qualifications of groups as radical or labelling them with "good" or "evil" adjectives, without providing context as a foundation for such claims.

specific group(s). Personal factors then include personality traits and psychological state.

The 3P's concept is assumed to offer a comprehensive, yet least-biased approach available.[24] The understanding of radicalisation is perhaps even more important than that of the process described in the previous subchapter – it frames the actual interviews conducted and also their analysis. In this regard, a concept of "*Three P's*" was utilised. Initially introduced as *Push* and *Pull factors* by Horgan (2008)[25], and further adjusted by Vergani et al. (2018) by adding "*Personal*", "Three P's" offer a system of interacting "risk factors", which influence individuals and make them more likely to join a radical organisation or align with radical ideology. Contrary to other concepts, Horgan does not claim radicalisation to be a set of stages in a particular order, unlike e.g. Moghaddam (2005), nor does this model offer a particular typology of pathways or personas as emerging patterns, as do e.g. McCauley and Moskalenko (2008). Being empirically based on findings of previous qualitative studies, this concept does not follow any specific theory, nor does it describe any particular pathway of becoming radical. Therefore, it further supports the intention of the researcher to enter the field without any confirmation bias (would *tabula rasa* be possible).

Push Factors

Push factors are understood as an external force or a sense of it, providing the "push" into terrorism (or violent radicalisation) (Horgan 2008, pp. 87-90). The external nature of these factors resides in the fact that they stem from the world around and might affect both the individual and the group which undergo the radicalisation process. Affected by these push factors, individuals (or a group of them) might find themselves isolated, and might become convinced that violence is necessary, or the only option (Horgan 2005). Should individuals share some of these grievances, groups might eventually emerge (as proved by e.g. Souleimanov 2018). Additionally, the frustration and dissatisfaction caused by push factors is assumed to trigger cognitive opening, a state when an individual is willing to change or adjust their identity (e.g. in accordance with the ideology of the group they joined) (Horgan 2005, p. 114). Although

[24] The 3P's concept gathers factors that affect individuals based on findings of empirical studies. As such, the concept stems from confirmed findings, rather than hypothetical suggestions. Additionally,, the inner workings of these factors are only vaguely described, without following any specific pathway, going through any phases, or without stressing any specific ideology. As such, it gathers only these concepts, providing the researcher with clear suggestions on what to look for during interviews.

[25] In his quantitative research summarising the radicalisation literature, based on empirical data from over a hundred studies, Vergani adds a third "P" to Horgan's original concept.

there has been no empirical evidence proving the suggestions so far, Moghaddam (2005, pp. 162-163) suggest this cognitive opening to be the first stage of radicalisation.

Push factors consist of fear, frustration, dissatisfaction, anger and other, mostly negative, emotions and states. Based on Vergani's (2018) research mapping the radicalisation discourse, among the most common factors referred to as "push factors" are usually the relative deprivation of a social group (projected on the individual), consisting of one or more feelings like injustice, inequality, marginalisation, grievance, social exclusion, frustration, victimisation or stigmatisation (Vergani et al. 2018, p. 5). Rather specific then, Vergani also lists a perceived threat to a group, state repression (towards the group) or unemployment, as push factors recognised by the literature (Ibid.).

According to data, one can be under the influence of push factors, yet radicalisation might not happen; similarly, neither criminal record, nor low education led to extremism. As there are many misconceptions regarding push factors leading to radicalisation, the author of this paper considers it important to mention some of them. Firstly, as already suggested, radicalisation does not require being a criminal nor being sexually frustrated (e.g. Horgan 2008). Secondly, as Sageman notices, there is a popular belief that poverty breeds extremism (and terrorism), yet according to data collected by him, most terrorists come from middle-class families (Sageman 2008), or even higher(-middle)-class, as proven by experience from deradicalisation programs in Scandinavian countries (Daugherty 2019). And finally, even when a certain set of push factors affects an individual (or a group of them), the radicalisation does not have to take place – as there are larger parts of society under the effect of similar societal stress factors and grievances, and yet only a small part of them undergoes the process of radicalisation – a puzzle that remains to be solved.

Pull Factors

Pull factors represent supportive qualities of a group, eventually increasing the momentum provided by push factors (Horgan 2008, p. 87). They usually consist of virtues like belonging, ideological alignment, collective identity, or bonding. For the purpose of this research, this subchapter distinguishes a) cognitive pull factors; changing individual's beliefs and identity and b) group pull factors; affecting

individual's behaviour and establishing bonds and c) other pull factors, like material or emotional rewards and role of charismatic persona.

Metaphorically speaking, push and pull factors can be considered two sides of the same coin. Pull factors represent the supportive qualities of a group that influence an individual and eventually pulls him closer to the group (Horgan 2008). Although pull factors might gain momentum through push factors, it might also be the other way around as it is not uncommon, that an individual joins a particular group and only afterwards adopts a certain ideology (and even then, they may not be "fully indoctrinated")[26] (Sageman 2017, p. 4). The strength or intensity of either group is then also affected by personal factors.

a) Cognitive factors affect an individual's belief system and their identity; they consist of e.g. consumption of propaganda, cultural congruence and acceptance of collective identity. Vergani's research has proven that the consumption of extremist propaganda (or alignment with it) can be considered a pull factor – both in terms of culture and myths on a group level or beliefs and (world)views on an individual level (Vergani et al 2018, pp. 9-11). Supported by these shared grievances, individuals eventually might agree not only on issues, but also on the denominators responsible for them. Reaching these conclusions either individually, as a group, or simply as a result of propaganda consumption, these individuals eventually have similar or identical opinions, or even worldviews. This state, cultural congruence, then increases the approval of efficacy and morality of a group that addresses these shared grievances (Dekoster 2008, pp. 1165-1166).

Eventually, the influence of a group might lead to a change of social identity and/or to acceptance of a collective one. These shared grievances and collective agreement on identities and roles eventually lead to collective identity, as Odag illustrates (Odag 2019). Should this level be reached, the group provides a safe place where controversial opinions can be expressed, increasing the value of the group to an individual and often leading to stigmatisation and to fatalism (Dekoster 2008, pp. 1164-1165.). Consequently, such changes can lead to a change in social identity as well, as an individual values the group they belong to and the importance of their membership

[26] Sageman goes as far as to claim that "This view that they are fanatics driven by ideology is the ideological perspective." (and thereby misleading from true empirical understanding of phenomenon) (Sageman 2017, p. 4)

increases (Koomen and Plight 2016, p. 117). The side-effect of such psychological processes is an enhanced in-group bias, and aggressiveness towards out-groups serves to gain/preserve self-esteem and positive image and strengthen the bonds in one's own group. (Ibid.)

b) Group factors are in effect once an individual is a member of a group; they are an umbrella term for needs for belonging, kinship, conformity, bonding, social identity and identity fusion, groupthink or opinion "band-wagoning". Already briefly introduced, another subset of pull factors can then be labelled group factors. Generally speaking, group factors address the fundamental human need to belong. It is rooted in the desire to associate with others, to cooperate and to accept group norms (Zimbardo 2007, p. 229). The general notion can be applied to all groups, regardless of their purpose, as the Rusbult investment model suggests,[27] yet under specific circumstances, group dynamics can take unexpected turns. The need to belong can be perverted into excessive conformity, compliance and in-group versus out-group hostility; in extreme scenarios, these can result in an excessive exercise of power to dominate others or into learned helplessness[28] (as proven by the Stanford Prison Experiment) (Zimbardo 2007, p. 230).

As extremist groups are usually isolated, group factors can multiply their effect. In the context of radicalisation, one should remember that these groups often share prejudices, providing space not only for conformity but also for strengthening self-identity (confirming one's beliefs and opinions) (Odag 2019, Koomen and Plight 2016). As the group increases its importance for an individual, by supporting and eventually creating his identity, one might become more prone to adjust in other respects. An example is social pressure,[29] leading to acceptance of group norms (Asch 1955), which is expected to be higher inside these groups, as isolated groups multiply the effect of not only informational influence, providing new influential arguments or amplifying

[27] The Rusbult investment model is an example of decision making as to whether one should or should not remain in/enter a specific group. The decision is based on an equation "Satisfaction – Alternatives + Investments", which should result in a decision for an individual.

[28] Such behaviour was described by Zimbardo after the Stanford Prison Experiment. The behaviour was a result of a need for consistency and rationality, a need to know and to understand our environment and our relationship to it and a need for stimulation. When combined, these needs might result in the behaviour described (for more see Zimbardo, 2007).

[29] Social pressure is a term used by Asch during his psychological experiment. A test subject (an individual) was invited to a control room, where other five subjects (following instructions of the researcher) were seated. The experiment was then consisting of easily answered test, where the 5 instructed participants answered obviously wrong and eventually convinced the test subject to answer accordingly (as the individual felt social pressure from being different).

existing ones; but they also multiply the normative influence of simply "being in the group", leading to stronger opinions and opinion „band wagoning" (Meyers 2012, pp. 218-227).

c) **Charismatic personas** as recruiters or leaders might be decisive in joining the group; similarly, **material and emotional rewards**. Whereas material incentives are mostly related to payments or gifts (Vergani 2018), emotional rewards are rather general, addressing the desire for adventure, excitement for violence or propaganda consumption, as already mentioned (Koomen and Plight 2016). Even more important than these incentives than appear to be charismatic personas. A leader or recruiter may play a significant role in an individual's radicalisation process, either inspiring, coaching, becoming a hero or even their mentor (Ibid, pp. 94-96). Such authority, when supported by limited sources of situational information and a gradual increase in demands, eventually leads to the natural (psychological) obedience of an individual (Burger 2009).[30]

Personal Factors

Personal factors summarise states and feelings of an individual, including diagnosed disorders, personal traits or temporal states like fear or anger. Often interrelated with push and pull factors, personal factors complement the 3Ps matrix with respect to the actual individual. This last set of factors has been suggested by Horgan, yet specifically listed only by Vergani (2018). This broad category lists factors like mental illness, disturbance, or psychological disorder as subjects. Beside these rather clinical states, also factors of shorter duration are included, such as depression, low self-esteem, personal alienation, feeling of isolation, friendless or loneliness or being a misfit, which are usually associated with personal crisis, cognitive opening and a consequent search for meaning (Ibid., pp. 11-13).

As for personality traits, extremists are assumed be oriented toward authoritarianism, social dominance and narcissism. Vergani also lists low tolerance of ambiguity, high personal uncertainty, black-and-white type of thinking and

[30] Burger replicated the well-known Milgram experiments (1965, 1974), where the obedience of an individual towards authority was tested. The results have shown that an individual is more likely to obey when an authority is present that gradually increases the demands on an individual. Emotional distance of the victim and limited sources of information serve as supportive variables (or when an individual finds himself/herself in a situation that he/she has no experience with).

impulsiveness, among the list observed among extremists (Vergani et al. 2018). According to further suggestions narcissistic personalities are also relevant, with high, yet often unstable self-confidence, leading to higher aggression and a tendency to blame outside elements for mistakes (Hudson 1999). Koomen and Plight (2016, pp. 94-96) eventually add yet another trait to the list, as extremists and terrorists are assumed to be generally oriented toward authoritarianism and dominance. As a result, they support "traditional standards and values", respecting authority and its figureheads and directing aggression towards a target sanctioned by such authority (Ibid., pp. 94-95).

3. Methodology: Empirical Data, Data Collection and Analytical Technique

In the same manner the empirical data and findings derived from them represent "What do you know?", methodology represent "How do you know?", in other words, how the data was collected and processed (Brinkman 2013, p. 84).

The main objective of this chapter is to provide the reader with a description of the methodology and methods selected. The importance of this chapter lies in the context it provides to the presented findings – understanding the methodology not only explains the nature of data and conclusions drawn by this thesis, but also defines the limitations of this work. Eventually, the description and reasoning of the methodology allows the study to be replicated or further developed.

To fulfil this objective, the thesis has adopted the following structure: 1) in the first subchapter, *Methodology*, the adopted methodological framework is defined and its consequences for research are discussed; 2) the *Research Target and Research Question(s)* subchapter explains the objective(s) of this thesis; 3) the *subchapter Data Collection* introduces individual methods utilised in the data gathering process; 4) *Data Analysis* summarises the processing of data; 5) *Research Ethics* discusses the moral and academic concerns that accompanied this research; and finally 6) *Limitations of the Research* focuses on the constraints of this study.

In sum, this study utilises ethnography-based qualitative interviews. By recording those interviews and/or making notes while conducting them, emerging patterns are identified, labelled, and studied. The analysis of the materials obtained already starts during interviews, eventually proceeds with their transcription; it continues with coding and pattern identification and finally interpreting the data and drawing conclusions. The research has several limitations, yet mainly: 1) given the known mechanisms of human psychology, the true motivation(s) of individuals to join NM might remain hidden (both intentionally and unintentionally); 2) the methodology chosen relies heavily on the researcher's capabilities to interpret the data; 3) given the unexplored nature of the topic, only a mapping of sorts is expected and finally 4) given the researcher's lack of experience, potential for improvement is expected.

3.1 Methodology

Hereby presented instrumental case study adopts the methodology of realist ethnography, utilising qualitative interviewing as a primary method of data collection. It was chosen due to its potential for unbiased mapping of the field and high flexibility of collection methods. While the former has been selected given the general lack of data on militiamen's motivations in the Czech context, the latter is considered crucial due to a heightened level of mistrust in academia and media demonstrated by militiamen – which might be "compensated" for by the flexible methods and approaches of ethnography. On the following lines, the further reasoning and consequences of methodology chosen are explained.

Defined by the research design, this study can be classified as an instrumental case study; that is a case study aiming to provide an insight into a particular issue, redrawing generalizations or building a theory (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe 2010, p. 473). According to Stake (1994), cases can be classified into three categories: 1) intrinsic, 2) instrumental and 3) collective. Whereas intrinsic case studies are primarily interested in the case itself, rather than any generalization or extension of theories, the instrumental case perceives the case as secondary to understanding a particular phenomenon (the core difference being in the purpose of the study) (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe 2010, p. 473). A collective case study then involves the exploration of multiple instrumental case studies (Ibid, p. 474). As the defined objective of the study aims at understanding the phenomenon of paramilitary organisations (in the Czech Republic), via studying individuals' motivations to join a particular organisation (NM), it clearly fulfils the definition of an instrumental case study (rather than intrinsic). As for the methodology itself, ethnography is based on using inductive logic to find patterns and understand a specific group of people. As is typical for studies conducted from the interpretivist standpoint, the main objective of this paper is to understand a specific group of individuals with a shared culture – and the methodology was chosen accordingly. In the case of this study, the data are based on individuals' testimonies, and the inquiry method for data collection is qualitative interviewing. This method, however, can be utilised in many methodologies, e.g. phenomenology, narrative analysis and others. Therefore, it must be noted that the overall methodological approach is that of ethnography. Ethnography utilises an inductive logic in its research, identifying designs and details and only then generalising them; in the words of qualitative researchers, "it

represents a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets shared and learned patterns, of values, behaviour, belief and language of a culture-sharing group" (Creswell 2007, p. 68), or as Spradley puts it "the essential core of ethnography is this concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand" (Spradley 1979, p. 5).

In terms of interpretation of data, the approach of realist ethnography has been adopted, for providing authenticity and maximising the clarity of data. As ethnography is anything but a straightforward, unproblematic task, it is very much dependent on a choice of strategy, construction, and positioning of the researcher. Ethnography as conducted in this research is an analogue for *realist ethnography*, as understood by Van Maanen and Creswell. A distinctive characteristic of realist ethnography is a third-person narrative, pushing forward the authenticity of the cultural representation, while the fieldworker "vanishes behind the narrative" (Van Maanen 2011, p. 46). It typically involves documentary-like descriptions of relevant details, putting emphasis on the ethnographer's "final word, how the culture is to be interpreted" (Van Maanen 2011, p. 51; Atkinson M. 2012, pp. 25-27). This "final word" approach reveals that open self-reflection and doubts are hardly central matters in the texts of realists, yet limitations should be mentioned openly.

The ideal unbiased approach is hardly achievable, which this study recognises; it aims to remain pragmatic on that matter. In theory, ethnography as a theoretical framework should be uncontaminated by personal bias, political goals or judgement (Creswell 2007, pp. 68-70) and thereby provide "precise data". And indeed, this should be the ideal the researcher should strive for, especially when entering an under-researched topic, as in the case of this study. In practice, however, the "burden" of the persona of the researcher is carried along, together with the interests of the researcher's disciplinary community, which necessarily project themselves into interviews and observations (Van Maanen 2011). Realising this, Van Maanen (2010, pp. 222) suggests that as ethnography focuses on "empirical" and "I-witnessing" ideals – personalised hearing, seeing and experiencing – ethnographers must remain pragmatic in both their approach and analysis (and so should the reviewers of their studies).

Lastly, while reading the thesis, one might argue, that the interviews conducted bear signs of phenomenology, which describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experience of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell 2007). However, it must

be born in mind that, would this study opt for the phenomenological approach, putting emphasis on shared experience of respondents, it would be both theoretically and methodologically untenable/unfeasible given the limited research on this phenomenon. This lack of data thus provides a reasonable argument for ethnography and not phenomenology.

3.2 Research Objective and Research Questions

Since there is no previous research conducted on this topic so far,[31] the primary objective of this thesis is mapping and introducing the field of militiamen's motivations in the Czech context. From the perspective of radicalisation studies, an individual might accept radical beliefs (cognitive radicalisation), but engaging in a radical organisation or even committing an act of political violence (behavioural radicalisation) is yet another step, as (e.g.) Neumann suggests (Neumann 2013, p. 873). Therefore, the target of this study is to understand motivations leading individuals to engage in the National Militia and to understand why they stay engaged, despite governmental proposals to ban such organisations, and the presumed attention of police and counter-intelligence towards those involved.[32] Correspondingly, the main research question was formulated as:

RQ_1: "What type of factors played a role in an individual's decision to join National Militia?"

While the main question represents a virtual keynote of the thesis, the process of radicalisation and engagement is assumed to be much more complex, than what one question can answer. Therefore, subquestions were chosen to expand the understanding of the process and possibly offer a solution to the puzzle of militiamen's motivations.

[31] So far, the only research conducted among members of the National Militia was a bachelor thesis submitted by Vlk (2015). However, this research combined ethnography and netnography, with both militiamen and their sympathisers, yet of unspecified number. Additionally, the discussion involved a rather wide array of topics ranging from international and domestic politics to activity on social media, and as such, it was not considered as a solid foundation of further research.

[32] As will be further explained in the following chapters, during 2019, the Parliament introduced a draft law (or law proposal or bill), suggesting banning paramilitary organisations. The proposal was known as a "Parliamentary Leaflet 669" (Parlamentní Tisk 669), a part of the new edited version of the Weapons Act. Shortly after this research was conducted, the proposal was enacted and is effective since 30th January 2021. (The adopted terminology is in accordance with official websites of Parliament of Czech Republic – which uses draft law, law proposal and bill on its websites).

$SubQ_1$: “What expectations do individuals have when joining National Militia? (How are these expectations met?)”

SubQ2: “What factors affect an individual’s decision to stay engaged in National Militia (even after governmental law proposals)?”

3.3 Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was qualitative interviewing. As for the recruitment of respondents, a snowball sample collection method was utilised, relying heavily on the institution of gatekeepers. Then during interviews, additional methods were used, like recordings, fieldnotes and observational protocols, depending on agreement between the research and each respondent.

Given the higher level of mistrust in academia shared among respondents, data collection methods have been chosen accordingly. To be able to collect empirical data, one must first get access to the culture-sharing group. Due to the attention of media and governmental organisations to the National Militia, the organisation was initially sceptical and distrusting towards both the research and the researcher. To access the community, the researcher has used an official contact on one of its leaders and after interviewing him, turning him into a gatekeeper,[33] the snowball sample collection method has been utilised,[34] so no further representative logic behind respondents’ recruiting can be found.

The main method for gathering the data was qualitative interviewing. Regarding the process of the interviews themselves, the data collection process began already when contacting the potential respondent based on gained contacts from the gatekeeper. When a respondent actually agreed to participate, they were first provided with an explanation of how research is conducted according to ethical rules of research (which will be further expanded later in this text), which also played the role of an “icebreaker”, during which the “atmosphere” can be set and the respondent can start to present his/her thoughts (Heyl 2007, p. 374-376). What differentiated the following

[33] A gatekeeper is a person who can grant or deny (and maintain the state of) access to the community or to a number of respondents. For more, see Feldman, Bell & Berger (2003).

[34] “Snowball sample collecting method” is based on contacts (respondents) gained through already interviewed participants. It enables raising the initial level of trust of the researcher; however, its limitations are the potential number of respondents.

interviews apart from everyday conversations was then the greater extent to which it was planned and reflected upon (Brinkman 2013).

The intention of the researcher was to structure each interview most fittingly to each respondent, yet still centring it around the conceptual framework. The interview itself was centred around general concepts derived from the literature review, which slightly narrowed the research in order to reach the research objective. Five rather general open questions were set and asked during the interview, aiming at simple formulation and brevity to maximise understanding from the respondent and maximise the amount of information providable (Foddy 1993). The list of questions guiding the interview was not introduced to the respondent (except the gatekeeper) prior to the interview and questions were asked in different order during each interview, following the spontaneous development of the interview. The low number of planned questions enabled the researcher to keep the interview semi-structured, aiming at active involvement of respondents and increasing the chance of actually "hearing their ideas, memories and interpretations" (Heyl 2007, p. 374). Supported by a "friendly-approach" (Brinkman 2013; Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, McKinney 2012), rather listening than arguing and interfering with the respondent, it becomes possible (at least partially) to develop and build on intimacy, as if one talked to a friend.

Beside these set open questions, which were designed to reveal the general objective of the research, rather than specific (sub)questions, complementary and leading questions were also asked. The former was usually used to deepen the understanding of the respondent's testimony, while the latter served as a guiding line, in cases when the respondent shifted the topic of the interview too far from the topic of interest (for too long).

As complementary methods of data collection, the researcher has used fieldnotes, observational protocols and recordings. Ethnography enables the researcher to use various collection methods in the research, such as in case of this study – interview (and its recordings), fieldnotes and observational protocols (Creswell 2007). In an ideal scenario, the interview is recorded and complemented by fieldnotes and observational protocol(s). Yet, as the level of trust was initially low, in some cases respondents refused to be recorded. In such cases, the data was collected via fieldnotes and observational protocols. These then enabled (re)constituting the world in preserved forms, so it can be reviewed and later analysed. From their nature, these fieldnotes and

protocols tend to be both reflective and descriptive (Ibid.), however also selective, as the ethnographer sees different things "significant", ignoring and hence "leaving out" other matters that do not seem (so) significant (at the time) (Atkinson 2001, p. 353). Since different respondents reacted differently to the researcher making notes, some of these notes are rather in the form of scratch notes, headnotes and paraphrases, others are in the form of diaries and full quotes.

Using these methods, eleven one-shot interviews (between 2,5 and 5 hours long) were conducted, with 10 males and 1 female, all between 40 and 77 years old. More interviews were to follow, but given the Covid-19 restrictions, there has not been a chance to conduct them (yet).[35]

Finally, as a complementary method of data collection, this research also utilises open sources, gathering information from social media, conventional media and various websites. Using these additional sources specially to provide the reader with further context, these methods are indeed complementary. They include e.g., official websites (and social media accounts) of NM, media reports and state reports, providing the thesis with data otherwise inaccessible (or hardly accessible via interviews only). Beyond this purely informational purpose, the variety of sources used to collect the data also serves to increase data reliability through triangulation.[36]

3.4 Data Analysis

Analysis of data collected via interviews followed the example of a data analysis spiral, as understood by Creswell (2007). A data analysis spiral is the process of analysing data, which includes data collection, categorising it into files and units. Eventually, data mining begins, and reflection and note-writing follows. Real analysis begins during reading and memoing, eventually creating categories, comparisons, further categorising data into matrices, trees and propositions. The final stage of spiral analysis is represented by visualisation of data and eventually by presentation of findings. It is the "spiral of describing, classifying and interpreting loop", where code or

[35] While working on this thesis, the lockdown situation did not enable conducting the interview in-person. The possibility of conducting the interview on-line was considered, however, due to the refusal of recordings of some of the respondents, it was unfeasible.

[36] Triangulation might also be called "cross examination", as it double or even triple checks specific data collected in the research. As such, it generally labels the use of multiple methods/data sources to increase the validity of findings. In terms of interpretivism, it might even offer a different perspective on the issue.

category emerge, that represents the heart of qualitative data analysis (Creswell 2007, p. 150-155).

The exception in terms of analysis were recorder interviews, where the analysis began with the transcription of them. In the case of recorded interviews, an analysis process begins with transcription, helping the researcher to recognise the intimacy with the data that is created by thorough repetition, and the attention the process focuses on micro-level features of recorded interaction (Della Noce 2006, p. 8). According to Heyl (2007, p. 373) even the respondent's hesitations, contradictions, topic about which little is said, and shift in verbal positioning all help to highlight complexities in what the respondent is actually saying. The transcription process of recorded interviews then offers a chance not only to "re-live" the interview, but also to focus on aspects unnoticed during the interview or even during the first round of the transcription. As such, the process of transcription requires the researcher to analyse the recording thoroughly, often spending several hours on one hour interview (Galletta 2013).

In the case of interviews which were not recorded due to the disapproval of respondent, the researcher has utilised extensive fieldnotes – full quotations, notes of impressions of the psychological state of the respondents, or even initial coding of assumed motivations. Especially during these interviews, the research needed to have been cautious of the intensity of field notes, as the process of note-making drew the attention of respondents and might have affected the way they responded, attempting to keep both themselves and the organisation in positive light and avoid the contrary (Myers 2012). Realising the potentially harmful effect of this tendency on the validity of data, the researcher had to adjust the number of notes taken given his best evaluation.

Once the first phase was finished, the concept of coding was used, drawing conclusions from radicalisation studies and psychology. Coding in this case represents the first significant step from description towards conceptualisation, requiring close attention to the data, discovering what is happening to it (Gubrium et al 2012). Coding in the process itself means to assign labels to certain parts of text, enabling the researcher to classify the data and filter it into trees and propositions. At first, there was the initial coding, introducing raw field data and basic categories. Then, as this research utilises radicalisation studies, prefigured codes, defined by previous research, were used, as well as emerging codes, based on developments in data. Lastly, focused coding highlighted and labelled emerging patterns (Creswell 2007). A result of this process

should eventually be a description of a culture-sharing group, based on thorough analysis of themes and its interpretation through theoretical lenses.

3.5 Research Ethics

In Zimbardo's words "every act of intervention in the life of an individual, a group, or an environment is a matter of ethics" (Zimbardo 2007, p. 232). As human beings are subjects to this research, ethical standards must be considered, but most importantly, they must be met. In general, the research should not hide its purpose, nor the fact that respondents participate in a study and benefits to participants should outweigh the risks (Creswell 2007). Furthermore, the principle of transparency should be applied – to avoid the problem of deception, the purpose of the research and five "questions" were openly declared from first contact with the gatekeeper. Every contact the researcher received since then, was first shortly introduced to the purpose and the nature of the research even before agreeing to the interview, and this knowledge and understanding was further developed at the beginning of the interview itself, once again.

To "*maintain confidentiality and protect the anonymity of individuals with whom we speak*" (Creswell 2007, pp. 141-142), individuals were assigned numbers and any potential information which would enable identification of an individual were left out – about all of which respondents were informed about at the beginning of an interview.

Regarding "seeking consent", due to the degree of distrust expressed by militiamen towards academia and existing rules in the Czech context,[37] no written (and signed) consent was requested, only verbal confirmation of agreement. Instead, the approval from the Commission for Ethics in Research of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University was sought. The Commission approved this research in an issued Statement on November 10th, 2020.

3.6 Limitations of the Research

The research is limited by several factors, like the selected methodology, theoretical and conceptual framework, but also by different types of psychologically

[37] Contrary to some Anglo-Saxon universities, in the Czech context, there is no need for signed consent to the research by the respondent – the research standards must be approved by the Ethical Committee "only".

driven biases and previous experience of militiamen with academia. After describing the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches, one must stress, that each of them bears consequential limitations on the research and answers it might offer. Beyond those already mentioned, such as the relatively small number of respondents[38] or limitations related to the conceptualisation, it is important to realise that respondents might have approached the research with a negative mindset, given the previous experience with media and experts on the topic.[39]

In terms of psychological drivers, preservation of self(-image) and rationalisation must especially be taken into account. Then in a more general sense, the interview itself bears traits that must be considered while analysing and interpreting the data and conclusions derived from it. Beyond mere exaggeration or ignorance of certain factors, as already explained in this study, an individual's behaviour bears specific traits when speaking of himself/herself. While explaining their own behaviour, people produce plausible answers, both when asked about recent events or events in the distant past (Myers 2012, p. 46). Similarly, self-interest tends to colour individual's social judgement, attributing more responsibility for mistakes to others, while in the case of accomplishment to himself/herself (Ibid, p. 36). And in the same manner, social behaviour is motivated by self-concern, aiming at preserving the positive light of oneself (Ibid.) Many of these attributes can be summarised as self-serving bias, which also includes the false consensus effect (Ibid., p. 66) and the false uniqueness effect (Ibid., p. 67), generally leading to maintaining a positive image both knowingly and unknowingly, both to oneself and to others. As a sort of compensation for these tendencies and psychological mechanisms, the researcher has often guided the interview towards fellow militiamen, to minimise the defence of "self" in the social world.

The researcher realises that another limit is himself, given a lack of experience in similar research and related factors. An additional limitation of sorts consists of the persona of the researcher himself. Given the lack of experience, attributional errors, unrecognised patterns or misinterpretation is assumed to be possible. Similarly, the initial uncertainty might have affected the ways interviews were taken, especially those conducted in the earliest phase of the research. Some of these negative factors could

[38] Affected especially by Covid-19 restrictions, the total number of respondents is only 11.
[39] During interviews, several respondents stated they were betrayed or intentionally harmed (as an organisation) by media and/or academia "as National Militia and its members were described as extremist".

have been reduced by, e.g. participant or non-participant observation during a longer field presence, which was, unfortunately, hampered by the pandemic restrictions. For the very same reason, several interviews with other members of NM were also cancelled (by potential interviewees).

Empirical Part

The purpose of this section of this thesis is to present the results of the researcher's fieldwork. Building on the theoretical and conceptual framework (Chapters 1 and 2) and utilising described methodology (Chapter 3), this chapter offers an overview of certain patterns important for answering the research questions. Although the name of this section already defines its content, it is important realise that patterns in data and their interpretation are not intended as mere description. This thesis also intends to show the relation between identified patterns and possible implications for the case study, but also for the whole field. To achieve this objective, the empirical part describes, but also explains the data and puts it in context.

With that said, the empirical part starts with chapter 4, where the organisation studied, the National Militia[40] (NM), is characterised. Chapter 5 then analyses members of NM, also utilising public data, but centred mainly around the analysed sample; this chapter identifies shared personality traits among respondents, as well as their mindset. Chapter 6 represents the core of the study, analysing motivation to join, motivation to stay, but also motivation for disengagement (from NM). Finally, chapter 7 binds the empirical chapters together, by evaluation the fulfilment of objectives, further analysing the presented findings and their meaning and finally discussion about implications of the research.

As for a summary of the section, both situational (motivations) and dispositional (personality traits) factors appear to affect individuals' decision to join (or stay in) NM. Whereas key dispositional factors are heightened conservativism, authoritarianism and moral arbitrariness (accompanied by narcissism in some cases), situational factors appear to be more complex. In the early stages (of NM and decision-making process), situational factors determined frustration, fear, need for belonging and thrill seeking as dominant motivations. However, as the situation changed, so did the motivation, resulting in a dominance of bonding, ideological alignment and quest for significance (a further summary of these findings is offered in the Conclusion).

[40] The name of the organisation has been translated as "National Home Guard" in the past by Mareš and Milo (2019, p. 131). Despite this previously made translation, with respect to both authors, this thesis uses a different translation: National Militia. The reason behind this change is quite simple and pragmatic. The term Militia is considered as more easily understood in an international context and generally used more often for similar organisations (that is: paramilitary groups organised on the territory of a state without its approval). In contrast, Home Guard (e.g. in the UK) was established with approval of state as a direct support of its policies, helping its security forces.

4. About National Militia

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to familiarise the reader with the organisation studied in this thesis. This chapter's ambition is to show the uniqueness of NM (and similar organisations) in the Czech context. By doing so, the chapter provides a *leitmotiv* of sorts for further chapters, but it also explains why NM has become a topic in the Czech security environment and thereby a relevant topic for this thesis. The last but not least significant purpose is to establish an informational background, based on which the thesis can operate with possible future scenarios in chapter 7.

To follow its purpose, this chapter firstly offers a brief summary of the Czech experience with paramilitary organisations. Subchapter 4.2 then offers a historical overview of NM's development and established relations. The core of this chapter is subchapter 4.3, in which actual activities and proclamations made by NM and its members are summarised. The last part of this chapter then discusses how NM has been addressed by the Czech media and state.

In terms of the content of this chapter, National Militia (NM) is a paramilitary organisation established in 2015 by the National Democracy party (without the approval of the state). NM profiles itself as protector of Czech towns, regions and families, responding to increasing fear of Islamisation and destabilisation of Europe. To fulfil this purpose, NM organises military-like drills, border and town guards and "military days", often supervised by those of its members who are former military experts (or by external experts). Although NM claims to be an apolitical, public and "above-party" organisation, it often engages in and comments on politics, mainly in the form of online statements, but also by open letters to state envoys, organising "official delegations" to foreign territories and organising political gatherings. From the position of the state and "mainstream" media, NM is considered to be an extremist organisation, undermining the democratic principles of the state. As for security agencies, according to available information, NM has mostly been monitored to prevent it from engaging in criminal activities; yet arrests were made in a structurally related organisation organised for the support of Donbas-region-separatists.

4.1 National Militia in Context

Based on historical experience, the term "Militia" bears almost an exclusively negative association in the Czech environment. For those familiar with the Czech security environment, it should not be a surprise, given the fact that "Civilian support of police (or military)", namely "Lidové milice" (People's Militias) and "Pomocník Veřejné Bezpečnosti" (Assistant to Public Security (Police)), often consisted of the "most indoctrinated" supporters of the previous (communist) regime. As a matter of fact, research suggests that it was these militiamen (with arms ready) who were prepared to suppress the Velvet Revolution protests by force. (Bašta 2008, p. 99)

Speaking in terms of modern history, the Czech Republic has little or no experience with paramilitary units on its territory; the more surprising are the numbers and capabilities of those emerging in 2015-2017. Contrary to other states in Europe, the Czech Republic has no official civilian support for police[41], even 30 years after the Velvet Revolution (when the last organisation was disbanded). In terms of unofficial organisations, emerging groups who called themselves "Militias" or "Neighbourhood Watches" were mostly related to far-right organisations, such as Odin's Soldiers (Ministerstvo Vnitra, 2018, p. 16) or National Resistance of Silesia (Právo, 2005), consisting of up to 30 people, aiming at intimidating Roma citizens (Mareš and Milo 2019). The exceptions to this "far-right" trend were then e.g. neighbourhood watches in the towns Jesenice or Chomutov, where temporary organisations were created and intended to halt the suddenly-increasing crime rates (mainly robberies) (e.g. Franzkiová and Bohuslavová, 2020). In sum, these organisations were almost exclusively of a local (or regional) character and turned out to be incapable of long-term functioning. Additionally, their nature was not paramilitary in the true sense, but rather that of vigilante groups, as Mareš and Milo note (Mareš and Milo 2019, p. 130) The sudden emergence of National Militia in 2016, claiming to have branches in more than 750 Czech towns (Národní Domobrana, 2016a) only a year after its establishment, thereby represented a significant security development.

[41] The only "support" for security forces are "active reserves" of the Czech Army (Aktivní Zálohy Armády České republiky). These individuals must pass basic military training and must attend military exercises on a regular basis.

4.2 National Militia and Historical Development

"*On August 15th 2015, on the anti-governmental 3rd camp of the people, organised by National Democracy on ancient Vyšehrad* (…) *citizens (and first members of NM) have bent the knee and thereby demonstrated their standfast commitment to defend their homeland. This special unforgettable moment has become historically known as "Vyšehradská přísaha" (Vyšehrad's oath*)…"

(Národní Demokracie 2016)

National Militia emerged in 2015 as a reaction to growing fear of migration and "Islamisation". As the migration crisis reached its peak in 2015[42] and provided momentum for an already-existing fear of "Islamisation" and "culture war", far-right parties and organisations used this momentum to gain attention. The Czech Republic was no exception to the rest of Europe in this regard. Several movements were established, such as *Unit Against Islam* (Blok proti Islámu) or *We Don't Want Islam in the Czech Republic* (Islám v ČR nechceme).[43]

The establishment of the National Militia can be traced to the controversial Národní Demokracie party (National Democracy) and its activist-leader Adam B. Bartoš. Bartoš is known for his grandiose statements and activities, for some of which he has been convicted. To list a few, Bartoš became notorious for discussing "the need to solve the Jewish question, which has not yet been solved satisfyingly" (Echo24 2015), creating lists of Jews (Laudin 2016) or for using the photo of Czech prime minister Sobotka as a target in shooting practice (Echo 24 2016). It was he, on behalf of the National Democracy party, who made the announcement of the establishment of National Militia on the website of National Democracy, claiming to react to a "significantly worsening situation, as a result of massive migration wave" (Národní Demokracie 2016).

Declaring independence from National Democracy in 2016, the National Militia' Council[44] was established and quickly gained attention and recruits. "Handing over the

[42] "Migration crisis" is usually a term connected to the intensified migration to Europe from African and Middle Eastern countries after the year 2011 as a result of Arab Spring unrests. Subsequently, the numbers of refugees multiplied during 2014 and 2015, as the Syrian Civil war intensified. For more, see Fontanari and Ambrosini (2018).

[43] Neither of the mentioned movements provides an official translation of their name – therefore translations provided here may differ from later historical versions, should the movements be active again.

[44] Council of National Militia (Rada Národní Domobrany) is a leading organ of NM. „It consists of three most esteemed members (…) and has (beside others) a representative function (to the public). In practice,

agenda of National Militia to the Council", National Militia denounced all its formal ties to National Democracy and quickly gained a significant number of members. Claiming to have 2400 members organised in 90 branches across the Czech Republic (Národní domobrana, 2016a), National Militia began to organise military-like drills, border patrols, and town patrols (Veselý, 2018), but also began to openly question and reject Czech foreign policy. These "wild beginnings", as leaders of National Militia describe this period, eventually escalated with the secession of some members into "*Zemská Domobrana"* (Land Militia)[45] and intense media attention, given the statement of Martin Holkup from an organisation not distant from National Militia[46], in which he claimed that "… *the people should shoot its government in the first day of war. And this is a word I send to our politicians* (…) *bullets will be fired*." (ČT24 2016).

As for the period from 2018 until the present (2021), National Militia has tightened up its recruitment strategy and gradually decreased its regular activities, mainly due to subsiding migration. The interest of media and competition with other organisations eventually lead National Militia to basically close up its ranks and establish a "control mechanism"[47] for new members in order to avoid the acceptance of extremists, provocateurs and (governmental and media) infiltrators (information gained from various respondents). Simultaneously, the interest and enthusiasm of militiamen decreased, given the (yet) unfulfilled scenarios of cultural war and increased attention of Czech police, counter-intelligence and the government in general. Since 2019, Czech government began to discuss the legal proposal which would ban both militia-like-organisations and membership in them – suggesting a fine for membership up to 200.000 CZK (approx. 7,875 €) (Ministerstvo Vnitra, 2021). The significance of the

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the Council coordinates the activities of regional commanders, issues statements and manages the whole organisation. For more, see Národní Domobrana, 2021a.

[45] In Mareš and Milo (2019), the organisation is translated as "Land Home Guard". The translation here differs for the same reasons explained in case of NM (for more, see the footnote 36)

[46] Československí v záloze pro mír (ČSVVPM, Czechoslovak reserve soldiers for peace – as translated by Mareš and Milo 2019, p. 131) represented a significant source of members for National Militia in the initial phase (and is assumed to serve as a model for NM). It was established on January 1st 2015 as a Facebook group "under the pressure of circumstances" gathering like-minded soldiers in reserve or retirement. Marek Obrtel (the longest acting leader of NM) was a distinct member of this organisation, and according to their websites also served as a trigger that lead to its establishment. During 2015, Obrtel left the organisation over „different visions of organisation" and its "non-functional nature". For more about ČSVVPM see: Českoslovenští vojáci v záloze proti válce plánované velením NATO (2021)

[47] This control mechanism is built on "confidence". In practice, individuals "have to attend some events" and prove themselves as trustworthy, to gain full membership. The primary objective of this approach is to eliminate radicals and extremists, in the words of respondents, but also provocateurs and infiltrators, who would like to gather information about NM or discredit it. Before gaining membership, there is a "probation phase", where the individual has only limited access to NM system and receives only limited information (allegedly).

proposed law and the media-caused pressure for militiamen is also proven by the fact that a splinter organisation of National Militia, Land Militia, has announced its disbandment in reaction to it (Malát, 2020).

4.3 What is National Militia about?

In the words of NM's members, National Militia's main objective is "(…) *to defend the homes of Czech citizens, their lives, health and property, hence also to help to keep social peace, stability and law*, (…)" (Národní Domobrana, 2016b). In the released video announcing the establishment of the "Council of National Militia", leading members of the organisation speak of their main objectives, purposes and motivations. "*That is the purpose of (National) Militia. To defend, on the basis of personal initiative and free will of citizens, to defend their homes and help to establish a regular, nationalist-thinking, state-establishing army,"* (Ibid., 6:19) they continue. According to their repetitive proclamations, the organisation is based on the principles of freedom, human dignity, active citizenship and non-profit legal activity. The nature of the organisation is supposed to be an "*independent, public, apolitical and above-parties initiative of citizens"* (Národní Domobrana 2021).

Despite its proclamations of being apolitical, however, National Militia continuously comments on and engages in politics. In the very same introductory speech mentioned above, leaders of NM speak of the incentive for the establishment being the "… *complete dysfunction of our state. Our politicians act only in accordance with the interests of foreign countries, mostly in favour of the USA, Germany and Brussels (the EU) (...) which are in direct contradiction with Czech interests* …" (Národní Domobrana, 2016b, 8:27). On its websites, National Militia repeatedly expresses disapproval of Czech membership in the "criminal organisation NATO", as well as in the EU and generally speaks of conspiracies in Czech government against its own citizens. Beyond this pure criticism, NM also publishes political statements refusing state policies and decisions, as in the case of the Vrbětice Affair,[48] in reaction to which NM directly addressed the honorary Russian consul in Czech Republic stating: *"(...) we address you on a matter of categorical refusal of statements and actions of*

[48] Vrbětice Affair refers to an explosion at the ammunition depot in Vrbětice (Czech Republic) in 2014. According to information published in 2021 by the Czech prime minister, the explosion was a result of GRU's (Russian Military Intelligence) activities (based on information from Czech counterintelligence and investigative reports). The Russian Federation (RF), as well as several "conspiracist" Czech websites, labelled these accusations as proofless provocations, intended to damage Czech-Russian relations and impose further sanctions on RF. (For more see e.g. Bellingcat 2021)

government and Parliament of Czech Republic in the so called Vrbětice affair and related matters. We are well aware, that the government of Czech Republic without any direct and verifiable proof and testimony, and very likely on purpose, has unleashed an absolutely unprecedented campaign against the Russian Federation (...) We believe (...) that actors in such affairs, like that called "Vrbětice", will receive a righteous punishment." (Národní Domobrana, 2021b).

The main figures and even some "regular" militiamen are (or have been) politically active. The political engagement of NM and its members does not end with proclamations and political criticism on the official websites of NM. The original "Council" – Nela Lisková, Marek Obrtel and František Krejča – can be taken as an example. Each of these was a candidate in Czech elections during his time on the "Council" (Krejča, no date; Česká strana národně sociální 2018; Prchal 2016). Nela Lisková was even an honorary consul of the unsanctioned embassy of Donetsk Republic in the Czech Republic (Prchal 2016). Even should one consider these activities as those of an individual (that is personal activities unrelated to the NM), similar events were organised for the whole organisation, such as manifestations in front of the Ukrainian Embassy under the banner of the National Militia (Národní domobrana, 2016c)[49], public speeches at demonstrations organised by far right parties (ČTK 2018) and "official" envoys of National Militia to Donetsk and Luhansk regions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Donetsk People's Republic 2016), all of which were organised and attended by leading members of the organisation. Further proof of this assumed tendency are then, e.g. organised participation at concerts of controversial bands[50] (which could be labelled as political mobilisation given their nature) or attendance at gatherings with political parties (as in the case of "Patriotic Gathering Příčovy"[51]). The resulting image of these activities then portrays NM as politically active, although it claims to apolitical and to have no official ties to political parties.

[49] Although calling for "Memory of liberation of Czech people …", National Militia issued a statement, according to which: "This year's gathering will take place in front of the Embassy of Ukraine, where we will support the severely-tested citizens of Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics, whose ancestors participated in 1945 in the liberation of our fatherland…" For more, see: NWOO (2016)

[50] An example can be found in "Akce Pochodeň, 20.5. 2017" (Národní Domobrana 2017). This event announced on the Facebook account of NM was coordinated with the band Ortel, enabling free entry for NM members attending in uniform. Ortel is regularly labelled as "extremist" by mainstream media (Pečinka 2015), as its lyrics and statements are often aimed at minorities (especially Muslims).

[51] Patriotic Gathering Příčovy is an event organised in Castle Příčovy, gathering organisations and political parties who claimed to be nationalistic. The event usually consists of several panel discussions, where the topics of international politics, security and historical/societal issues are debated.

In terms of its primary activities, National Militia conducts military like drills under the supervision of military experts and organises "family-like" events. The most eye-catching activities of NM were naturally the border- and town-patrols organised mainly in 2016-2018 (source). Beside these, however, NM also organised tactical and strategic exercises, like CQC (Close Quarter Combat), Enter and Clear Building drills, interception of a vehicle or even artillery strategies and ambush attacks (Hybner 2019[52]). These drills and exercises are supervised either by militiamen who served in the military in the past (mostly in the Czechoslovak People's Army), some of whom were high-ranking officers, or even by external experts, like IDF[53] consultant Daniel Bohbot (Ibid.). Additionally, events like climbing trainings, radio station tests, shooting at the range or family days consisting of hiking and sitting and singing around a fire are also "part of the program" (Národní Domobrana 2020). These events of an entrepreneurship-nature[54] are the more interesting, as they aimed also at the families (including children) of militiamen, supporting group coherence and bonding. The picture is then only complemented by "Military capability days" organised for schools, where militiamen supplement their regular classes with basic survival skills, or even "grenade throwing" competitions (Dragoun 2019).

4.4 Attention of Media and Governmental organisations

Both media and governmental agencies speak of National Militia as "from their nature xenophobic" and "a significant security" risk. The most significant driver of this approach are probably political statements made by members of the militia-like organisation, which in some cases even directly threatened the government. Once analysed from a broader perspective, one might also find long-term consequences of "politicised paramilitary organisations" as they: a) represent a threat to the democratic principles of the Czech Republic and b) in terms of national security and sovereignty, states are assumed to be weak, once parallel military structures arise, as they challenge the state's monopoly on violence.

[52] Militias conducted a few coordinated drills and eagerly posted their activities online with thorough descriptions. One of such exercises was published with documentation in their news project "Militiaman 2019". For an online version of this document see: Hybner (2019)

[53] Israeli Defense Forces

[54] Entrepreneurship refers to the nature of these activities, as their primary purpose was not to increase neither the skill and abilities of individual, nor the ability of the whole group, but rather to provide them with free-time activity, and making the organisation more attractive even for relatives of NM's members.

Media usually display paramilitary organisations in Czech Republic (incl. NM) as pro-Russian extremists and conspiracy-spreading pensioners, who "play soldiers" in border regions. Perhaps the most famous incident, which might have framed the whole phenomenon, was a statement made by Martin Holkup in 2015, for which he was prosecuted (on behalf of another paramilitary organisation[55]): "*In our proclamation, there is a quote of Ernest Hemingway, which clearly says that the people should shoot their government on the first day of war. And that is the word I send to politicians, if they lead us to it, there will be shooting in the parliament. Let them realise that."* (ČT24 2016). Since then, journalists paid close attention to similar organisations (incl. NM), and thoroughly mapped their statements as well as their activities (Malecký 2019). Also monitoring general trends in their development, media in recent years assume paramilitary organisations to be in decline (Malecký 2018). Nevertheless, even should they decline, they do remain an object of interest, as some of these reports even go as far as to claim NM to have ties to Russian intelligence services, via known business acquaintances and contacts with officials (of e.g. Donetsk and Luhansk republics) (Máca 2020).

As for the state approach, paramilitary organisations appear to be closely monitored by the security apparatus, mainly focusing on potential lawbreaking. Until recently, governmental representatives' reaction consisted of a) local authorities mostly refusing to cooperate with NM and b) central government introducing a bill to ban militia-like-organisations (and proposing a fine for membership in them) (Ministerstvo Vnitra 2021[56]). Security agencies then, with BIS (Security Information Service – counterintelligence) in the front, continuously reported on their development and on their activities. The public part of these reports usually confirmed allegations made by the media, that is, the extremist nature and pro-Russian activism of such organisations (BIS 2017, 2018, 2019). The "Manifestations of extremism and prejudice violence"

[55] Martin Holkup was at the time a member of Československí Vojáci v záloze za mír (for more, see footnote 46)

[56] During 2019 a parliamentary leaflet adjusting current weapons legislation was announced, banning paramilitary organisations and suggesting fining each member who would have joined such an organisation. The law was eventually enacted, stating the following: *"§3 (1) It is forbidden to establish, organise or supply with weapons an armed group, or participate in its activities. (2) As an armed group is understood as a group of people that simultaneously a) fulfils the nature of paramilitary armed unit, b) is designated to armed promotion of objectives based on political, religious or other ideology and c) handles weapons, strives for gaining access to weapons, or organises individuals that handle weapons."* (Poslanecká sněmovna Parlamentu České republiky 2021). Despite the law being effective since January 30 (2021), NM still remains active and is not prosecuted by the state. This issue and its consequences are further discussed in Chapter 7.

report labels paramilitary organisations as "… *from their nature xenophobic and totally refusing foreign-policy directives of the state and therefor it is possible, to consider the potential realisation of such projects as a significant security risk"* (Ministerstvo vnitra[57] 2019a, p. 13). The most recent development is the arrest of leading figures of the Czechoslovak Soldiers in Reserve for Peace (Československí vojáci v záloze za mír[58]), who are prosecuted for supporting terrorism. According to the prosecution, the five arrested members should have organized the departure of Czech citizens to the Donbas region to support the insurgency,[59] organising travel, collecting material support and money for its realisation (Aktuálně.cz 2021).

Finally, in terms of academic approach, experts call for caution, as NM is assumed to be rooted in extremism and to undermine the state's monopoly on violence. A prominent Czech expert on domestic extremism, Miroslav Mareš evaluates NM and parallel organisations as a "new wave of vigilantism", focused on migration and based on extremist beliefs on one side and pro-Russian sentiments on the other (Mareš and Milo 2019, pp. 144-146). Suggesting a broader perspective, Mareš also suggested such organisations could play a vital role in fulfilling far-right scenarios of a Europe torn apart by civil wars and insurgencies – yet Mareš concludes that the fulfilment of such a scenario, a transformation of these actors from free cells to other organisational units, would be necessary (Mareš 2012). Although Mareš recognised the low-probability of such a scenario under the current circumstances, his thesis partially deals with the underlying assumption of state-parallel militias. In sum, once such organisations appear and the state is unable to address them properly, it is considered to be evidence of a weak or failed state (Ahram 2011). Although the typology of such organisations might differ, as might their effect, the basic existence of them challenges the state's monopoly on violence on their territory, basically corrupting this pillar of a state's sovereignty (Aliyev 2016).

[57] Ministry of Interior of Czech Republic.
[58] Over time, numerous branches of the above-mentioned organisation appeared (e.g. Czechoslovak soldiers in reserve against the war waged by NATO). For the purpose of this thesis, their mother organisation is used as a point of reference.
[59] In the aftermath of the Ukrainian revolution in 2014, Eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk declared independence on Kyiv. As the Ukrainian central government does not recognise these regions as independent, what followed was an armed struggle between Ukrainian forces and insurgents (usually referred to a War on Donbas). The controversy of the war is supported by the fact, that similarly to Crimea, numerous reports documented the presence of Russian troops actively participating in the conflict. The potential support of NM's members might therefor be assessed as "Support for Terrorism" or "Service in a Foreign Army", both of which are considered illegal under Czech law.

Lastly, also some advocates of paramilitary organisations can be found, usually among former military officers and/or security experts with whom militias cooperate (e.g. the already-mentioned instructor D. Bohbot), or even among some political parties.[60] These advocates call for a different approach by the Czech security system, as the police lacks voluntary- (civilian-)support since the reform of the police after the Velvet Revolution. According to them, the establishment of such an organisation might improve the Czech security environment. Needless to say, this argument is recognised, as e.g. Libor Stejskal notes, that the state should consider *"(...) using the potential (...) of individuals offering help to police, sacrificing their time and money, (...) especially should a time of crisis come*.", yet he immediately calls for caution, as "(…) *people with a distinct extremist background must not get into the security forces*…" (*DVTV* 2018).

[60] National Militia finds advocates mainly among members of Communist party of Bohemia and Moravia party (KSČM) or Party of Direct Democracy (SPD) (labelled as extremist by the Ministry of Interior).

5. Who Are Militiamen

Chapter 5 is purposed to profile militiamen, in order to provide some basic information, but more importantly to explain shifts in motivations as introduced later. Starting with the descriptive purpose of this chapter, the hereby-presented profiles (based on the shared traits of respondents) might serve as a foundation for deeper understanding of similar individuals and communication with them (either on a governmental, NGO or purely academic level). While these traits and beliefs are not of primary concern to this study, their proper identification and understanding are integral to the core of the final argument of this thesis. The explanatory purpose of this chapter thereby resists in the suggestion that certain personality traits might have played an important role in later shifts in motivations of research participants. The analysis of these personality traits is therefore necessary for further arguments presented in this thesis.

Bearing these ambitions in mind, the chapter starts with presenting demographic information about the analysed sample. In subchapter 5.2, the core of the chapter, specific shared personality traits are identified and demonstrated in short quotes from research participants. Perhaps unorthodoxly, parts of this subchapter (5.2) contain brief theoretical conceptualisations that are considered necessary to back the claims made (further argumentation is provided in subchapter 5.2). Finally, part 5.3 intends to offer a purely militiamen's perspective of NM, its role in the Czech Republic and militiamen's role as members of NM.

Summarising the content, the analysed sample consists of few, yet varied types of respondents, including regular members and leaders, men and women, older and younger. Despite their different personal background however, these individuals manifested several shared personality traits, mainly heightened conservativism, authoritarianism and moral arbitrariness, and only some also narcissism or rescue personality. Supported by these traits, respondents believe themselves to be patriots, normal good guys capable of critical thinking, who offer protection from incoming danger. As a reaction, however, they are overlooked by the state and mainstream society, and in some cases in prosecuted for what they believe in.

5.1 Demographics

"Well, let's say, two thousand is too little and three thousand is too much. (…) But only like twenty percent is active …"

(Resp. 3)

In terms of demographics, NM claims to have over 2,500 registered members, yet only some hundreds of them are active, at most. According to official statements of NM, e.g. from July 2016, there are over 2,500 militiamen in NM alone (Národní Domobrana 2016). When asked during the interviews, however, even leading figures with access to "the database" did not claim the same number[61]. According to (Resp. 1), there are over 1,500 "very active" members, and thousands of those who are "only regularly" active. This is in direct contradiction with others, claiming "only" hundreds of active members (e.g. Resp. 2, 3, 5). Educated guesses (of informants) estimate only around 20% of registered members are somewhat active (Ibid.)

There is a great disparity in the distribution of militiamen across the Czech Republic, as there are regions counting between 5-15 members and those counting over 100. As will be further elaborated on in the "Motivations" part of this study, different groups of NM differ greatly in terms of numbers and activity. According to the statements of respondents, the strongest regions appear to be the Pilsen Region and the Moravian-Silesian Region with over 100 members and different-sized activities a few times a month (Resp. 5). The weakest, on the other hand, appear to be Hradec Králové Region and Liberec Region, with only up to 20 members, only a couple of which are active. Their activity is then usually conducted on a monthly basis, at best (e.g. Resp. 11, Resp. 2).

Militiamen view NM as a highly heterogenous group, consisting of a whole spectrum of "the people" (of the Czech Republic). In this regard, NM claimed to have 87.8% men and 12.2% women (Národní Domobrana 2016)[62] in 2016. As for the average age, militiamen stated that they have mainly 40 and older "comrades-in-arms", expecting the average to be between 50 and 60 years old in general. Lastly, as for the

[61] The validity of the data should be considered as roughly informative at best. Whereas early statements made by NM might have been overestimations, to attract further recruits, claims made by respondents might have been intentionally misleading, as a result of mistrust towards the researcher. E.g. Report of Ministry of Interior from 2019 claims "paramilitary groups" to be based on around 200 individuals of retirement or pre-retirement age. (Ministerstvo vnitra 2019b, p. 6)

[62] The reliability of these information should be a subject of discussion, as they might intentionally differ from reality (either for security or marketing purposes of NM)

socio-economic factor, NM claims to represent all "classes" and groups. "*Former soldiers, policemen, voluntary firefighters, paramedics, teachers, businessman, members of sport- and patriotic-organisations enlist in National Militia*," stated NM on its website during 2016 (Národní Domobrana 2016)

The sample analysed de facto mirrors the above-mentioned data and claims: it consists of 10 males and 1 female; 5 of whom represent different levels of leadership of NM and 6 who labelled themselves as regular members. As for the regional distribution, 6 regions are represented in this dataset.[63] The average age approximately 57 years old, with the youngest respondent being 45 years old, the oldest 77 years old. As for personal background, all respondents, except for one, were in a stable intimate relationship a "long time before the militia and this interview". Similarly, all members had families (who support them), yet three of them had no children of their own. Perhaps interestingly, considering the suggestions of some early radicalisation studies, five of the respondents have university degrees (some reaching even PhD titles or equivalents of it), while the rest claimed to have finished high school "only". Correspondingly to reports of governmental agencies, 7 respondents claimed to have previous military training (3 of whom served in Czechoslovakian People's Army - ČSLA).

5.2 Personality Traits

This subchapter represents the core of the whole of chapter 5. Its purpose is to introduce personality traits identified as shared among respondents, and thereby prepare the argument in the upcoming chapters: that personality traits may have played a significant role in shifting motivations. In terms of the rather general purpose of this subchapter, yet no less important, the observed traits of militiamen might build a foundation for researchers who would study the psychological profile of militiamen. Additionally, the content of this subchapter offers a deeper profile of militiamen, allowing more effective communication with them, or further data for risk (or integration) assessment.

Before proceeding with the chapter, the limitations of the presented claims must be stressed (above those already introduced in the *Methodology* chapter). Psychological

[63] Czech Republic has 13 regions total (Prague, the capital, being one of them).

analysis is far from being simple but as it is, it offers space for attributional errors in identifying personality traits and disorders.[64] The findings presented here should be submitted to more critical evaluation, given the fact that psychoanalysis was not the main interest of this thesis, the rather unexperienced researcher and rather limited sample analysed. Given all these considerations, the research finds it crucial to submit the presented finding to further research so that it can be either confirmed or invalidated.

Another fact worthy of mentioning and requiring explanation is the rather unorthodox introduction of (yet another) theoretical concept. This subchapter introduces the reader to the Moral Foundation Theory (MFT) and Authoritarianism conceptualisation. Explaining the overall necessity for these concepts, this study aims to avoid any emotional value attributed to "conservative" and "authoritarian" by public discourse, by anchoring the terms in academic literature. However, that might not be the only explanation required. From an academic point of view, including theoretical concepts in the empirical section might be found unorthodox. One might rightfully argue that these should have been included in the theoretical section, rather than here, in the empirical one. As such, the chosen approach should be explained. Firstly, the hereby introduced concepts represent a context for the identified patterns in the data. Their introduction is therefor considered a further and deeper explanation of the findings, rather than another theoretical guideline for this whole research. Secondly, by including these concepts in the empirical section, the researcher aims at greater text cohesion. Both concepts are introduced only briefly, and they are immediately applied to interpreting the data. By doing so, readers are allowed to keep the concept in mind for the required time and more easily orient themselves in the presented findings.

5.2.1. Heightened Conservativism

All interviewed members of NM demonstrated a heightened level of conservativism (though with different intensity), both on a political level, and on a moral level. Generally speaking, militiamen adhere to established customs and traditions, support authorities, ingroup loyalty, justice and care. Taken without context, these observations might not seem as important, however, with a closer look, they lay

[64] Attribution error is considered as an option, due to the complexity of psychoanalysis, experience of the researcher, tendencies to rationalisation of respondents, etc. Further variables limiting the hereby provided findings, such as limited size of sample or the chosen methodology, are further described in Chapter 3 of this text – Methodology.

the foundations for moral justifications of their decisions (such as joining NM). More importantly for this study, it is assumed that heightened conservative values provide an explanation for the specific motivations identified. To describe the identified patterns, this subchapter briefly introduces the Moral Foundation Theory (MFT), including the assumed five foundations of morality. The second part then presents specific manifestations of conservative-based morale of militiamen. Given the fact that moral reasoning represents a significant part of "Motivations", only basic tenets are offered in this part.

Finally, as suggested in the introduction of subchapter 5.2, this part introduces (yet another) theoretical concept. Thereby, this subchapter is rather unorthodox in terms of its structure. Yet, as already argued for, it proceeds as such, as this concept only provides further context for the presented findings. Also, it is believed that by including the conceptualisation right before the data, greater text coherence and thereby understanding of findings is enabled (for more, see the explanation provided in the beginning of subchapter 5.2).

Conservative – Liberal Dyad: Moral Foundation Theory

Moral Foundation Theory assumes human morality to be founded on five psychological foundations: virtues of harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity. According to Moral Foundation theorists (MFT), human morality is based on more than is covered by the traditional Kohlberg-Gilligan[65] domains of justice and care (Haidt and Graham, 2007). It claims morality to be based on the five above-mentioned virtues and perceptions of their importance – the difference in their perception then differentiates what is labelled as "Liberals" and "Conservatives", who value the virtues differently. Whereas Liberals tend to base their morality mainly on "harm/care" and "fairness/reciprocity", Conservatives tend to consider all five as important (Graham et al., 2009). As for what each of these five foundations represent, the literature claims following:

1) **Harm/Care** - According to MFT, the first foundation of morality is the Harm/Care virtue, which stems from emotions of compassion in response to

[65] L. Kohlberg and C. Gilligan are assumed to be de facto founders of the modern field of moral psychology. While the former suggested morality to be based on justice, the latter suggested care to be the main source. Eventually, both of these suggestions were acknowledged, yet the debate over the superior importance of one of them continued. (For more see Gilligan and Wiggins 1987 and Kohlberg 1969)

harm and cruelty done to members of an in-group (Fulgoni et al, 2016). Important for both conservative and liberal moralities, this first element of morality has developed from the mother-child relationship. Later developing to social interaction generally, it has the potential to feel emotion of compassion as a response to harm and suffering of others.

2) **Fairness/Reciprocity** A second of MFT's virtues of morality stems from reciprocal altruism, including anger, guilt and gratitude, eventually leading to virtues like fairness and justice (Trivers 1971). Resulting from inter-personal interactions within groups, societies across cultures manifested feelings of shame, guilt, anger or gratitude as a result of their interactions. Eventually, fairness and gratitude became positively valued, being associated with positive emotions.
3) **Ingroup/Loyalty** The third foundation of morality according to MFT is Ingroup/Loyalty, being created on both the micro level (family) and macro level (state). Associated with a general need for belonging and need for order (for easier understanding of the surrounding world), individuals tend to support and enhance their membership in groups. This general tendency then leads to construction of virtues like patriotism, heroism, and loyalty; criticism of one's group may then be perceived as betrayal or even treason (Haidt and Graham, 2007; pp. 104).
4) **Authority/Respect** A fourth value of MFT is Authority/Respect, stemming from hierarchical structures inherent in human society. It induces respect, awe and admiration toward legitimate authorities, supporting good leadership and punishing bad leadership (Fulgoni et al., 2016). Interestingly, the actual understanding of this foundation differs, as does its cultural interpretation: whereas some value high subordination to collective needs, others value individualism (intentionally oversimplified).
5) **Purity/Sanctity** Last but not least, the fifth virtue of morality is purity/sanctity, supporting "moral individuals" and refusing those who are impure and debased (e.g. those motivated by lust, gluttony, greed and anger) (Haidt 2006). Interconnected with the previous four, morality often dictates supporting the moral code adopted in society. Those who follow it support order and stability, and are thereby morally approved by others. Those who

do not, on the contrary, but defy the order and disrupt it, support moral deviance and thereby become undesirable.

NM members' opposition to certain political topics might be explained by different moral foundations. Based on the different importance of above-mentioned virtues, the evaluation of morality might differ. As Haidt and Graham suggest (2007), researchers in moral psychology and social justice have agreed that morality is a matter of harm, rights and justice. On this definition, conservative opposition to e.g. social justice programs, is assumed to be immoral and has been explained as a product of various immoral processes, such as system justification or social dominance orientation (e.g. Prato et al 1994). Similar conclusions might be drawn on NM's members' statements, yet the author of this study advises accepting the suggestion made by MFT – that the morality/immorality matrix is not black and white, and the morality scale of respondents might differ substantially from that of "Liberals". Revealing this scale and providing an understanding of it might further explain the motivation of Militiamen to engage in NM's activities. Before proceeding any further, it is important to realise that MFT is a nativist theory and such does not need any version of modularity to be true; at the same time, it is also a cultural-psychological theory, assuming culture and psyche to be highly connected (Shweder 1990).

MTF Application: Moral Conservatism of Militiamen

All respondents (each with a different intensity) manifested signs of personality traits that correspond with "Conservative moral reasoning". While interviewed, militiamen demonstrated generally similar values and judgement of public and personal affairs. Utilising the MFT framework, these expressed opinions are assumed to correspond with a Conservative moral foundation. Respondents based their actions on the perceived incapability of the state to take care of them and their interests; the militia is then perceived as a tool to provide militiamen and their families with safety (harm/care). Consequently, the mainstream and international community is assumed to be acting unfairly, as it supports foreign migrants coming to their countries; it is a duty of militiamen to remedy this situation. Thirdly, by supporting foreign immigrants, the mainstream and the state betrays its ingroup – which NM fights by supporting nationalism. Fourthly, by support multi-culturalism and by weakening the armed forces,

the current regime undermines traditional authorities and order. Finally, those who fight for correcting these wrongdoings, or at least recognise them and publicly name them, are viewed as "pure".

1) **Harm/Care** While advocating for the necessity of NM, all NM's members stated they were motivated by the duty to protect their families and towns; similarly, all perceived a great injustice being done by the state, which is assumed to fail in its basic responsibilities. According to testimonies of members of NM, the Czech Republic is incapable of effectively dealing with criminality and protecting "the people". In terms of its army, it is often considered rather impotent, consisting of a "few mercenaries and a large amount of office workers" (see chapter 5.3 Militiamen Mindset – Dangerous World). Building on this foundation of morality, militiamen a) stand up to what is perceived as a moral obligation and accept the role of Protector (see subchapter 5.3 - Protector), and b) correct and point out the immoral behaviour of the state. As NM allows them to address both, the decision to join it is perceived as moral and desirable.

2) **Fairness/Reciprocity** Pro-Immigration, racial justice, gender equality, but also corruption or "judicial mob" are perceived as grave injustices supported or carried out by the state and mainstream society. Relevantly for this study, respondents repetitively expressed disapproval of both global topics (e.g. Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests or restrictive approach to migration wave) and those local (e.g. state support to minorities and other countries). From the militiamen perspective, the state fails to take care of its own citizens by supporting others. This "selective justice" is then further developed once internal politics become a topic of discussion. According to militiamen, the system is corrupt, supports only a select few and is full of "interested parties". Alleged proof of this is the general nature of the judicial system in the Czech Republic, or the very low percentage of high-level politicians imprisoned or even penalised for corruption. "*Right here, in this country, judicial mob rules. When a policewoman from a criminal department issues a statement and I found out, that there was an investigation in place, which issued a completely different statement. And I was not invited at all. How is it possible? And she says, that it is not her duty to invite me. (...) I mean, look at all these politicians. How many of them are arrested? Dalík, that's one and Rath perhaps. But who else? It is still the same, same dirty tricks. Mob. Nothing else*." (Resp. 6). As will be further discussed in motivations, these injustices and desire to make them right, they

call for an action. And as NM identify these and gather like-minded people, it might be perceived as a chance (and moral obligation) to make things right.

3) **Ingroup/Loyalty** The nationalistic tone, Czech symbolism and loyalty to the group summarise the desired image of NM. Although these might be viewed as substitutive values, NM members stress the importance of patriotism for them personally and for the whole organisation (for more, see subchapter 5.3 Militiamen Mindset – Patriot). They tend to identify themselves with historical personas (e.g. Gabčík and Kubiš[66]) and hold high antipathy, some even enmity, towards those who criticise NM, or those who leave it. Based on these values, it is unthinkable to most respondents that they (or their organisation) could be considered a danger for the republic, since they desire the opposite – to protect it. Stemming from this moral foundation interviewees highly value loyalty (even to political parties) and strictly distinguish themselves from those who "changed coats", e.g. in 2016-2017 during the split in NM, or in the case of politicians, who currently represent different parties than they did before.

4) **Authority/Respect** Militiamen both support and seek authority; either that "deserved" (e.g. by age, or experience) or that "desirable" (e.g. by entitlement). Given the increased attraction of NM to the military and its traditions, the approval of authority is not an unexpected finding. According to most respondents, the "decadence of the West", as well as "increasing insecurity", are both a result of corruption of traditional values and of authorities. As this theme represented a substantial part of interviews and often was an undertone of a whole interview, the whole following subchapter was dedicated to this theme (see 5.2.2. Authoritarianism)

5) **Purity/Sanctity** Militiamen refuse to be motivated by no less than the purest and best intentions: selflessness, desire to help and to improve the situation. Besides the obvious self-perception, high sensitivity to this virtue lies with the description of dropouts who left NM: they are assumed to be selfish and desiring power (disputes over leadership), greed (desire to make business from NM), politically motivated ("those who were too radical") or eventually lazy or not devoted enough (did not have enough time).

[66] Gabčík and Kubiš were Czech paratroopers, who (successfully) carried out the operation "Anthropoid" during WWII. The two mentioned successfully carried out the main objective of the operation and assassinated a high-ranking SS officer, Reinhard Heidrich. Both the paratroopers and part of their team was later captured and shot dead. Given its global and local historical importance, the operation is considered an important moment in Czech history, a moment of Czech defiance to occupying forces, heroism and capability.

5.2.2. Authoritarianism

NM members tend to support submission to established authorities and norms, tend to be highly ethnocentric and advocate the use of force to establish control in politics. Using the "Authoritarianism"-related literature (e.g. Hiel 2012, Jost et al 2003), several factors suggesting increased likelihood of an "Authoritarian personality" were identified. Beside those already mentioned (e.g. in previous subchapter), respondents often referred to the need for order and integrative complexity, aimed at avoiding uncertainty; here, interviewees demonstrated different levels of dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity. Accordingly, each member also spontaneously spoke of their fear of external threats, which should be dealt with by force. The following paragraphs briefly explain the authoritarianism concept, demonstrate the features identified in the research and explain their consequences.

An authoritarian personality generally believes in established authorities and social norms endorsed by them – those who defy them should be forced to obey. According to the Authoritarian personality model, there are two types of "Authoritarians" a) the submissive and b) the dominant personality (Altemeyer 1998). The submissive personality tends to submit to authorities and social norms and reacts with enmity to those doing otherwise (Ibid., p. 48). The dominant personality, on the other hand, demonstrates signs of narcissism and dominance, as the definition suggests, relying on cultural elitism, patriotism and nationalism (Ibid, p. 52). Both of these subtypes then seek to avoid uncertainty and the unknown; they need order, structure and closure and often support dogmatism and stereotypes, stemming from their intolerance of ambiguity (Hiel 2012, p. 167). Usually being taught that prejudice is morally wrong, Right Wing Authoritarians (RWA) tend to respond temperamentally, when labelled as holding it (Altemeyer 1988, pp. 110-116). Similarly, RWA's often judge and condemn specific actions on moral grounds; yet often they hold double standards on these matters, given the fact their dogmatically held beliefs are often constructed by copying selected authorities (Altemeyer 1996, Chapter 8) (further described in the following subchapter – Moral Arbitrariness and Double Standards). Lastly and perhaps ironically, an authoritarian personality may reject the "regular" authorities. Usually, this is in a case in which they believe the "real" established authorities have been usurped by other groups, such as left-wing parties, Jews, feminists or homosexuals (Ibid, p. 9).

Militiamen expect established authorities to be obeyed, yet it is necessary for them to distinguish from "real" authorities. According to the assumed traits of an Authoritarian personality, respondents expressed being disturbed over the corruption of "traditional authorities": kids who do not listen to their parents, "thugs and low-lifes" that do not follow the law and policemen who cannot respond properly. In a similar fashion, the youth should listen to elders, as they have "earned the authority". In this sense, the world is decadent, and the "good old times" should be re-established. When asked of their disobedience to state (which currently aims to disband them), militiamen usually respond with charging leading political figures of treason and appeal to "common sense and moral duties", which demand the NM to proceed with its activities (for more see previous subchapter Heightened Conservatism, or Chapter 6. Motivations)

For members of NM, order and strict law enforcement are highly valued – those who disobey repeatedly should be met with force. Following the argument of limited police power and rights, militiamen grieve over rising levels of (petty) crime[67] caused mainly by impotent police units. In this case, force is viewed as the proper answer: "*If trash exists in society, there is violence to address it. But it must be exercised somehow smartly, so it cannot be prosecuted, you know. Like, you cannot simple beat someone because he is dirty or black for example, you understand. But if he like commits something, then he must bear responsibility, and if he does not want to, then the physical side of things MUST come.*" (Resp. 3 describing his understanding of why Western society declines).

As the danger is perceived as imminent, all respondents referred to the necessity of being prepared and the need to preserve stability via cultural purity. Avoiding the unknown, respondents refuse the acceptance of migrants of a different culture, as the outcome of such events is uncertain. On this matter, militiamen eventually tend towards cultural elitism and strong nationalism. In a similar fashion, only on a smaller scale, they seek to be prepared – both in knowledge and skill (e.g. survival skills) and

[67] According to respondents, police authority is not as high as it was, as its powers are limited. A consequence of this development is an increasing level of petty crime, like burglary, thefts, and assaults. In some cases, police are assumed to be ordered "by high posts" to ignore a specific type of crime, like that committed by Muslims, minorities generally and protesters (of a certain ideology). As for the validity of the claims, according to public data from the Czech police (and Ministry of Interior), the level of crime is steadily decreasing, from almost 400,000 offenses in 2000 to slightly below 200,000 in 2019. Admittedly, the statistic can be also affected by revision of definitions of crimes (changed taxation and qualification of petty crimes). (For more, see e.g. Policie ČR, 2021)

materially (e.g. by storing up to 200 litres of water, 6 months' worth of supplies of food or by hiding "Survival boxes" near the respondents' hometown).

Finally, corresponding with the authoritarianism thesis, some of the respondents' actions and opinions are based on dogmas and prejudice – most of which they recognise and rationalise. As a result of a felt need to avoid uncertainty, support for cultural elitism and a few situational factors,[68] most respondents tend to support dogmas and prejudice. The latter often consisted of oversimplification and demonisation of Islam, gender stereotypes or *a priori* adopted views of political parties and organisations. The former, dogmas, then either advocated some of these convictions (e.g. Islam is pure evil, that is non-negotiable) or were related to the strict moral code of individual militiamen (further described in the very next subchapter).

5.2.3. Moral Arbitrary and Double Standards

In accordance with other traits (e.g. conservatism, dogmatic beliefs, …), militiamen appeal to moral duties and judge their fulfilment by others; yet they often hold double-standards on this matter. Partially corresponding with Authoritarianism and Conservatism, respondents have been shown to be sensitive to questions of morality, duties and overall approach to life. Militiamen see the "moral code" as an important part of their lives. Seeing themselves as part of a moral and righteous group, respondents were inclined to patronising, adoption of moral superiority and sometimes apparently faced cognitive dissonance. Some of these contradictory claims were especially obvious, as they (in some cases) appeared within a very short period of time (even in the very same sentence).

Most militiamen appeared confident in and convinced about their morality; although admittedly recognising "mistakes of the past", their current activities are unquestionable. Building foundations for moral arbitrariness, interviewed members of NM fully convinced of the morality of their actions. In these terms, most of them have clear visions of how the world, society and families should look and which set of rules should be applied to each of these social units. While interviewed, militiamen openly admitted some mistakes of their own (made in the past), yet their current position and activities were fixed in strong moral foundations. "*There are different views on that*

[68] In this case, situational factors primarily refer to feelings of frustration, fear and group factors affecting an individual's perception of the world.

(morality and its alleged decrease in society). I, for example, don't steal. I could perhaps. When I go with a company car, I simply write the truth. Sometimes it's complicated, because I make stops there and there (...) and those guys ask me like, why do you write that silliness, but that's simply the truth! That's how it was! (...) Then there are people who are lazy at work (...) laughing at doing nothing and still getting paid (...) well that's what this generation is. Those people of my generation, I don't have to go there and speak of morality." (Resp. 3); "*I am of Christian tradition (...) And even would I personally fail, then I would still believe that this is the correct way of thinking. Because the world came up with nothing else over that X*[69] *thousands of years. It simply the only true variant that can be, you know. Everything else will eventually be proven as pathological*." (Resp. 1).

Building on their experience and high moral credit, most respondents were often inclined to moral arbitrariness, patronising, judging and general commenting on the moral credit of others. The primary target of these evaluations were usually individuals around the place where the interviews were conducted. Then, usually, sources of frustration (further described in chapter 6) were addressed, especially parents and youth. "*Would I dare to do something those kids dare to do nowadays to their parents, I would be probably dead, you know, because I would get slapped in such a way, I would spin around. (...) Those parents, they simply don't have time (...) I don't want to generalise, but the older the man, the more prepared he is, and those young boys, who did not go through military training, it's a disaster.*" (Resp. 3). The final, most strongly criticised group were political subjects, especially those blamed for the grievances of interviewees, or those criticising NM "*We (NM) came to him and offered help. And I don't remember all that he told us, but said we don't need you here. Well, that's not true, that was only someone who wanted to keep his warm job*!" (Resp. 6). Criticising either of these, respondents mostly used evaluations such as "moral", "truth", "true", "right", "wrong", "evil", "good", calling for justice and use of common sense. Shortly after pointing out these immoralities, militiamen strictly denied any evidence of them acting in such a way, or even thinking about it. "*I was never really thinking about it. Politics is dirty, so what kind of people can do it. Not me. Never*." (Resp. 6) … "You know, some people steal from their employer. (…) *I would never. I would never steal, that is simply how I am. I would not do it.*" (Resp. 3).

[69] „X" in this context refers to an unspecified, but rather high number.

Often leading to confusion or stronger advocacy for a specific policy were some double standards (or cognitive dissonance) in relation to the (im)morality of certain activities. Already emerging when judging the day-to-day issues of society, respondents often faced cognitive dissonance[70] when interviewed. Often realising a "double standard" of sorts, either based on their self-reflection or following question(s) asked by the researcher, informants usually managed to rationalise their initial claims: "*Those boys are like women today, as those hormones are deep in the ground (...) Yes, I too wore long hair, of course. But we were not such ladies. You know, it was only like love and nonviolence, that was already Gandhi in India (...) but it definitely was not as feminine as it is today. I wouldn't do it.*" (Resp. 11). A more problematic issue, however, emerged once society- or state-level themes were discussed, especially in relation to "democracy", "freedom of speech" or the "above-party nature" of NM. On these complex issues, the usual reaction was most usually an even stronger defence of previously-formulated beliefs or a change of topic. "*That's all censored in the media. They can express themselves, like on behalf of the militia, we have a kind of mechanism there, that they should submit it for approval, but that is not censorship! I simply look at it and say yeah, it's okay, you can say it, write, post it or something*." (Resp. 1). These misconceptions, confusions and also already mentioned double-standards might have been a result of various visions of NM. As some claimed it to be a primarily educational organisation, some military and some saw it as a civil movement, these different visions often overlapped, not only between individual respondents, but also during individual interviews, as the topic developed: "*They (Land Militia) were radical. They presented themselves like armed forces. That's not what we want! Not that we do not want to know how to handle weapons, you know. (Later in the interview) and we could be like support for those armed forces. And when those migrants will cause some trouble here, oh, we will handle them then.*" (Resp. 6). The imagined ultimate manifestation of these double standards was the question of obeying the law because, as already documented, the law (according to respondents) should be obeyed, and if not, then force should be used. Respondents stressed many times that they do nothing that is against the law, yet when

[70] Cognitive dissonance, or non-fitting relations among cognitions (Festinger 1957, p. 3), represents a state when held beliefs are met with information or other beliefs that directly challenge them. Two elements are considered dissonant if they are inconsistent, contradictory, or not fitting culture or group standards (Ibid., p. 12). As cognitive dissonance is considered a negative feeling or discomfort, an individual is assumed to somehow resolve it (ideally achieving cognitive consonance). However, once such dissonance is not resolved „immediately", individuals usually aim at reducing the dissonance by e.g. actively avoiding situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance. (Ibid. p. 3)

asked of the potential legalisation of NM, the clarity of obedience to the law was somehow blurred: "*I don't think they would ever do that (ban NM) (...) because considering how militias alike operate around us (previously mentioned Hungary, Poland), it may be considered as anti-national! Even anti-state! Against its capability to defend itself! (...) It's only about finding a good lawyer and perhaps a philosopher even, that would explain this to those people.*" (Resp. 11); "*I would stay probably. Because I can't imagine how they would control who is and who isn't in the Militia. Even we don't know it. There is simply some list of people, but it doesn't really mean anything.*" (Resp. 7).

Direct consequences of these traits are dogmatism, emotional advocacy of certain beliefs and general strengthening of one's opinions, as individuals aim to reach cognitive consonance[71] and reaffirm their identity. A natural consequence of moral arbitrariness (and double standards on that matter) is either stark self-evaluation or self-protecting mechanisms. As a result, individuals usually defend and justify their beliefs and formulated opinions more firmly, even accepting those beliefs as dogma or unwritten rules. The importance of this trait will be especially important in Chapter 6, as ideological alignment and frustrations[72] appear to be key motivations in engagement with NM. This being said, one should consider the possibility of Moral Arbitrariness being a temporal trait, triggered by frustration and a perceived need to reaffirm one's identity.

5.2.4. Other Traits

Beside those already mentioned, members of NM demonstrated also other personality traits when interviewed; those shared by 3-5 respondents were signs of narcissism and rescue personality.[73] As these traits are a matter of advanced

[71] Cognitive consonance is a de facto oppositive of dissonance. It represents a state of mind, when one's beliefs are in harmony – usually related to positive emotions, a state one unconsciously desires to achieve (Festinger 1957, pp. 15-20)

[72] Related to ideological alignment, NM might have addressed an identity crisis (and cognitive dissonance) for some individuals. As a result of the need to address these, to bring order back to one's life, individuals might have more easily aligned themselves with NM's ideology. Similarly, frustrations might have supported feelings of cognitive dissonance and identity crisis, supporting the need for solution and comfort. (These tendencies and mechanisms are further explained in chapter 6 in specific sections addressing Frustration and Ideological Alignment.)

[73] In this regard, the sample size is significantly limiting. Also, by labelling specific traits as „narcissism" and "rescue personality", the research de facto issues a psychiatric diagnosis, which might be found very controversial from an ethical perspective. For that reason, these findings should be submitted to further research (as suggested in the text).

psychological evaluation, they are referred to only briefly and should be submitted to further evaluation. However, as these personality traits appeared repetitively, in the sample and in particular interviews, the researcher finds it important to direct attention to them.

Narcissism

The first "additional trait" (not demonstrated by all respondents), summarises the general tendency to seek approval of others, frequent use of others for self-definition, grandiosity and impaired ability for empathy – usually referred to as narcissism. Using the definition and description of narcissism provided by APA (American Psychological Association)[74], a number of respondents indicated narcissistic personality; a few of them then demonstrated almost all described traits associated with narcissism, namely: grandiosity, attention seeking, dependency on others in identity formulation and self-direction, and low capability of empathy.

Starting with grandiosity, the selected members of NM appeared to feel entitled to speak and act on behalf of others and often manifested self-centeredness, both regarding NM and their private life. These individuals mostly centred their stories and generally the interview around themselves – their personal ambitions, experienced grievances, and their numerous achievements. They often felt the need to justify their actions and opinions. For these, it was them who "recognised the qualities of some individual" and "got them where they are now". It was them who in the past stood behind the success of both of their groups, but also private businesses and others.

In terms of attention seeking, the selected interviewees appeared to seek attention or admiration, both from the interviewer and from others (based on their statements). Phrases like "*when I told them what my pension is, they did not believe me! No one can live with it they said! Well, I left them impressed (laughing).*" (Resp. 3)

[74] According to APA, typical features of narcissistic personality disorder are variable and vulnerable self-esteem, with attempts at regulation through attention and approval seeking, and either covert or overt grandiosity. Characteristic difficulties are apparent in identity, self-direction, empathy, and/or intimacy (…)Two or more of following are considered as conclusive: 1) excessive reference to others for self-definition and self-esteem regulation, exaggerated self-appraisal either inflated or deflated, or fluctuating between extremes; 2) goal setting based on gaining approval from others, personal standards unreasonably high as a result of seeing oneself as exceptional, unawareness of one's own motivations; 3) impaired ability to recognise or identify with feelings and needs of others, excessively attuned to reaction of others (if relevant to self); 4) relationships largely superficial, serving their own interests. Or both of following: A) (grandiosity) feelings of entitlement, self-centeredness, feelings of superiority; B) (attention seeking) excessive attempts to attract and be focus of attention of others, admiration seeking (APA 2013, p. 767)

often spontaneously appeared, often followed by small talk of unique trainings, experience, name-dropping[75] etc., which often emerged without asking and was *de facto* irrelevant to the topic.

In keeping with the identity dimension of narcissism, selected respondents often excessively used others for definition of themselves and assumingly exaggerated self-appraisal. While doing so, those manifesting narcissistic traits often referred to themselves as part of a bigger group – "we the normal people", "we the working people", "we militiamen", or simply used reference to their acquaintances to support the strength of identifications they made. Interestingly, the stronger the described opinion/experience was, the more likely the plural was stressed.

In a similar fashion, the mentioned interviewees often based their goals on approval from others and saw themselves as exceptional. Usually, these individuals claimed not to seek any position "they forced me there", "apparently I was good at it", "not many people do", which would not have raised a flag, unless it would appear repetitively – which it did.

Finally, these individuals (based on their statements) neglected the feelings and reactions of others, either as a result of their irrelevance to individuals' ambitions, or due to an assumed incapability of empathy. This tendency was especially obvious while speaking of outgroups, so an alternative explanation is the incapability of identifying with others as a result of in-group factors. However, given the other demonstrated traits of narcissism, narcissism seems a likely explanation.

Rescue Personality

The second and last additional trait, demonstrated only by a minority of interviewees, though demonstrated clearly, was the so called "Rescue Personality". Following traits expected from those serving in the military, these individuals manifested low neuroticism, low agreeableness and higher extraversion, conscientiousness and sensation seeking.

Initially developed by Mitchell (see e.g. Mitchel and Bray 1990), rescue personality captures traits typical for those who serve in emergency services. Generally,

[75] Name-dropping refers to respondents mentioning their relations with public figures (e.g. band members, politicians, …).

this personality type scores low on neuroticism, being stable psychologically, considers soft and gentle behaviour as undesirable in most cases (low agreeableness) and often seeks risk and competition, which further strengthens their resilience (Klee and Renner 2016). These individuals are usually inner-directed, “action-oriented”, obsessed with high standards of performance, traditional, socially conservative, easily bored and highly dedicated (Wagner, Martin and McFee 2009, p. 1), de facto complementing other traits observed among militiamen.

Those who manifested these traits were a few individuals previously serving in the military or having longer experience with martial arts. Although a minority of respondents in comparison to the total number, these individuals usually spent a significant period of time (5-10 years or more) in a highly competitive environment like military or martial arts clubs. For these individuals, it was the military drills and thrill seeking generally that played an important role as a motivation to join the NM (though not necessarily a primary role). When interviewed, it was these respondents whose moods remained most consistent for the whole time and who most valued opportunities to prove their worth.

5.3 Militiamen Mindset

"*Militia? I always say it is an epic of patriotism.*" (Resp. 1).

"*Guys that I know, they are normal fathers from families. No extremists.*" (Resp. 10).

The mindset of most militiamen regarding their "struggle" is similar: they believe themselves to be patriots, sacrificing their time, money and reputation to protect their country. They believe themselves to have valuable experience and moral credit that should be taught to Czech youth, and that they are prosecuted and hunted by (inter)national forces, who aim to prevent unity among people (which they offer). All these beliefs are shared among the militiamen, though with a different intensity. The understanding of what is here labelled as the "Militiamen mindset" serves mainly as a summary of sorts. As most of these beliefs were already suggested in the previous subchapter, this chapter offers a purely militiamen perspective (or at least the best interpretation the researcher can offer). Understanding these and labelling them properly then creates a de facto preface to Chapter 6. Motivations.

Patriot

By joining NM and participating in its activities, militiamen serve their fatherland and preserve Czech patriotism. During the interviews, most stated that being in NM is a question of being a patriot, being a Czech and building the Czech nation and society, e.g.: "*We do not like to say state, we rather prefer fatherland (…) and NM is de facto a service to fatherland.*" (Resp. 1). Most of the respondents also very frequently mentioned symbols of the Czech Republic and made historical references. A usual point of reference across the interviews was pilgrimage (co-organised by NM) to Říp or Blaník[76]; some also see a resemblance in their struggle with that of Hussites[77] in 15th century, as e.g. Resp. 11: "(*inactive members of NM)* (…) *they act like nothing is going on to the last moment and then they like, when you are like caught between a rock and a hard place, they go for it. Well. Like Hussites, yeah.*"

[76] According to Czech legends, Říp mountain was the place from which the "Forefather Czech" (Praotec Čech) saw the country for the first time. Blaník mountain is a place where an army of Czech knights is said to be hidden, waiting in sleep, for the moment that "the hardest times will be upon Czech people".
[77] The Hussites (Husité) were a Czech Protestant Christian movement in the 15th century, following the teachings of Czech preacher Jan Hus. As their armies were capable of resisting Crusades to Czech territory, and capable of conducting their own raids abroad, they are often viewed as a matter of Czech pride. The importance of this movement (and era) was elevated especially during the Czech National Revival (České národní obrození) during the 18th and 19th century.

Dangerous world

According to the respondents, current trends in global and regional politics lead to an increased probability of war and civil unrest. As suggested in the "Authoritarianism" subchapter, militiamen perceive a great threat surrounding them, both at a macro level (international politics) and micro level (the level of crime). The fact that militiamen live in a state of constant threat eventually drives them to accept precautions. In the words of Resp. 6: "*An absolute minimum of people realises what the risk is. It takes very little for murders and looting to start, within a week or so. It takes a couple of rockets, which will eliminate those (electricity) distribution stations, not only factories, but also those distributors. And once the black-out happens, it is the end of everything. No telephones, no GPS, nothing, no gas station, no gas, no fuel, nothing*."

Protector - Martyr

The actual role of NM members is viewed as that of protector, offering safety to their families, towns and ultimately the whole republic from "undesirable pathological phenomena" (Resp. 1). Respondents strongly opposed the governmental assessment of them as a threat, "*We are the exact opposite. We do not wish to harm anyone, we wish to protect our homes, our towns, our counties or regions*." (Resp. 3). In relation to these duties, most militiamen stressed their sacrifices for the cause, both of time and of money spent. "*We sacrifice our money and time, time we could have spent with our families, and what does the state say? It says we are some extremists.*" (Resp. 3).

Prepper

In the reaction to an increasing risk of conflict, NM members desire to improve their chances of surviving an eventual conflict by gathering supplies, weapons and knowledge. "*Well, I have like 200 litres of water in PET bottles at my place. I have it in the dark, so the PET, it is ok, that simply cannot be in the sun. But what is 200 litres? Where will we go to the toilet? We live in a panel house, we need to flush, so you will hold only for a while. And God forbid, it should happen in winter, when there will be snow, then you are screwed. Nothing. And the people are not ready! Nothing!*" (Resp.

6). The intensity of this trait was rather surprising, as all but two respondents spontaneously mentioned their gathered supplies and promised to increase them further.

Critical thinker or Conspiracy theorist?

The respondents think of themselves as of critical thinkers who carefully analyse every piece of information from the media. As such, they often find the media to by lying in order to discredit NM and to increase the control the government has over people. "*Those people, they believe everything that you say to them. „They said it on TV, then it must be true!" they say. I mean, don't they have brains?*" (Resp. 10). By conducting their analyses, they often find disturbing information about state or even international injustice, which, in their view, should be corrected. Specific respondents (a minority of them) then claimed to have discovered deep conspiracies, which in the extreme, covered even ancient societies from pharaoh-era Egypt, hollow moon theories or micro-needles in bandages and nano-robots in the air, designed to dominate the world (Resp. 11).

Overlooked Mentor

Having the moral high ground, necessary skills and will, NM members seek to educate the Czech population – a dimension in which they are overlooked and underestimated by the mainstream (and the state especially). They want to teach them how to handle guns, how to defend themselves, how to think critically and how to be a true patriot. "*What I want, primarily (...) is to have a chance to reach out to elementary and high schools and to „push" this into people, this wisdom. (...) This is a question of basic security, handling guns and all this, that is a basic thing, that perhaps everyone should go through, that is the education we offer and it should start with kids! (...) And they say, they don't need us. But that's simply not true*." (Resp. 6).

Prosecuted

As values promoted by the NM are considered as threatening to the state, NM members are prosecuted by the government and discriminated against by the media. Some, though not all, militiamen feel prosecuted by state organisations, who try to

undermine their will and limit their possibilities for helping the nation. "*Well, everyone says they want to take care of people and do something for the state… (thinking) Well, we did and therefore they go after us.*" (Resp. 7). The media reports that circulate in the ether are considered to be fabricated and governmental actions and rhetoric based on these media reports are often compared to those adopted by undemocratic regimes (e.g. in communist Czechoslovakia): "*Well, they have fear, the people who leave the Militia. The same the people had when they entered Nazi parties, because they feared that if they had not entered, they could have sent to prison. It is the same today.*" (Resp. 10). Nevertheless, most members with whom the interview was conducted, expressed a strong conviction to stay, despite governmental actions.

Normal good guys

Finally, NM members view themselves as those who are moderate, good and rational thinking individuals. Related to the above-mentioned personality traits, militiamen consider their opinions to be the true mainstream, which is overlooked and censored by "mainstream media". "*Well, in the first place, I have military training and I have been raised to have, like, responsibility. And by that I do not want to say that I am a responsible person, I do silly stuff whenever I can (...) but I still think that I have those boundaries right. Not everyone has that, but I believe I got it right.*" (Resp. 6 on what causes the decay of "normal values" in society).

6. Motivations of NM members

"*Motives and needs that ordinarily serve us well can lead us astray when they are aroused, amplified, or manipulated by situation forces that we fail to recognise as potent (...) Its temptation is just a small turn away, a slight detour on the path of life, a blur in our sideview mirror, leading to disaster.*" (Zimbardo 2009, p. 258).

The objective of this chapter is to address the research objective and answer research questions. In the following subchapters, the core of the research is presented, explaining what motivations lead respondents to join the NM (and to stay in it). Besides fulfilling the purpose of the research, this chapter also discusses the first set of "additional factors" (others will be analysed in Chapter 7), namely those factors that caused militiamen to question their membership in NM, or that forced others leave NM (based on respondents' opinions).

According to its objective, this chapter starts with subchapter 6.1, identifying shared push and pull factors leading individuals to join NM. Individual subparts then describe the nature (or manifestations) of these factors and then its consequences. Subchapter 6.2 identifies factors currently keeping interviewees engaged in NM (and it very briefly offers an explanation of their difference from factors introduced in the previous subchapter. Finally, subchapter 6.3 presents "motivations for disengagement", that is factors that lead individuals to doubt their active membership in the organisation.

In terms of what this chapter claims: a set of push and pull factors appears to be dominant among motivations. In the early phases of NM, push factors (fear and frustration) and pull factors (need for belonging and thrill seeking) were the key essences leading individuals to join. Over time, however, as situational factors changed,[78] so did motivations to join (or stay engaged). In the case of respondents, their continuous engagement is motivated mainly by pull factors (bonding and ideological alignment) and a personal factor (quest for significance). It is important to note, initial motivations did not completely disappear, but rather developed or became of secondary importance. Lastly, it appears that ill functioning of NM, shift in interest, low approval from broader mainstream society and a proposed ban of militias are the most significant factors leading to disengagement from NM.

[78] As will be explained in chapter 7, situational factors changed over time (e.g. perceived threat of migration). Resultingly, so did motivations, as they were (and are still) largely affected by situation development.

6.1 Motivations to Join.

Categorising motivations into three basic groups, this chapter's purpose is to identify the first one – motivations to join (NM). By doing so, this subchapter answers the first research subquestion and enables understanding of the primary drivers that lead respondents to engage in NM's activities. While doing so, it partially utilises the findings presented in Chapter 5, thereby explaining their importance and relevance.

To follow its purpose, this subchapter consecutively identifies four main motivations. In the first part, the role of fear is explained and described. In the second part, frustration's role and its many dimensions are discussed. The third part then introduces the need for belonging and its relation to the previous two (push) factors. Finally, the fourth part discusses the last shared motivation – thrill seeking.

Generally, the interviewed members of NM were motivated to join the organisation by four interrelated push and pull factors. Initially, the primary motivation was the fear of an external threat – embodied by migration at the time. The decision to join NM was however also affected by the frustration felt by respondents, frustration that stems from society as such, the domestic political situation, and international affairs. All of these are assumed to increase the need for belonging,[79] leading to an urge to belong to a group that is capable of addressing fear and frustration. Finally, most members (but not all) were motivated by thrill seeking, as NM was perceived as an opportunity to experience an excitement otherwise hardly obtainable.

6.1.1. Push Factor: Fear of Outer Threat

A unanimously shared push factor, openly admitted to by all respondents, was the fear of external threats – which was dominant especially during the very beginning of NM. According to the research participants, there are numerous immediate threats that our society currently faces. On the top of the list is migration and the Islamisation of Europe, but the list of threats goes much deeper, as militiamen often stressed while interviewed. The reason why this threat projected itself into their motivation to join NM is the fact that the threat seemed imminent and unaddressed (properly) by the state. NM then addressed this issue and thereby represented an opportunity to control the situation and increase individuals' feeling of safety. An interesting aspect of fear as motivation is its decreasing role over time – at least according to statements made by research participants.

[79] Not to be mistaken, the need for belonging is a general human need, increasing its influence under specific circumstances. Whereas in some cases the need might lead to enrolment to football or bingo club, in other cases it might result in entering an extremist group.

Nature of Threat

According to the respondents, the Czech Republic faces several threats; migration, civil unrest and war are the most severe of them. In their responses, most participants identified a list of threats to Czech society, listing black-outs, lack of food supplies or natural disasters. Nevertheless, these threats were usually associated with feelings of a need to be prepared or with blaming the state for being unprepared. What was associated with fear[80] was the unanimously listed threat of migration and criminal activities related to migration.

Migration is supposedly a first phase of the Islamisation of Europe, which will lead to an increased level of "undesirable social-pathological phenomena"[81] and eventually to cultural wars between "Europeans" and "Migrants". Corresponding with what is called the "Dangerous World Mindset" in chapter 5, interviewees often spontaneously returned to the topic while interviewed, advocating for their previous claims and the importance of the Islamic threat. "*Notice, that when they arrive, it's all men and all men of working age. How many women are there? They might come, some of them, but definitely not all. And then it is logical, that they will have needs and they will want to satisfy them. (...) I have a great granddaughter now, a little one and I can't imagine, what it would mean, if they would come and rape her. I think I would take that machine gun.*" (Resp. 3). However, while talking about migration, some informants quickly added other threats to Czech security and some laughed when the topic of threats came up during interviews: "*Well, I think... you expect me to say migrants (are the biggest threat), right? (laughing).*" (Resp. 10).

As secondary sources of threat, interviewees listed others, such as "evil from Germany", "dictates from the EU", "warmongering of the US", or threats such as black-out or natural disasters; however, this study considers them to be of a rather proxy/secondary character and not of primary importance in their motivations. Besides migration, the respondents also mentioned threats of flooding, shortages of food, or black-out, sometimes referring to "internal threat analysis": "*We have here a certain risk analysis, that we made, there are approximately 10 of those risks. There is this worst scale, that is practically insolvable for us, ... but then there is this "middle" which is interesting for us, those various blackouts, economic crises, global, that would mean a lot of things.*" (Resp. 1). However,

[80] While analysing fear, the author considered not only direct mentions made by respondents. In several cases, these feelings were rather "read between the lines" and admittedly, these were uneasily distinguished from frustration (which often overlapped with emotions of fear).

[81] According to Resp. 1, migration might increase what the respondents calls "social-pathological phenomena" (sociálně patologické jevy). According to further explanation, this term encompasses criminal activities, disturbances of order, and generally shifts in ordinary activities of society.

these were usually associated with words like "preparation" and lack thereof, rather than fear "*I mean look at those people, they are buying pasta, oil and flour. Do they know what they would cook if there would be a crisis? They don't! They don't have a clue. Totally unprepared*." (Resp. 5). More interesting (from this study's point of view) are the fears of the respondents of Germany, the U.S. and the EU. According to informants: "*Those elites, they cooperate mainly with Germany. Germany is the one that runs this all. Actually, from the beginning, so far as we remember, it has tried to engage in everything and it does still. It is the moving power, the engine, that the Jewish elites control. But the danger comes from Germany*." (Resp. 6) or as Resp. 11 assumes: "*Someone is trying to wake the Nazism in them, on purpose. And if some evil will come, it will come from Germany. I am sure of it*." (Resp. 11).

The importance of fear seems to be decreasing over time, both in terms of its ratio to other motivations and in terms of its intensity. Based on the interpretation of statements made by the interviewed militiamen, feared played a vital role in their decision-making process in the initial phase of NM. Media reports, social media and videos shared on social media supported this fear, though mainly in 2016 and 2017. Since then, the importance of fear seems to be decreasing, leading some members to reassess the value of NM to them. As a result, some members left NM spontaneously: "*Well, some of them thought, the threat is no longer imminent, or there is none. So, they went back to their families. But the threat is there!*" (Resp. 3). Further factors and the role of a lack of fear is further discussed in the Motivations for Disengagement subchapter).

Fear as a Motivation

Explaining the actual contribution of fear to the decision to join NM, fear of migration represents an unknown factor potentially leading to disorder (chaos); the "natural" reaction is therefore to control the situation, restore order and improve an individual's situation. As the perceived threat is assumed to threaten an individuals' life, a military(-like) organisation addressing the issue might be a safety harbour that individuals seek.

Facing an unknown situation, individuals expect either an opportunity or a threat; once the phenomenon is perceived as a threat, the natural response is to try to eliminate it. Generally speaking, unknown situations are usually associated either with an opportunity to improve the state of affairs, or they represent a threat to current state (Peterson 1999, p. 56). Driven by the need to control the situation, militiamen are assumed to desire eliminating the threat of migration, once the situation has been assessed as a threat.

In the resulting environment, NM represents a means of control and a chance of feeling safe. As militiamen see migration as a threat to their very existence, and usually connect it with violent crime or war, a paramilitary organisation preparing for survival might be seen as an appropriate way of addressing this fear. Following the narrative created by anti-migration websites, NM even claims to address specifically the danger of migration and offers training, like-minded people and organisation of both.

Asking the question 'Why NM specifically?', the local nature of NM, together with mistrust in the state or time constraints, made other alternatives irrelevant. Interviewees openly spoke of an unwillingness to join the police or military for time reasons, and some also admitted the low chance of them passing the physical trials (given their high age). Nevertheless, most of them stressed the theoretical issue of "alternatives" (to NM) more. According to the interviewed members, Czech security forces are incapable of protecting the country, and the police are impotent to deal properly with a possible wave of crime related to migration *"The (Czech) military is only an expeditionary force. (...) But it's not even an army, that would be capable of effective defence of the country against an external threat. So going to serve means to fly somewhere to Iraq, Afghanistan or Mali.*" (Resp. 1) And even should security forces be more capable, they "serve foreign interests". "… *They only interfere somewhere.* (…) *They simply fight for foreign interests.*" (Resp. 6).

6.1.2. Push Factor: Frustrations

A second important factor increasing the attractiveness of NM to respondents was their frustration: frustration caused by the state, the international community, and increasingly by a decadent society. Manifesting itself via dissatisfaction, feelings of injustices, victimisation or inequality, respondents blamed several actors for an increasingly "bad situation". Namely, corrupt parties and politicians, international cabals, and eventually the whole society, for they contribute to decadence of values, bending of laws and increasing chaos and danger. As they felt NM correctly identified these grievances, as well as the actors responsible for them, it offered a chance of meeting like-minded people and thereby perhaps addressing these sources of frustration. The researcher assumes that it is this shared motivation in particular that enables the politicisation of NM and justifies its political engagement.

Nature of Frustration

Frustration, in general, is a state in which an individual does not receive a "reward" (as expected) but sometimes even a "punishment" instead. In this dyadic matrix, in which interaction with the world results either in punishment (negative feelings) or reward (positive feelings), frustration might come as a result of a delay of reward or a result of multiple punishments (Amsel 1992, p. 396). Rephrasing the conceptualisation chapter, persistent frustration then undermines individuals' ability to believe that their conceptualisation of the world is valid and that their goals are appropriate for reaching their ends (Peterson 1999, p. 27). As a result, individuals might begin to seek (and change) both ends and means of their conceptualisation.

For the interviewed militiamen, there are several sources of frustration, though the daily source of it is the general deterioration of society, at least in comparison to the "golden times".[82] Corresponding with the moral values of conservative personality and moral arbitrariness trait, described in Chapter 5, militiamen feel a decay of morality in Europe. This undesirable trend manifests itself on the most visible level in the police: "*Back then, the policemen would take a stick and beat him. And no one would say a word. And today? They would probably like to do it, the policemen. But they can't. They mustn't.*" (Resp. 3). The problems of society, however, run much deeper, starting with parents and their ways of raising their children: "*They simply don't raise them. … And that should be one purpose of the militia, to re-establish military drills. So that those rainbow kids, so that they are no longer those boys and pussies, so that they become MEN.*" (Resp. 6). An ultimate manifestation of the decadence of society is then the tendency to raise the topics of LGBTQ. "*I always say, once there will be two (male) dogs having puppies on the street, then I will see this as a norm. But until then, definitely not. The nature... that… It will come back at us one day. Or perhaps its coming already to us, as a society, because you can see that they completely erased all moral values, let alone barriers.*" (Resp. 1). The societal level of frustration is then the more severe, the more mainstream media criticises NM's members worldviews and labels like-minded websites as sources of disinformation "*Where do I get information from? Well. I can name you each and every one of them (laughing). They are listed on that website… how is it*

[82] References to „Golden times" varied from respondent to respondent. In some case, they referred to the whole period of communism, whereas in other cases they referred to a specific period (e.g. while in military). Despite these differences, however, all had in common a general conclusion – that society is progressively losing its values and order.

called…that counter-disinformation! There are all, all those I visit (laughing) really! All of them! (…) But that's manipulation, for those who don't know, for those who don't have information. (…) for me, they revealed themselves by it and said look, we are the greatest disinformation website!" (Resp. 11). Eventually, these feelings sometimes result in the acceptance of "collective harm",[83] as militiamen often identify themselves with movements and parties affected by "progressive left" and "cancel culture", where the "straight white man" is a target.

Another source of frustration was identified as the state, which either enables the society to deteriorate, or directly initiates events leading to deterioration. Referring to the previous paragraph, it is the state that creates law and the educational system and thereby stands behind the deterioration of society. The main reason behind the state accepting such damaging policies is that politicians are all alike – morally corrupt, bribed and acting against the interests of the Czech Republic. "*There were clear signals, that simply clearly stated, that the state, not by mistake, but on purpose, failed in securing national activities*." (Resp. 1); "*Who does not work, those who cheat, steal and all of these (politicians), they have their protective rights (…) but I, as a harmed working man, who does not participate in crime, nor cheat, nor steal, I have basically no rights.*" (Resp. 6). On the most general level, the punishment in this case resides in the unfulfilled hopes of "their party" (respondents'), parties advocating respondents' interests, to succeed in elections. But on an individual level, most members also experienced personal disappointment in dealings with the state. On this matter, the list of grievances includes unsatisfactory compensation for buy-offs of land (property owned by individuals bought off by state companies), inappropriate behaviour by police during specific interventions, or bad experience with local politicians.

Finally, the third group of stress-causing actors are international actors, both state and non-state, who support the above-mentioned decadence – for it enables better control over citizens. A third underlying driver of the current state of affairs are the interests of international actors, both state entities and supranational entities. According to NM's members, the international community is the final manifestation of decadence. The underlying cause for why "nothing has changed since 1989[84]" are the interests and greed of actors like the United States or the EU, which only want to steal from us and control us. "*They bought it*

[83] Collective harm refers to a feeling of helplessness towards a certain phenomenon. Those who identify with this harm, usually feel like victims of a certain behaviour against which nothing can be done. This troubling theme is further described e.g. by Nefsky 2011.

[84] "89" refers to 1989 Velvet Revolution, during which a chain of events lead to the democratisation of Czechoslovakia.

all, to control us. And now they threaten us with war, to control those who they cannot buy. Exactly like before the Second World War. Only this time, without a shot." (Resp. 4). In this effort to increase their power and control, the U.S. and "criminal NATO" support warmongering, creating problems they might profit from (allegedly). Being yet again a rather "collective factor", respondents here expressed feelings of unimportance, resignation and incapability of making a change.

Frustration as a Motivation: Possible (Re)gaining of Significance

Under the pressure of frustration, NM might have offered a way of releasing it and thereby (re)gaining the feeling of significance (and importance).[85] As suggested, while under pressure, individuals seek to address the pressure by adjusting either the means or the ends in their lives. In this regard, NM appears to offer an answer for the most significant sources of respondents' frustrations: via training and education, it offers a chance to address the decadence of society; via organising like-minded people, it provides a way to address the ill-functioning state; and finally, via supporting nationalism, it opposes the international efforts to dismantle nation-states and control Europe. By participating and/or supporting these activities and stances, individuals engaged in the activities of NM appear to feel like standing up to their moral standards and obligations, thereby regaining their feeling of self-respect, importance, and significance.

Starting with training and education, NM provides its members with military training and education, building the right moral values. Pointing to the problem of a decadent society, NM has the ambition of educating the Czech youth and providing them with military training – the lack of which is often considered a reason for "men not being men". "*Well, you know, I believe the military made you a man. And those boys today, who did not see the military, you see what they are becoming. They are not men.*" (Resp. 11). In this sense, some respondents expressed a feeling of significance only for "doing what they considered right", though others showed feelings of superiority, in correspondence with the "Moral Arbitrariness" trait and "Overlooked Mentor" mindset.

As for convictions about the ill-functioning state, NM offers a way of addressing political issues by gathering "like-minded" people. When interviewed, several members suggested NM to be a new actor in the Czech political arena, though not in the "*traditional sense*". "*I think,*

[85] As significance and importance might be used as synonyms in some cases, the terminology used in this chapter should be clarified. Whereas significance refers to self-perceived value (in accordance with QST), importance refers to social status (the importance of the individual in the eyes of others).

that even if you would establish a club of gardeners, they (the state) would be afraid … Because those people can organise and cooperate… I think they are afraid of a coup or something (laugh)." (Resp. 10). In this sense, not only does NM supplement the duties of a state, where it is assumed to have failed (e.g. by protecting its borders and preventing petty crimes), "*I know about one town, where we cooperate with the police, helping them, because they were incapable of handling it and they received no other support.*" (Resp 7.) but it also reminds the state officials of its duties, "*It's a sort of reminder to politicians of their duties… a sort of scarecrow, for what might happen*." (Resp. 8) "*Some representatives, they fear us. I don't know if it is well-founded or not. I would wish for them that their fear is well-founded, but it basically isn't. I simply do not like people who force themselves into a role, such roles that they can negatively affect other people's lives, without punishment, lives of people who voted for them. So, I would wish for them that they could not sleep out of fear, but that is only a wish of sorts. Understandably, the more they will fear us, the more they will go against us, you know.*" (Resp. 6).

Eventually, combining the two previous means, NM addresses even the international scene, as the organisation is supposed to defend the Czech Republic and increase the level of nationalism. As for the former, NM is viewed as a potential game-changer in terms of Czech security. It offers a deterrent force. "*That could be a role of NM. If those people, who will be causing chaos here, realise, that they have some sort of force against them, that is united and ready, they won't dare.*" (Resp. 3). Yet replacing the Czech "army of mercenaries and bureaucrats" is not the only way of addressing malicious international actors. NM also offers a group of patriots, who will educate the youth in the same manner and thereby dismantle the effort of a multicultural, multi-ethnic, nation-less entity controlled e.g. from Brussels or Washington. "*I guess you know what is going on. You are informed. About those migrants, how it looks now, now the EU for sure plans something again, another dirty trick on us.*" (Resp. 11).

6.1.3. Pull Factor: Need for Belonging

The need to belong is a motivational factor "*... doubly energised by 'terror of being left outside'. This fear of rejection when one wants acceptance can cripple initiative and negate personal autonomy. It can turn social animals into shy introverts. The imagined threat of being cast into the out-group can lead some people to do virtually anything to avoid their terrifying rejection.*" (Zimbardo 2009, p. 259)

Following guidelines established by Zimbardo, the described push factors lead to the respondents' increased need for belonging. This natural need to socialise with like-minded people was strengthened and focused by feelings of frustration, fear and alienation from mainstream society, leading the interviewed members to look for conformity, a sense of belonging and safety. As NM claimed to address these sought feelings, the general need for belonging is assumed to transform into a need for belonging to an organisation like NM. As the following chapters will explain, this need eventually transformed into bonding, or disappeared, as a result of a perceived lack of threat (which triggered the need in the first place).

Nature of the Need for Belonging

The need for belonging is a natural human need; in the case of militiamen, this need may have been amplified by feelings of fear, frustration and general insecurity, leading them to seek a group that would address these push factors. Enhanced by push factors, respondents manifested the general need for belonging – a need for conformity and safety, for identity and order. Additionally, the need for belonging might partially also cover the need to act (regain significance) via participating in a group addressing the fear and frustration militiamen face(d).

Reacting to the fear of external threats and feeling isolated in recognising the threats, participants expressed the desire to organise into groups, with the aim to eliminate those feelings. Facing the threat of alleged Islamisation and an upcoming cultural war (or at least increased criminal activity), respondents claimed to be looking for a group that might help them increase their feeling of safety. The smaller the city they were from, the more local the group they sought. "*These (organisations) simply have to work on a local basis, at a place they know. Because it will probably be of no use, if they take those people and bring them to some other city, for example Brno, which they don't know. It should be local I think, in that case, it would work perfectly*" (Resp. 10). Several respondents reported being in contact with other groups in their area, or even engaged in their activities. "*Every group focuses on something different. I know about guys, who really train like special forces. And they really do those drills, like entering of buildings, interception of vehicles and so on. … Then there were those like radicals, who literally wanted to be off radar, be like, out of the law. Not like breaking it, but making their own laws and rules*…" (Resp. 7).

In terms of addressing frustration, participants' main expectation was to meet like-minded people that shared the same political preferences and needs. In addition to the threat

issue (which was especially important in 2016 and 2017), interviewed members of NM expressed their desire to meet like-minded people. "*I wished to meet like-minded people. Who feel the same way and are capable of doing something about it*" (Resp. 2); "*Not many people are willing to speak the truth out loud. Only some of us can and that's what I like*." (Resp. 11). These established connections of like-minded people, however, do not serve only the general need to belong, but they are also expected to address the militiamen's frustrations. By joining these individuals, militiamen appeared to feel pride for standing up to the state and the injustices done by it (further described in the following parts of this text).

Lastly, aiming to address their frustration and increasing their self-perception of their own significance, the interviewed militiamen appeared to desire a role they would respect. The final expectation, resulting from joining the group, was a role that would be beneficial, not only in terms of security, but also in self-perceived value. "*Yeah! That's actually one of the main purposes this thing! To somehow help them, not only physically, but also morally. Because we try in the militia, to create a relationship there, so that the elderly would not be underestimated, (as they are) more experienced (...) those young need that experience to be passed on them.*" (Resp. 3). "*What I would want, but there will probably be no chance for it, is to explain to those kids (...), that those teachings, how it is presented and taught, that they are afraid of Russia, that there is a grave danger. But if you take it historically, Russia has always waged defensive wars, never offensive*." (Resp. 6). Such a role, both in society and in the organisation itself, seemed to be achievable only via joining NM (at least at the moment). This general expectation might slightly remind one of the quests for significance, though it is considered to be of secondary importance (or at least was, when the interviewed individuals decided to join NM).[86]

Need for Belonging as a Motivation

Addressing the seeking for belonging, in reaction to a desire for safety, NM offers a paramilitary organisation with local cells. Given its primary (military-like) purpose, NM does address the feeling of insecurity, though, one might argue that so does the police and army. The added value of NM (as already suggest in subchapter 6.1.1.) resides mainly in its capability to create local cells, which only later organise into regional groups and eventually

[86] As will be discussed in subchapter 6.2 the importance of the quest for significance eventually developed. However, as has been said, at this phase it is considered to be a distant hope at most, superseded by the general need to belong.

are managed by the Council. As noted by journalists and respondents themselves, these local cells often fell apart as a result of decreasing activity since 2018. As such, NM ceases to address this dimension of need for belonging. Yet, simultaneously, with the decreasing capability of NM to address the need, there is a decrease in importance of the need for belonging caused by security concerns – as the perceived threat is decreasing as well.

Then, increasingly more importantly, NM offers a group of like-minded people, clearly identifying problems in society and offering means to eradicate them. In its proclamations, public speeches and online posts, NM repetitively identifies the sources of frustrations and wrongdoings, shared by its members. As respondents often raised the same issues and perceived injustices on social media. "*Its about how those kids are raised, totally without respect for authorities. When I sometimes read some things on Facebook, I am so surprised, how someone can post such a stupid thing to something, completely without knowledge of the context. So I sometimes comment back and then there are arguments there, sometimes. Sometimes a lot (laughing)*." (Resp. 3). NM seems (and seemed in the past) as a zone where these grievances can be shared and discussed.

Utilising its unique nature, NM offers a way of self-realization, either via defined ways of addressing sources of frustration, utilising previous experiences from the military, or simply gaining social status. Offering not only a network of likeminded people, but also making suggestions about how the frustration should be addressed, NM offers a chance. A chance of acting in accordance with an individuals' moral values, felt obligations and thereby regaining significance (as will be described more in subchapter 6.2.3.) Establishing a military-like structure, NM also offers a way of utilising previous military experience for former officers (possible a quick re-gain of significance), or a clear way of gaining such a position by following the expected behaviour of a soldier.[87] Finally, for those instead seeking a role in society, NM presents an opportunity reflected in militiamen mindset, Overlooked Mentor and Saviour, in their planned role in society, providing militiamen with the hope of being in a leading role of education and training of youth – a role accessible only via joining the organisation.

6.1.4. Pull Factor: Thrill Seeking

Another important factor, especially during the initial phases of NM, is thrill seeking. Representing a desire for adventure, excitement and action, thrill seeking embodied an

[87] According to some respondents, an individual might earn a promotion, as long as written and unwritten rules are followed and the individual acts as an exemplary soldier.

important factor in the beginning of NM, though it appears (like fear) to be of rather secondary importance, at least during the COVID-19 pandemic (during which activities of most NM cells decreased or totally ceased). This expectation of excitement offered respondents a hope of unique experience, as well as a reputation for participating in such an organisation. This theme especially allowed the emergence of quest for significance in motivations to stay (this will be further described in subchapter 6.2.)

Thrill seeking: Nature of Seeking

Thrill seeking represents another shared motivation, though not shared by all respondents, leading individuals to join NM. During interviews, most respondents stated the chance for military drill, weapons handling, "some of the man stuff" and generally some excitement as expectations that accompanied their decision-making process resulting in them joining NM.

A figurative first layer of thrill seeking is the general excitement from trying new things. Some respondents shared their initial motivations to join NM to be the desire to "try something new" and "learn some useful skills": "*Yeah, you know, I kind of missed that (army drill), so I started to prepare for my weapon licence and was seeking those groups. Not militia specifically, but those like... you know... those survival groups... to learn something new.*" (Resp. 7). According to these statements, individuals appear to have required a new stimulus in their life and NM might have been an emerging opportunity to gratify the general desire. Perhaps surprisingly, this theme played a role not only for younger members (according to the statements of militiamen), but also for pensioners, who might have perceived a significant loss as they retired (further elaborated in the following subchapter).

As a step further, several subjects specifically sought the military experience. Driven by the idea of military service as "being a question of manhood", numerous interviewees stated they expected to learn/remind themselves of some military experience in NM. "*Well, (thinking), ... I think what I missed, was what I deprived myself of, the military. And I felt a kind of a handicap there, like the handicap of a man. (...), I desired to be a man a little, like by the physical side, as well as the emotional*." (Resp. 11). Related also to the need for belonging and the quest for significance, some militiamen expected to find "military drill", but also "manly brotherhood" and military-like activities in which to spend their free time.

As a third, partially separate dimension of thrill seeking, a few informants were motivated by the expectation of either learning or deepening their weapons handling skills.

From this point of view, there were two kinds of expectations: those by individuals without a weapons licence, who sought the opportunity to use handguns, but also rifles; and those who expected to deepen their knowledge and skills under the leadership of experienced professionals, within a collective of enthusiastic people like them. "*It has changed... I expected to go there and learn something from them. Only now it appears, like I have to be there and somehow make it work.*" (Resp. 7).

Thrill seeking as a Motivation

Addressing the desire for general excitement, NM offered a unique, active and controversial topic. From the perspective of an individual who sought (or seeks) general excitement or a new stimulus, NM embodies that and much more. Given its unique (paramilitary) character, NM represents an experience and live action. Given its nature and proclamations, it represents a controversial topic, e.g. for discussion "over a beer", and thereby represents a thrill from being different (by participating in NM).

As for those seeking military experience specifically, NM gathered some former military and police officers, and organised military-like exercises, otherwise inaccessible to some individuals. Starting from last of the mentioned individuals have currently had a chance to participate in the state security forces only after succeeding in entry trials and under the condition of having no criminal record. As such, NM offered these individuals a unique, otherwise inaccessible opportunity to join, e.g. despite their low physical capabilities or already-mentioned criminal records. In addition, NM members consisted also of former military and police officers, often high-ranking, willing to pass on their knowledge and to train those seeking it. As a result, for those seeking this knowledge e.g. for personal interest, or for use in paintball or airsoft matches, NM represents a unique opportunity of reaching this knowledge (free of charge).

Concluding with the last dimension, NM publicly organised visits to shooting ranges, with supervision and lectures, and thereby satisfied the need for weapons handling experience. On an elementary level, NM is known to have organised drills and lectures on shooting ranges,[88] including competitions. By doing so, it offers incentives to those seeking either the basics of weapons training,[89] or those seeking companions as enthusiastic as them.

[88] As documented in previous parts of this study.
[89] In the Czech Republic, it is possible to visit a shooting range without a weapons licence (as long as the individual is accompanied by a person holding the license (or an instructor specifically)).

Nevertheless, (most probably) stemming from the military background of some of its members, NM also enables getting into contact with some rather uncommon weapons, like semi-automatic, or even full-automatic weapons.[90] As a result, NM offers not only the activity, which is by itself a source of thrill, but also a unique version of it, by accessing otherwise hardly accessible weapons.

6.2. Motivations to Stay

Whereas motivations to join NM consist mainly of a combination of push and pull factors, motivations to stay in NM appear to be dominated by pull and personal factors. The most influential factors affecting an individual's desire to stay engaged in NM were bonding, ideological alignment and finally, a quest for significance (either via political statements or role chasing). As one may notice, these motivations differ from motivations for joining NM. Analyses conducted by the researcher suggest that some initial motivations developed (e.g. need for belonging developed into bonding), some appear to disappear as a result of changing situational factors, and some became of secondary importance (as others dominate the minds of respondents).

6.2.1. Pull: Bonding

"*We made preparations for a really long time, so he was even at our home. My wife cooked and it was like, you know, a special day of sorts. And if you speak with someone in private (...) you get to know them. And there, right there, I got it confirmed, that he really is who I though he is (...), a man of great heart, for everyone…*" (Resp. 6).

Based on statements made by all respondents, bonding represents a significant reason to stay engaged in the activities of NM. Feelings of kinship, brotherhood and comradeship were mentioned during each interview, although with different intensity. The core of the feeling is created by shared memories and experience, manifesting itself via references to brotherly relations. Eventually, the desire to maintain this feeling then in some cases lead to the adoption of collective identity or even a fusion with the social identity of individuals. The resulting consequence of these feelings is then an even stronger bond of individuals to the group and to the organisation, supported by feelings of safety and conformity. Given the continuous frustration felt by respondents, some of them react to the pressure by reaffirming

[90] Based on Czech law, a civilian is unlikely to receive a licence to possess automatic weapons. As such, the opportunity to use these on a regular basis may be appealing to some. Use of automatic weapons has been admitted by respondents and even NM publicly: Národní Domobrana, 2020.

their identity via identifying differences from other groups – leading to the acceptance of prejudices, stereotypes and other concepts offering an easier orientation in the chaotic world. Lastly, bonding (in some cases) might be perceived as a fulfilment (or development) of a need for belonging.

Nature of Bonding

The most apparent embodiment of bonding was the stress that interviewees put on the shared experience that distinguishes them as a group. When interviewed, militiamen referred to the shared experience with their group very positively. An example of these are the already mentioned pilgrimages to Říp or Blaník hills. Regular activities seem to play a significant role in supporting the cohesiveness of the group and sense of belonging. "*I have to say, it is that sort of friendly group of people. First of all, we are thinking the same way, right. And secondly, if you need something, then it was simply worth it that you called someone like 'look I need help' and he was like 'yeah, I know someone'… So those people, we really help each other.*" (Resp. 10) or like Resp. 3 recalled: "*We have a little fella there, like really small. And once in a pub, he, like accidentally, bumped into someone, but fortunately, there was this big truck driver of ours, … who simply protected him*." (Resp. 3).

A metaphorical "next step" of shared experience are the described feelings of brotherhood, kinship and family-like relations within NM. Supported by shared grievances and identified frustrations, militiamen often look for support within the ranks of NM, rather than their previous social groups. As such, "colleagues" from NM are viewed as those who understand them and share some commitment and willingness to fight and speak out the truth. "*Somebody one told me, hey, don't be silly, it's really important what you do. You extend the informational field if you think about it. And now I see, that people really come and are interested about the information I spread*. (…) *And there are a lot of us, who think the same way, but only a couple of us who are willing to fight for it or at least speak out loud. People are scared*." (Resp. 11). Taking the feeling of bonding still a step further, some militiamen even described their relations towards other members as "family-" or "brother-like", automatically assigning positive values to them and strengthening the in-group affiliation toward other members of NM: "*The core of those people is very cohesive and we a know a lot of stuff about each other, like everything, and those relations are like brother, sister …(Should there be a crisis)… I think that their comfort and this stuff won't be more important for them than my needs.* " (Resp. 3).

Finally, most interviewed members of NM appear to accept the collective identity, and in some cases, this collective identity appears to be accepted as a social identity. Respondents often identified themselves primarily as militiamen and referred to themselves in the plural (this notion was most obviously demonstrated by respondents with narcissistic personality traits). While doing so, these individuals often advocated the narrative of why NM was established and why it is needed in the Czech Republic and connected it with their personal convictions and values. Given the military-like structure and activities organised by NM, this level of bonding and collective identity came as no surprise to the researcher. What was surprising, however, were specific cases in which collective identity appeared to have affected even the individual identity of individuals, as they fully accepted their role in NM and desired it to be their primary role in society: "*I have a different vision, I would feel very good and maybe I would even quit my job and dedicate myself only to this (NM). Some of our guys already can, as they are retired*." (Resp. 6). This trend is assumed to be strongly supported by the complex nature of NM, affecting the personal life of respondents (spending free time together, developing a certain set of skills, establishing relations), political opinions (as NM engages in and discusses politics) and working relations (as some respondents, based on interview statements, established even working relations). Additionally, as there are numerous visions and narratives about the future of NM, individuals are free to adjust them to their desires; making membership in NM even more appealing to them.

Consequences of Bonding

Shared experiences and learning activities appeared to have a positive effect on the attractiveness of a group to an individual, providing them with pride and fulfilling their need for belonging. Building on their shared moments, respondents' need to belong (only now specifically to their cell rather than generally to "some group") increases. On this matter, the word cell instead of NM is chosen on purpose. While speaking of their relations to and impressions of NM, its leadership and their group, most respondents stressed their relation towards their cell, whereas they often spoke of a weak or even no relation with leadership (especially the council), or other cells. "*I hardly know them. I mean, I know who they are, but I have never met any of them.*" (Resp. 8); … "*She usually visited some event, changed into uniform at the place, took some pictures and left. That was not what I expected*." (Resp. 11). An exception to this cell-preferent tendency were members of the Council of NM, who appear to foster close relations amongst them.

In terms of feelings of brotherhood and community, informants spoke of their cells as a space of conformity and safety and expressed strong in-group preferences. As a result of feelings of kinship and close ties, individuals gave the impression of feeling at ease with sharing their concerns and ideas with the group. Their cells were described as a "safe space" for debate and explaining matters such as international affairs. "*It's chill. We sit around and share our thoughts. It is not like there are any divisions. (...) There is usually a discussion, with arguments. (...) And so far, always the majority convinced the minority, how it is, what is the truth, and they (the minority) acknowledged that.*" (Resp. 6). This safe space appears to be especially important for militiamen, given their frustration with "mainstream media" and online forums, where they often meet contradictory opinions. In this sense, cells and NM as such serve as a *de facto* echo-chamber,[91] amplifying specific opinions held by NM. Resultingly, witnessing the enmity of other groups in comparison to the friendly and safe environment of their cell, militiamen tend to stay engaged in it.

Finally, NM offers militiamen collective identity, providing them with a feeling of order, self-esteem and stability. As a result of the strong influence of pull factors, NM appears to have established a sort of collective identity, distinguishing their members not only by their uniforms, but also by a specific set of beliefs and ideologies. This identity strongly favours members of the ingroup, and automatically assigns them positive qualities, e.g. honesty, bravery, intelligence and assumed mutual empathy. The same, however, works also the other way around, that is, towards the outgroup, where stigmatisation takes place on several levels. On the most general level, the collective identity shared by militiamen distinguishes between members and non-members of the organisation.

"*Resp.: A sympathiser is someone, who does not want to be active in the militia, but he is aware of it and knows that he can rely on it and the militia, under certain circumstances, can rely on him. And if there would be any problematic relations within society, then he is of course a legitimate member – if he wanted to be.*

(Intermezzo of several questions, suggesting the respondent would not deny any "sympathiser" a chance to join NM)

INT: ... but to others you would? (deny the chance to join)

[91] Echo chamber refers to a "social bubble", and is used especially in relation to social media. As such, it describes a "systemic bias in audience composition", stemming from a tendency for individuals to select information that is congruent with prior attitudes, or that comes from like-minded sources. Resultingly, beliefs held are more likely to be amplified rather than confronted. (Guess, Nyhan, Lyons, Reifler 2018, pp. 4-5)

RESP: Well, it depends. That would be assessed individually and those, who came hard at us, we would not deny them all, probably, but we would be very cautious, (…) they would have to demonstrate that they really mean it and they won't, like, gather intelligence on us or something."(Part of interview with Resp. 3).

On a deeper level, however, respondents clearly identified several outgroups that further helped them in identifying their own qualities and values. Among these groups were already-mentioned Islamists, migrants in general, but also corrupt politicians and supporters of multiculturalism.[92] On this matter, most of these groups became a subject of stigmatisation and demonisation.

"*They only want to rape and plunder. I mean look at Islam itself. They eat dogs! They only came here to conquer*." (Resp. 5).

"*It simply has some limits (political participation of militiamen). It cannot simply be a threat to the reputation and focus of the militia. We would not like to see someone from, for example, NSDAP right, or similarly we would not like to see them in parties like TOP09."*[93] (Resp. 1)

"*Notice, that when they arrive, it's all men and all men of working age. How many women are there? They might come, some of them, but definitely not all. And then it is logical, that they will have needs and they will want to satisfy them. (…) I have a great granddaughter now, a little one and I can't imagine, what would it mean, if they would come and rape her. I think I would take that machine gun.*" (Resp. 3)[94].

From an outsider's perspective, these claims might be a manifestation of anger, though in the context of bonding, they represent a chance for further identification and order. The general importance of stereotypes and prejudice resides in the fact that it helps individuals to orient themselves more easily in their environment; especially in a new environment, or when under pressure (or frustration and fear) (Koomen and Plight 2016, p. 84). As such, this feeling of identity and a clear definition of it provides NM members with a sense of order and safety. As these feelings are tightly connected both to the people and to the organisation, NM tends to

[92] Militiamen usually refer to these individuals as "Sunny people" (*Sluníčkáři*) (translated by Mareš and Milo 2019). This initially referred to those seeing multiculturalism and migration as a positive phenomenon, or suggesting accepting migrants. Eventually, the term is sometimes used generally for those strongly advocating the rights of minorities, migrants and those criticising far-right policies and politics.

[93] NSDAP – Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei was a far-right party ruling in Nazi Germany. TOP09 – is a contemporary Czech party profiling itself as liberal-conservative. Most of its members have condemned NM.

[94] This specific quote was already used in previous chapters. However, for its illustrative value, it is used here for a second time, on purpose.

preserve them, via staying engaged in the organisation (this thesis is further elaborated on in the following subchapter).

6.2.2. Pull: Ideological Alignment

The ideological alignment of respondents manifested itself via acceptance and adoption of NM's goals and means. Related to collective identity, ideological alignment here represents more than just a mere "belief in a cause". It represents the acceptance of the goals and means, acceptance of identity and submitting to peer pressure "for the cause". It is under these influences that some respondents have adopted the idea of NM for their own and accepted it as a primary purpose in their life (further described in the following subchapter).

As one might argue, some tenets of ideological alignment have already been described in this research; however, so far, some parts of it were described only as by-products and not as solo factors. In the 3P matrix, the suggested factors are assumed to interact with each other (e.g. push and pull), however, also to overlap in some dimensions. This being said, the researcher fully recognises the complexity of the factors in effect and acknowledges ideological alignment as a result of some other factors. This fact, however, does not affect the importance of ideological alignment in individuals' decisions to stay engaged. As such, it is listed here as a solo factor, emphasising its importance.

Nature of Alignment

Given the described frustrations and fears and considering their literal acceptance of NM claims, some respondents appear to have undergone a cognitive opening state, resulting in accepting an identity as militiamen, often fusing with their own identity. During interviews, several NM members used emotionally charged terms, signalling the importance of the topic to them. The emerging hypothesis suggests that while frustrated and afraid, some respondents might have undergone a stage of cognitive opening, seeking a framework that would help them understand and interact with reality better (Koomen and Pligt 2016, p. 37). Consequently, militiamen might have not only accepted the collective identity of "militiamen", but their individual identity might have merged with it, into being a "militiaman". Respondents who identified themselves as a militiaman, as an individual, usually associate their future with NM, aspiring to "be a fulltime militiaman": "*I have a*

different vision, I would feel very good and maybe I would even quit my job and dedicate myself only to this (NM). Some of our guys already can, as they are retired." (Resp. 6).

As for specific beliefs, interviewees have adopted the narrative offered by NM's ideology – migrants and those who welcome them are a threat and it must be addressed, with force if necessary. This acceptance of means and ends does not necessarily stem from NM's claims and proposals. Given the authoritarian inclinations of some respondents, these beliefs might have been present even before their membership in NM (which might have only provided a specific framework for realising these beliefs). However, in some cases, acceptance of such beliefs might actually be regarded as radicalisation. This is especially true given the fact that the object of enmity are not only migrants and Islamists, but also "collaborators" and "those in power" – fulfilling the definition accepted here for radicalisation: "*accepting beliefs, ... leading to increased support for political conflict*". It should be noted here that none of respondents directly called for violence; usually, the interviewed members stressed the defensive nature of the force they speak of: "*You know, what it was about in the case of this National Militia, it was about self-defence, defence, you know, so on the contrary, it was about defence against violence. So, I don't understand it at all, that is simply complete manipulation. No one ever wanted to be offensive or commit violence, but on the contrary! Total opposite. They completely twist it!*" (Resp. 11). However, several of them spontaneously confessed to hearing such calls (for violence) from their comrades: "*We cannot go there and simply do something. To shoot, how is it called today…? the Senate! That's more of an academic question, than that someone would, you know. But there were those people, who said, let's go and let's do something. Let's go to the streets and, you know. But I am against it. I don't want anarchy here. Chaos, like in America now."* (Resp. 3).

Consequences of Alignment

The primary and perhaps the most important consequence of ideological alignment is the acceptance of collective identity and in some cases identity fusion. As already described in the "Bonding" part of this subchapter, the interviewed individuals are assumed to accept the collective identity. In the previous subchapter, they did so, based on stimuli provided by the group and pressures applied by the group. The acceptance of the identity was, however, also part of an internal belief system, which is assumed to eventually reach congruence with ideology of NM. Supported by the consumption of "propaganda" and ideological congruence,

some individuals became "fully indoctrinated", believing in the cause as described by NM. Thereby, disengagement becomes even harder, as these individuals would not only abandon NM and end the relations established with it, but they would also betray their beliefs. Stemming from this acceptance of the over-arching ideas as their own, these individuals were more inclined also to justification of NM and general submission to the group on matters not concerning NM directly.

As ideological alignment (reached either before or after joining NM) made individuals accept NM's values as their own, respondents often searched for justification of various NM activities and statements. Adopting the general set of ideas promoted by NM, interviewees tend to justify some of their actions. As documented in the "*Moral Arbitrariness and Double Standards*" subchapter (5.2.3.), respondents often tried to rationalise some statements made by NM. While doing so, however, some often faced a cognitive dissonance of sorts, as some of these claims (made by NM) were in contradiction with claims made by respondents earlier in the interview. In such cases, individuals tended to justify such statements even more eagerly, or abandoned the topic at once.

Finally, as a result of ideological alignment with the group (but strongly supported by other group factors), some research informants spoke of submission to group pressure, which some manifested on such a scale that it could be classified as groupthink. Supported by all group factors and (presumably) a desire to maintain a newly gained identity, individuals appeared to be affected by the group even in topics beyond the primary interests of NM. Eventually submitting to this group pressure, some individuals admitted to being influenced by the group*: "How did NM affect me? For example, I started to look at some political issues in a completely different way. (...) I never adored Russians, but now I simply changed my opinion, that he, Putin, is not totally bad you know. Take this annexation of Crimea for example (...) And they simply started to talk about these thinks at NM. And they simply have different opinions on some things, so they tell you like, look at it from this perspective (...) and suddenly it makes sense."* (Resp. 7). Rarely, some respondents are assumed to be subjected to opinion band-wagoning, practically repeating the claims heard by (e.g.) their cell's leader, yet unable to further support their statements. Lastly, several members manifested what could be classified as nothing less than groupthink,[95] most obvious when speaking about the

[95] Groupthink is psychological process occurring either within a group or between groups. It refers to an affect effecting the decision-making process in a cohesive group. Such a group is usually insulated from dissenting viewpoints and tends to support the strongest arguments, disregarding evidence suggesting them to be wrong.

unpreparedness of society for conflict, or about the threat society faces. In these cases, statements, argumentation and consequent associations de facto mirrored those in other interviews:

"*Take sirens*[96] *for example. Where will these people run when they hear them? (…) Those pensioners, they were completely lost when they heard them! And those people, they don't know what the different signals of those sirens mean (…) they are completely unprepared*." (Resp. 11).

"*They are completely unaware. In the past, people used to know what to do, when a specific signal came out of the sirens. They knew that had to go and hide in the bunker. But now? They would be completely lost. They don't even know what different signals mean. I don't even want to start on those bunkers. That's terrible what they did with them (…)*" (Resp. 6).

"*What does it mean they are unprepared? Take for example the sirens. They either don't work, or people don't know what to do when they hear them.*" (Resp. 5).

6.2.3. Personal: Quest for Significance

The last shared factor supporting continuous engagement in NM was a quest for significance. As previous subchapters have described, militiamen highly value their membership in NM, given bonding, but also as it provides them with a framework explaining their feelings and frustrations and gives them a way to address them. Via this framework, several interviewees appeared to have found a way of increasing their feeling of personal significance, either via using their membership in NM as a political statement, or via using NM to chase a desirable role.

Prior to introducing both, it should be stressed, that the quest for significance was most probably triggered via perceived significance loss. In accordance with findings from psychology and Quest for Significance theorists, a significance quest is most often triggered via an opportunity to gain significance, via a perceived threat to current significance, or via significance loss (Kruglanski et al. 2015). The source of this significance loss is assumed to be rooted in sources of frustration – that is, feelings of unheard voices in the political arena,

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Groupthink is usually stronger when a strong authority promotes a particular solution or course of action. (For more see e.g. Janis 1971.)

[96] Sirens *(Sirény*) refers to an audio warning system used to provide an emergency warning to the general population about approaching danger. In the Czech Republic, the system is tested regularly on a monthly basis. In practice, the system uses different tones for different situations.

perceived marginalisation by the mainstream and others. Given the thorough description of these frustrations in previous parts, this part of the thesis lacks the "Nature of Significance Loss" part (contrary to other "Motivation" parts), as it would only repeat already presented findings.

Significance Via Political Statement: Significance Loss

Membership in NM appears to be viewed as a chance to make a political statement, and thereby regain some of the significance perceived as lost. Judging by suggestions made by psychology and QST theorists, one way to trigger a "quest for significance" is by causing a significance loss, or the threat of it (Kruglanski et al. 2013). This perceived loss, in the case of respondents, was caused by the already-described frustration, consisting of feelings of injustice, marginalisation of like-minded individuals, feelings of social exclusion by the "mainstream media" and finally victimisation associated with what is viewed as "oppression of white heterosexual men".

As a result of these feelings and conservative moral values, some respondents appear to view NM as a chance to regain their self-esteem, by making a de facto political statement. Stemming from their feelings of social insignificance and based on their moral values, NM attracts some with its political orientation and activities. By participating in the activities of NM, or simply by being a member of it, respondents appeared to feel pride and satisfaction, as they address topics they personally see as important. The perception of significance is even higher, as by participating in NM, individuals get the feeling of taking control, increasing their chances of eliminating sources of fear and frustration, thereby providing them with feelings of safety and stability. This feeling of regaining significance, which accompanied most (or perhaps all) interviews, freely mirrors the "revolutionary hero" as described by Peterson (1999, p. 271): "*The revolutionary hero*[97] *reorders the protective structure of society, when the emergence of anomaly makes such reordering necessary. (...) This capacity (to reorder) (...) is exceedingly threatening to those completely encapsulated by the status quo, and who are unable or unwilling to see where the present state of adaptation is incomplete (...) The archetypal revolutionary hero therefore faces the anger and rejection of his peers, as well as the terrors of the absolutely unknown. He is nonetheless the "best friend" to the state.*".

[97]'Revolutionary Hero' here refers to an archetype of a story / persona shared across cultures. In context of this thesis, respondents are assumed to adopt this "societal role" to increase their self-perceived importance.

It is important to note, being on a quest for significance, informants take criticism of NM as criticism of themselves and their re-established significance (as explained by QST). When interviewed, militiamen saw every criticism of NM as baseless or against common sense, often as part of operations aimed at discrediting NM. This complete denial of criticism thereby de facto mirrors the protection of identity (as already described).

Significance Via Chasing a Role: Opportunity for Gain

For the other group of respondents, NM opened a chance for pure significance gain via adopting a specific role. The other group of "significance seekers" does not orient themselves toward any compensation or group effort at all. For these individuals, NM simply enables them to feed their personal needs. As might be assumed, this motivation is typical for individuals manifesting narcissistic personality traits. Urged by their needs, these respondents appeared to seek social status: either in relation to society in general, or specifically to some other social group (or even individuals). The roles they seek then freely follow some mindset themes described in Chapter 5: some seek to become mentors and leaders to broader society, some aimed to show dominance towards other militiamen, and some simply seek to impress their relatives or previously existing social groups (they were part of before joining the NM).

In terms of significance towards broader society, several members have shown patronising tendencies and feelings of superiority in relation to "the people". These tendencies, already described in previous subchapters, are assumed to be manifestations of insecurity, but also low self-esteem and in some cases covert narcissism. As a result, the roles of mentor or saviour were emphasised, accompanied by an evaluation of how this added value of NM is overlooked and ignored and how it might be beneficial (especially should specific individuals adopt these roles).

Speaking of ingroup authority seekers, only three manifested this tendency – seeking recognition, admiration and approval from their comrades-in-arms. These individuals usually had previous experience in the military, *de facto* reclaiming their positions from the past. As such, they manifested highest levels of authoritarianism in parallel and often remembered their times in the military in a very positive light. "*My wife always says to me 'you are an interesting type, you like those military drills' and I say, I do! Why not? The military drills, we were simply a bunch of dudes, we had some fun, when we were officers, I mean (...) I even had a guy assigned to me, to clean my boots and to keep my fire! Yeah, those were good times."* (Resp. 3).

As for the last group, seeking to impress previously existing acquaintances, these simply appeared to use NM to prove their capabilities to others. Usually, these selected individuals described their discussions about NM with previously existing social groups. Then depending on the success, they either thoroughly described the gained importance in eyes of the other party, or on the contrary, commented on the discussion in as few words as possible.

6.3. Motivations for Disengagement

The main reasons why respondents considered leaving NM, or why they think others left, were the ill functioning of NM, low approval of broader society, the state's policies towards NM and finally, withdrawal of a threat and a resulting shift in interests. In accordance with the 3Ps framework, as a set of factors affects an individuals' radicalisation process, similar factors affect the deradicalisation process in the same way (Horgan, Altier, Shortland and Taylor 2016). In the case of this study, factors that pushed militiamen away from NM were mainly the mismanaged affairs of NM (low activity, bad relations, or inactive management) and state policies, especially the introduction of "Parliamentary Leaflet 669"[98] (otherwise known as "Law About Militias", or "Hamáček's Law", as referred to by NM members[99]). Pull factors drawing militiamen to other groups (or generally to the mainstream), were in turn mainly low approval from broader society, as it appears to be afraid of NM in some cases and sometimes openly rejects any association with them; and a shift in interests, as the threat of migration appears to be irrelevant now for some, and militiamen thereby decided to shift their interests elsewhere, e.g. to their families.

6.3.1. Push: Ill Functioning NM

The first and apparently most significant factor supporting the decision to leave was the functioning of NM below the expectations of its members. When asked about hesitations about their engagement with NM, most respondents mentioned the functioning of NM as a main reason. Whereas the most significant reason in the early stages of NM was mainly the nature of the leadership, which was not radical enough according to some, in later stages (and during interviews), it was mainly the low activity of specific cells and the incapability of leadership, which led informants to question their membership in NM.

In the early stages, especially in late 2016, some members viewed NM as not radical enough and left it. In interviews, respondents shared their feelings about others, their motivation to join and motivations to leave NM. Apparently, for those leaving NM in the early stages of its existence, NM appeared as not radical enough and not willing to take

[98] Parliamentary Leaflet 669 (Sněmovní Tisk 669) is a working version of the "Law About Weapons" (Zákon o Zbraních). The working version suggests (among other things) banning militia-like organisations and fining any members of such organisations. Yet it should be stressed, that the law has not yet been finalised, let alone legalised. For more, see the official websites of the Ministry of Interior (Ministerstvo Vnitra 2021) or Parliamentary websites: Poslanecká sněmovna Parlamentu České republiky, 2019.

[99] Whereas the "Law about Militias" is part of media discourse, "Hamáček's Law" is usually a reference made in NM (Jan Hamáček is current Minister of Interior of the Czech Republic).

action. This call for action usually referred to more radical political actions or more intense military activities, including border and town patrols. "*Probably that appeal of some action somehow led those people to leave us, some of them I mean… but on the other hand, I think it is valuable, that we keep the line, that we do not go from extreme to extreme… you know, like that we would stress the tactical side one day and suddenly we would be scared of some law proposal, you know.*" (Resp. 1).

In the later stage (including that during which interviews were conducted), the core reason to leave NM was the relatively low intensity of activities. Even most respondents described the "dying activity" level as the biggest weakness of NM and factor that lead to their concerns over their future in it. According to testimonies from the leadership, between 60 and 80% of members who enrolled in NM are inactive and the rest are active on no more than a monthly basis: "*No, no, like twenty percent is active. When I get into the database, I always know immediately how many members are active, how many are waiting, and so on*…" (Resp. 3). Whereas decreasing activity is *de facto* disengagement on its own, the fact that the events and drills organiseare not organised as regularly as they used to be leads also other members to question both their membership and capability of NM to stand up for its purpose. "*I don't think it has any future (...) That organisation. It must start from the beginning with some organisational idea and that is the foundation. But I think that the state would stand up to it. Today, you won't wake those people up again. There will be no more members. And if they will, I don't think they will be those I would like to see there*." (Resp. 10).

Partially complementing the previous paragraph, the majority of "regular members" interviewed described a rather reserved relationship with their leadership; some then even openly questioned their capabilities to manage the organisation. Whereas the leadership appears to have rather close relations amongst themselves, regular members appear to feel disconnected from the leadership. Although finding excuses for decreasing activity of the leadership (such as personal and job-related duties), most respondents spoke of the leadership of NM as incapable. Based on their knowledge, this rather ineffective or outright incapable or indifferent management led several others to detach their cells from NM and establish their own, independent cells.[100] "*I think it's stupid to leave. It's not any radical group, that when you leave, you have to die. Nothing like that. Because, sometimes, I look for some other*

[100] The importance of these "rogue" (independent) cells is further discussed in subchapter 7.4.

groups, like more active ones, that I would like more. But not now. But some already did leave and establish their own, that is true." (Resp. 7).

6.3.2. Pull: Shift of Interests (As a Result of Threat Withdrawal)

As a second important factor leading to disengagement from NM, militiamen identified the shift of interests due to the withdrawal of a threat. Based on the testimonies of respondents, it appears that a considerable number of their former co-members view the threat of migration as no longer imminent. As a result, they shifted their focus either to their jobs, families or other hobbies. This assumption (of the respondents') is further supported by continuous complaints of respondents over NM costing too much money and time, both of which they could have spent somewhere else. The money and time dimensions appeared especially important once supported by other disengagement factors. An experience summarising several disengagement-supporting factors has been described by Resp. 6.: "*Well, on that account, to make it this big, you have to make preparations, you have to make calls, give a few hundred there, reserve the place, reserve accommodation… and only half of them come eventually. So, to pay the bills, those who have come will pay for those who did not. And the next time, even these say screw this, I will not pay that much again. It's hard to work in such an environment, you know*."

6.3.3. Pull: Low Approval From "The People"

The third important factor for disengagement, was a negative reaction from the mainstream, and society in general, to NM and its activities. Interestingly, no respondents claimed to have had disputes with their partners over NM, although several of them admitted to meeting with rather neutral or negative reactions from relatives in general. Those reactions were usually explained via submission to "manipulative media reports". Even without a direct confrontation, low approval played an especially important role once it occurred in the context of previously existing social ties and when NM members felt public rejection.

Being a known member of NM created a social pressure for some; in their jobs, hobbies or social circles. According to the testimonies of respondents, several of their former colleagues described pressure from their business associates or employers and friends. These pressures were more intense the more these acquaintances were related to security fields – e.g. the police or military. Consequently, some were supposed to have left NM due to fear of

potential consequences for their \personal or professional lives. "*Well, they were concerned. Because a lot of these people, I don't know, there were those who like, especially young ones, who were concerned, that if they would like to go to the police som day, that they would look upon them badly.*" (Resp. 1).

A slightly different factor was the negative response some of the respondents experienced when participating in NM activities. Apparently, public events had a strong effect on militiamen's dedication. "*For me, probably the strongest memory is one from the previous year. That day of military veterans on Slavia in Prague, where despite the political scene, actually, we were… even on television actually, there were those flags of ours even (...) The applause belonged to everyone, not only to NM. But it was quite nice, even very strong*." (Resp. 6). Yet whatever positive effect they might have had, an equally negative effect was sometimes offered by these public events. The very first effect these attitudes have is the tendency to hide any markers of being a member of NM and avoiding the topic or even denying it. "*They don't know it, that I am on the top of NM, they know that I like, do something, but I do not scream it out loud. What good would it bring?* (…) *it was funny. I once came to these guys, to their gathering. And there was some general of firefighters and everyone and I had to flip over my shirt, so that nobody could see the "National Militia", not to provoke anyone."* Resp. 3. Once these pressures were too high, however, some members were thought to be demotivated by the "disapproval", so much so that they eventually left NM. "*Well, on the first look, it did affect us (media attention). Because at the first moment it came to the surface and especially those like "threatening" articles, how we will be persecuted and so on and so forth. There was always some wave of those leaving, when some wrote, that they can no longer bear it. They always came up with some reasons and simply said somehow straight out that this is what bothers them. These various possible restrictions and stuff like this.*" (Resp. 1) This trend then generally describes some every day prejudices that members of NM had to face, especially during the very beginning of the organisation: "*A local preacher once asked me, whether I could say a few words about the Militia at some point, because elderly people were afraid. They thought we were some terrorists or something (laughing) (...) so we had a debate, and ever since it appears okay.*" (Resp. 1).

6.3.4. Push: Hamáček's Law Proposal

Finally, the last important factor leading to disengagement was the state incentive, the parliamentary leaflet[101] suggesting banning militias and militia-like organisations. Judging by first impressions, the effectiveness of this legal proposal would be evaluated as high, as the second biggest organisation, Land Militia, announced its disbandment in a reaction to the proposal.[102] While interviewing respondents, even they considered it to be an important factor affecting willingness to stay engaged in NM, though they quickly stressed the other side of issue. According to data taken from interviews, this law proposal did indeed lead some members to leave NM, yet it also contributed to others joining it.

As suggested, "Hamáček's Law" and its suggested 200,000 CZK[103] fine for membership in paramilitary organisations have forced some individuals to leave NM, or to break official ties. Judging by answers provided by interviewees, the law proposal drew a significant number of members away from NM – the main moving force being the fine itself, but also potential issues with employers (as illustrated in the previously analysed disengagement factor). Would one evaluate the policy only by these effects, one might consider it very effective, even before being passed in the parliament. Yet, according to brief notes made by a few respondents, some cells did break off their ties with NM, yet did not cease their activities, but only went "off radar", which enables them to proceed with their activities. "*(...) sometimes, I look for some other groups, like more active ones, that I would like more. But not now. But some already did leave and established their own, that is true. (...) Then there were those like radicals, who literally wanted to be off radar, be like, out of the law. Not like breaking it, but making their own laws and rules.*" (Resp. 7).

The surprising effect of the law proposal was the increased feeling of frustration felt by some, leading them to join NM, as a "sign of political protest". Respondents unanimously shared a belief on the final effect of the law proposal – although it did lead to some members leaving NM, it brought others to it. Estimates of balance between the two numbers might be perhaps surprising. "*Paradoxically, it brought us a lot of new members. We were basically at the same numbers. It brought an enormous number of people to us (...) And I think that it could have been that (rebel) sort of thinking by those members who entered at that time. That*

[101] In the period when interviews were conducted, Parliamentary Leaflet 669 has not yet been legalised. As such, in this chapter "Motivations", it is still being referred to as a "Proposal" or "Leaflet" and not as a law in its final version.
[102] In reaction to Parliamentary Leaflet 669, the Land Militia announced its official disbandment. As the main reason was state the suggested fine reaching up to 200,000 CZK. For more, see Malát 2020.
[103] As already suggested, the approximate equivalent of 200.000 CZK is 7,845 Euros / 9,413 U.S. Dollars.

they simply saw it as a protest in reaction to that (law proposal)." (Resp. 1). Stressing the "protest" and "in reaction" in the phrases used, the law proposal seems to have triggered feelings of frustration already described in this thesis. Further increasing its importance, the reaction to that frustration appear to be a quest for significance via making a political statement – only now embodying the reason to join NM, and not to stay engaged. Once combined with whole cells going "off-radar", these findings represent important suggestions, possibly shifting results of assessments of the effectiveness of the adopted policy.

7. Analysing Empirical Findings

Purpose of this last chapter is to analyse the presented findings, the relations between them, explain their underlying causes and finally, describe the implications of them. Whereas chapters 5 and 6 described the identified patterns, this chapter analyses them, summarises their meaning and tries to explain their background. The importance of this chapter lies in its explanatory value, providing a clear answer to "why", after answering "what" in the previous chapters. While doing so, this chapter provides the data with meaning; it explains changes in the data; and it suggests implications that can be drawn from the findings.

Accordingly, this chapter starts with addressing the research objective and research questions, summarising the findings of the research. Building on these, subchapter 7.2 points to shifts in motivations and offers an explanation for these. Subchapter 7.3 then identifies additional findings (in some cases highlights those already identified). Finally, subchapter 7.4 offers a discussion suggesting implications for the state and for further research and speculates about future scenarios (based on the collected data).

As for the content, the researcher successfully fulfilled its objective. According to available data, the main motivations for joining NM consisted of pull and push factors, interacting with each other. Over time, these motivations appear to have changed, however, with pull factors becoming dominant, together with personal factors (QST). According to this thesis, there are three drivers behind these motivational shifts: 1) changing situational factors, 2) specific personality traits, and the 3) influence of the group. As for additional findings, respondents manifested several shared personality traits; a majority of them claimed to have no previous relations to any other member of NM; and (perhaps surprisingly) there has been no conclusive evidence found about respondents suffering from personal issues (other than those related to NM). In terms of suggestions for further research, the researcher suggests confirming the findings presented by this study through further, focused studies. Two other specific suggestions are for a) those seeking to pursue further research on NM, who are suggested to analyse a limited number of inter-personal connections between NM members (e.g. via 'Hive Terrorism') and b) radicalisation experts generally, who are recommended to further analyse the role of personality traits (e.g. in suggested model in subchapter 7.2.2.). Finally, the state is advised to be aware that its policies might only result in specific cells going 'off-radar', becoming harder to monitor, but hardly preventing them from illegal activity.

7.1 Research Objective and Research Questions

Starting with the general conclusion, the research collected enough data to fulfil its objective and to answer the selected research question and subquestions. This being said, the research appears to be successful, providing enough data to explain or suggest why individuals join NM, what they expect(ed), how are/were these expectations met and what supports their decision to stay actively engaged in NM. Additionally, the interviews conducted appear to reveal even more then was initially intended, as will be further described in the following subchapters of Chapter 7.

7.1.1. RQ1 and SubRQ1: Motivations and Expectations

RQ_1: "What type of factors played a role in an individual's decision to join National Militia?"

According to the respondents' testimonies, militiamen's decision to join NM was affected by combination of pull and push factors, namely: fear of external threat (push), frustration (push), need for belonging (pull) and thrill seeking (pull). Offering a brief summary, respondents were driven mainly by fear of migration and its potential consequences (at least in the initial phase (2016-2017) of NM). Nevertheless, the second push factor, frustration, appears to be of increasing importance ever since, created by feelings of alienation from mainstream discourse, victimisation and overall disfavour towards "decadent society". Reacting to both fear and frustration, the urge to belong was strengthened, leading interviewees to a need to belong to a collective where their fears and frustrations will be addressed. Finally, although not dominant, some militiamen were reportedly motivated by thrill seeking, seeing NM as a chance to get unique experiences and excitement.

$SubQ_1$: "What expectations do individuals have when joining National Militia? (How are these expectations met?)"

As already suggested above, the main expectation of respondents regarding NM were to increase their feelings of safety, meet likeminded individuals, to change "things" and eventually to get some thrilling experience. Based on claims made by NM, informants expected the organisation to provide them with training and contacts that will help them against the threat of Islam and migration. As for likeminded individuals, these were supposed to increase their feeling of safety, but also to help organise a sort of political statement to "wake up the state". In this sense, a theme of increasing importance is the expectation of

"changing things" (sources of frustration) via NM. Lastly, most interviewees expressed their desire to learn survival and combat skills and get some thrilling experiences.

As for meeting expectations, the initial excitement was met with disillusion of sorts; supporting the shift in motivations to stay. The initial phase of NM was perceived as active and de facto satisfying the needs and expectations of its members. Nevertheless, as internal disputes appeared and the threat was no longer perceived as imminent, signs of doubts appeared. In most cases, NM appears not to have been active enough and thereby not addressing the threat properly. As a result, the initial expectations were met, though from the long-term perspective, the capability of NM to meet these expectations was questioned by the \interviewed members.

7.1.2. SubRQ2: Motivations To Stay Engaged

SubQ2: "What factors affect an individual's decision to stay engaged in National Militia (even after the government's law proposals)?"

While engaged in NM, motivations for engagement shifted, as bonding (pull), ideological alignment (pull) and quest for significance (personal) appear to be dominant. Interpreting and analysing statements made by members of NM, bonding appears to be of great significance to NM members; established relations, often of a "brotherly" nature, increase the value of NM, via its specific cells. The second pull factor shared by respondents was ideological alignment, which in most cases lead to the acceptance of collective identity and adoption of both the means and ends suggested by NM. Lastly, respondents often viewed their membership in NM as a way to gain significance – either via political statement or via chasing a specific role. Whereas the former serves to address general frustration through a morally just means, the latter serves as an ego boost.

7.2. Shift in Motivations

The difference between motivations to join and motivations to stay can be explained both by situational and dispositional factors. According to the collected data, most militiamen were motivated to join NM by a remarkably similar set of factors (listed in subchapter 6.1). Over time, however, these motivations changed or transformed. Whereas part of these changes can be quite easily explained via changing situational factors, some cannot. Thereby, this subchapter argues that the shift in motivations was affected not only by the changing

situation but also by dispositional factors – specifically by personality traits identified among respondents.

7.2.1. Changing Situational Factors

Starting with the rather obvious, the motivations to join and to stay shifted, given developing situational factors. As noted even by the respondents, the situation that gave rise to NM and other paramilitary and anti-immigration organisations has changed. A significant role was played by the changing (or rather disappearing) nature of the threat, but also the development of needs and changing nature of the group. As all these changed, so did the value of NM to the respondents, and thereby their motivations to stay engaged.

a) Threat No Longer Imminent

The most important factor in the changing motivations is the changing nature of the threat. In the eyes of the respondents (and reportedly also in the eyes of others), the threat of migration no longer seems as imminent, or at least not as severe, as it did. "*You know, some of them simply thought that the threat is not that big, as the media started to talk about other things. But the threat is still there!*" (Resp. 11). As a result, some members re-evaluated their priorities, leading them either to leave the NM, or leading to a shift in their motivations. As noted many times in this thesis, fear is thus no longer of primary importance and was replaced either by frustration or motivations addressing it (e.g. QST).

b) Development of Needs

The second important factor in changing motivations is the development of needs – most importantly the need for belonging. In a similar fashion to fear, the need for belonging either became of secondary importance, or transformed into bonding. With the disappearance of the threat, the main driver of the need for belonging disappeared. With that, individuals driven by fear eventually left NM. In some cases, however, the more satisfied the need was, the more likely it was to transform into bonding, making these individuals more likely to stay engaged, despite the lack of threat. Similar transformation or development might also be assigned to frustration. In this case, the frustration felt by respondents was of a rather abstract nature, but was addressed by a specific means, that offered by NM. Those respondents who approved of these means as legitimate eventually reached Ideological Alignment and some accepted the offered framework in order to satisfy their need for significance.

c) Changing Nature of NM (And Its Subunits)

Finally, motivations often changed as a result of changes in NM – its activities, functioning and overall nature. The last changing situational factor is the organisation itself. According to both media and testimonies provided by interviewees, the organisation has changed. For some, the organisation was not radical enough, leading them to leave. For others, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisation was not active enough, leading either to complete dismantlement of particular cells, or to a rather passive status for most of them. For the majority of respondents, NM changed its attitude, in terms of a decreasing capability to meet their expectations, ill-functioning leadership and in almost ceasing its activities. As such, the thrill-seeking motivation either disappeared or was satisfied elsewhere. As a result, the NM predominantly became a tool of political statement via passive membership, rather than an active weapon against migrants.

7.2.2. Influence of Personality

All three situational factors described here do provide an explanation of motivational shifts; however, an additional pattern emerged – the influence of personality. As argued in the previous part, changing situational factors do offer an explanation for shifts in motivations – that is for why some transformed, why others disappeared or became of secondary importance. As such, it might be tempting to remain satisfied with that explanation. But while thoroughly analysing the data, another pattern and possible explanation emerged – the influence of personality.

What this study suggests is that personality sometimes determines the dominant factors affecting an individuals' decision to join the group. Building on the identified shared personality traits (chapter 5) and shifting motivations (chapter 6), a few trends appeared: those with lower levels of conservativism and/or higher levels of authoritarianism (in comparison to other respondents)[104] remained in NM purely for bonding (or need for belonging); those manifesting higher levels of conservativism were motivated primarily by regaining significance via political statement; finally, those assumed to have narcissistic traits were motivated primarily by the chance of chasing a specific role and thereby obtaining social status for personal gain.

[104] As described in previous chapters, all respondents manifested higher levels of conservativism and authoritarianism than average. But even among the interviewees, the levels differed.

In analysing the groups, those who have demonstrated lower levels of conservativism (in comparison to other respondents)[105] and higher levels of authoritarianism stay engaged primarily for reasons of bonding and need for belonging. For those displaying authoritarianism, but lacking a narcissistic personality, NM simply represents a chance for being in a group with a clear, martial structure, providing them with a sense of order. For those with conservative values (lower in comparison to other respondents), the primary reason to stay is bonding, as NM represents a group of friends, offering a feeling of conformity or simply a hobby-group.

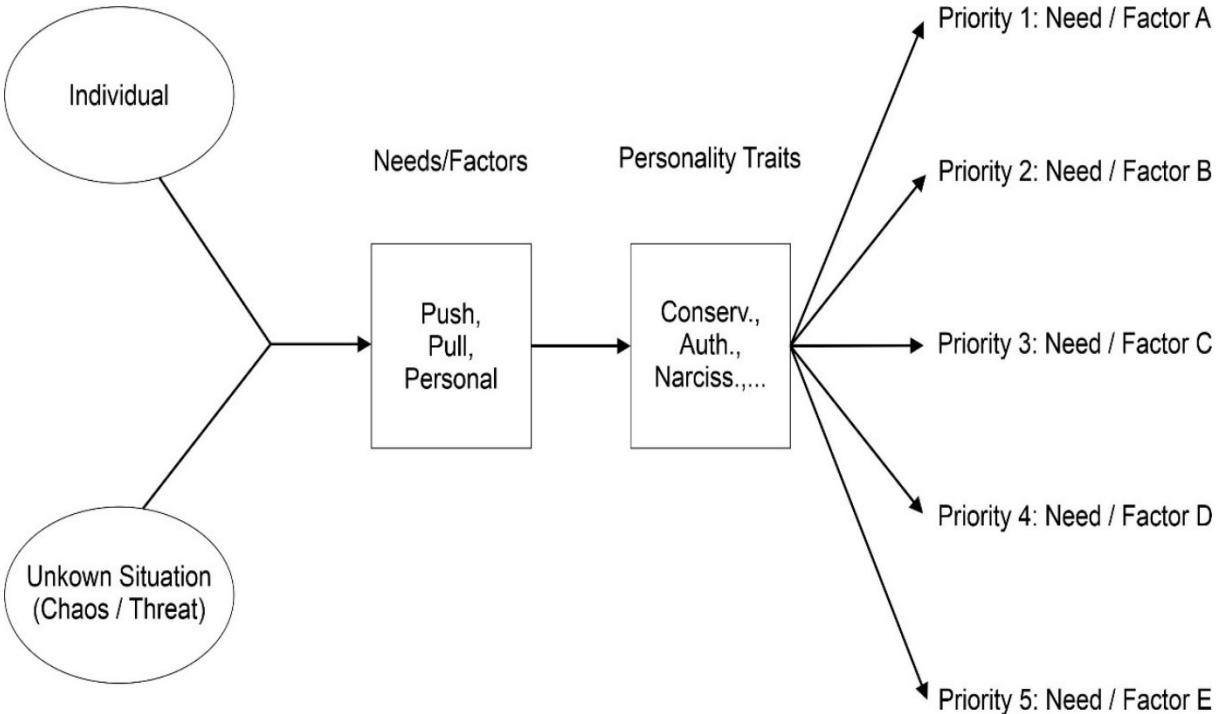
The other group, demonstrating the highest level of conservativism, is primarily motivated by a desire to regain significance via making a political statement, and as such was more inclined to ideological alignment. Following their moral guidelines (defined by conservativism), these individuals are assumed to see NM primarily as a way of carrying out their moral obligations ("something has to be done"), labelled here as a need for political action. By adopting this perspective, NM offers these individuals a way of regaining control, eliminating stress factors and thereby providing them with feelings of significance. It should be noted that ideological alignment might have been reached even before enrolment/registration into NM (as will be further elaborated on in subchapter 7.3). Bonding for this group of informants serves primarily as a sense of belonging to a larger group with a higher purpose, which makes the realisation of the desired statement possible (or more likely).

For the last group, supposed to be narcissistic, the group is primarily assumed to serve their personal interests – to increase their self-esteem or as an identity provider. Individuals demonstrating self-centeredness, seeking approval and recognition, usually associated their group with these urges. There should be no confusion; both bonding and ideological alignment are important here. Given this fact, ideological alignment provides them with identity and a clear way of gaining authority, whereas bonding (to a group) is valued mainly for the group itself, as it provides these individuals with an audience, capable of getting them approval and their desired domination. However, in these cases, both bonding and ideological alignment play a secondary role, as the primary motivation to stay engaged is their quest for significance via chasing a role. It is assumed that in the more focused approach, evidence of

[105] Respondents generally manifested a significant inclination towards conservativism. The lower/higher labels here refer to differences within the analysed sample (a respondent might manifest the lowest level of conservativism from the sample, though still clearly manifests strong inclinations towards conservative values, in comparison to general society).

personal stress factors (not concerning NM) might be found, though this study failed to conclusively identify such factors.[106]

The emerging hypotheses suggest that once individuals face changing situational factors, specific needs may occur; dispositional factors (personality traits) strongly affect the priority of these needs. Applying this rather theoretical conclusion to radicalisation studies, the following hypotheses emerge: 1) highly conservative personalities might view their respective groups as a tool of fulfilling moral obligations (such individuals then perceive membership as a quest for significance via making a political statement) ; 2) those demonstrating narcissistic traits primarily perceive organisations like NM as a way of gaining a specific role in society (quest for significance via pursuing a role). The importance of these findings lies within their specification. While so far, the research has identified either specific factors, or specific personality traits, the hereby formulated hypothesis concerns the relationship between them. As such, it does not represent a solution to the radicalisation puzzle, but it might contribute to describing it better and providing clarity to its understanding. (The general hypothesis showing the role of dispositional factors is illustrated by Figure 1.)[107]



[106] It should be noted that the two respondents showed some signs of personal struggle (family relations, working relations), however, their effect on joining NM is inconclusive.

[107] It should be stressed that the potential generalizability of the suggested model is limited not only by the limitations of the research itself, but also by the nature of the group. Given the specific traits of NM (e.g. its paramilitary nature, ethnic homogeneity), the model might not be applicable to e.g. Salafist groups.

Figure 1.: Suggested Scheme of Forces Affecting Radicalisation Process

7.2.3. Influence of the Group

The final identified factor affecting the shift in motivations was the influence of the group; data show that different sizes and activity intensities supported different primary motivations. As suggested in the brief analysis of situational factors and disengagement factors, the NM changed over time and eventually failed to meet the expectations/needs of some, leading to their disengagement. Eventually, those groups that remained (more or less) active appear to have changed, both in size and in their activities. It should be stressed that this part relies heavily on statements made by the respondents and was not intended as an area of core interest for the research.

Individuals who were part of group(s) consisting of 10 and more militiamen appeared to more likely pursue their personal ambitions; small groups (up to 9 individuals), on the other hand, supported bonding and cohesion. Perhaps unsurprisingly, individuals belonging to smaller groups demonstrated higher levels of bonding, especially among themselves. According to several statements made, in a number of rather smaller groups, once an ambitious individuals appeared, they either quickly left or the group eventually disbanded, unable to live up to their ambitions. Bigger groups counting 10 or more militiamen, on the other hand, appear to support a "competitive" environment, satisfying or even feeding attention and approval seeking personalities. In these groups, the quest for personal significance occurs much more likely.

Lastly, the more activity a group performs, the more confrontational a tone its members use and the more they accept the collective identity. Members of NM that claimed to be a part of a group that meets on a regular basis, often several times a month, chose a more confrontational approach. This manifested itself especially when asked of the sources of their frustration, or once criticism of NM came up. These individuals also more than often referred to themselves as "us militiamen", using it almost as a sole means of self-identification. On the contrary, groups engaging in activity once a month (or less) appeared to be dedicated to their group and not the cause or organisation as such.

7.3 Analysing Additional Findings

Beside answering this study's research question(s) and providing argumentation for the conclusion of the research, the data revealed also other patterns and findings, including: shared personality traits, a lack of previously existing ties between militiamen, and no specific or unusual personal issues. As for personality traits, interviewees manifested several shared personality traits (mainly heightened conservativism, authoritarianism, and moral arbitrariness). Other collected data suggests that none of respondents knew other militiamen before they joined NM (contradicting network-based theories of radicalisation).[108] Lastly, almost none of the informants appeared to deal with unusual personal issues, at least in the period the interviews were conducted, or when asked about the time during which they entered NM. As some of these additional findings were already described many times in this thesis, this section offers only a brief review of them.

7.3.1. Shared personality traits

The interviewed respondents shared several personality traits. These mainly included heightened conservativism and authoritarianism, but also moral arbitrariness, narcissism and rescue personality traits. The identification of these traits might already prove important in solving the puzzle of their radicalisation process, yet as was shown in the previous subchapter, these traits are also suggested to have an impact on shifts in motivations.

As for heightened conservativism, this trait provides guidelines for moral justification of an individuals' actions and beliefs. Conservativism is assumed to value not only care/harm and fairness (as liberal moral anchoring is described), but also ingroup loyalty, authority and purity. As a result of these adopted foundations, NM members see their engagement in the organisation as a moral obligation, fighting against the moral injustice done by specific political parties, the government and the international community.

Authoritarianism then especially predicted the acceptance of authority and a higher probability of accepting violence as a tool to political ends. In accordance with authoritarianism traits, interviewees demonstrated support for stronger police authority, harsher punishments for criminals (especially political ones) and supported a rather hierarchical structure of society, in search of order. As NM is a paramilitary organisation by

[108] Here it should be stressed (once again) that despite the pattern recognised in the data sample and testimonies of respondents suggesting the trend to be reliable, the data sample is generally too small for making a conclusive claim.

nature, offering violence against an external threat, it appears to resonate among individuals sharing authoritarian personality traits.

As for narcissism and moral arbitrariness, respondents often used NM to seek personal significance and the moral high ground. Whereas moral arbitrariness was based on conservative values and consisted of strong patronising attitudes and feelings of superiority, those individuals with narcissistic traits generally used NM to boost their egos. For moral arbitrariness, NM provided individuals with a group amplifying their beliefs and supporting them. For narcissism, the group provided individuals with feelings of uniqueness, as well as a clear path to reaching a specific role within a hierarchical organisation.

Finally, a few informants also manifested traits of rescue personality, seeking a highly competitive environment, a chance to prove themselves and further improve their performance in specific areas. These individuals usually spent a significant period of time (5-10 years or more) in highly competitive environments like the military or martial arts clubs. For these individuals, it was the military drills and thrill seeking in general that played an important role in their decision to join NM (though not necessarily the primary role). When interviewed, it was these respondents whose moods remained most consistent the whole time and who most valued opportunities to prove their worth.

7.3.2. No Previous Relations: Koehler's Hive Concept?

Interestingly, most respondents claimed to have no previous relations with other militiamen prior to their enrolment; assuming these claims to be true, hive terrorism, or in general a sociological perspective of radicalisation should be considered for further analysis.

During interviews, only one respondent claimed to have known an individual already enlisted in NM; two others joined the NM together. What this meant for the data is that 8 of 11 respondents knew no one in the organisation before joining it. As this pattern emerged early in the research, respondents were asked of their knowledge of other militiamen's associations – whether they knew each other, and how. According to the answers provided, only a certain portion of members did. Apparently, previously existing relations played a role only between (former) members of National Democracy Party or the Czechoslovak Soldiers in Reserve for Peace;[109] however, these individuals allegedly represented only a fraction of the total number of NM's members. Admittedly, this pattern might be a by-product of the

[109] For more information about this organisation, see chapter 4.

rather small data sample. However, considering the confident statements made by the respondents, an alternative explanation should be suggested – Koehler's concept of Hive Terrorism/Extremism.

Combining suggestions made by French sociology and network theories, Koehler's 'Hive Terrorism' speaks of fluid networks centred around shared opposition to democratic government and immigration that lead to the mobilisation of activists. According to Koehler, the term 'hive' points to the continuously changing nature of the group involved, with a dynamic and constantly shifting composition (Koehler 2018, p. 74). The phenomenon can have two different manifestations: "a) 'ordinary' individuals with no ties to extremist groups or persons deciding seemingly spontaneously to use severe forms of violence (e.g. arson, explosives, knife attacks) to fight what they might perceive as an existential threat posed by refugees, minorities, or politicians who are seen as responsible for the threat (usually left-wing or pro-immigration agenda); or b) the involvement of 'ordinary' individuals together with long-term members of an extremist environment. (Ibid.) Besides the obvious difference of extremist involvement, the first manifestation assumes a spontaneous reaction guided by emotions, whereas the second might be a conscious and deliberate recruitment and mobilisation strategy on the part of extremist groups.

Based on Koehler's assumptions, both suggested manifestations are applicable to the phenomenon of NM. Given the previously existing ties of NM to the National Democracy party and to other paramilitary organisations, its activities might be considered a manifestation of a mobilisation strategy adopted by "long-term members of an extremist environment" (the actual terminology here would be dependent on the classification/definition of extremist groups). Yet on the other hand, a second variant appears to be potentially applicable, given emotional factors' importance as motivations. However, in this case emotions did not lead to an act of violence *per se*, but instead led individuals to act by joining NM. As this thesis does not provide enough data to confirm either of these hypotheses, it should be of interest to further research to explain the phenomenon of non-existing ties, e.g. using Koehler's suggestions.

7.3.3. No Evidence of Private Life Issues

Lastly, there has not been any indication of deeper personal issues. As noted and discussed in previous chapters and subchapters, the sample shared several personalised frustrations and fears of external threats. Once familiarised with NM, a quest for significance

allowed this to be addressed. Nevertheless, there has been no additional source of frustration found. Only one individual was unemployed when the interviews were conducted. Only one admitted having no intimate relationship, and others claimed to have stable relationships dating prior to the establishment of NM. And only one demonstrated some signs of insignificance triggered by a different factor than those shared and described by others. The only factor from this category shared by a few respondents was retirement from their jobs – though most of these individuals replaced them with part-time jobs, and demonstrated no signs of feelings of insignificance inflicted by this.

7.4 Discussion

Finally, before concluding, subchapter 7.4 offers a discussion about the implications of the hereby presented findings, both for the state and for research, and suggests scenarios that are considered as likely. This final chapter utilises findings and statements made by the respondents; however, the majority consists of hypothesising and should be read as such. Firstly, it (again) stresses the limitations of the research, recalling the need for approaching the research with critical pragmatism. Secondly, the data revealed some implications for the state and its current and also future policies. Thirdly, the research suggests which direction future research should take, both in terms of studying NM and in terms of radicalisation studies. Finally, based current trends in NM, possible future scenarios are suggested – serving rather as a summary of current trends than a specific prediction of a particular scenario(s) that should be a foundation for future analysts of NM.

7.4.1. Limitations of the Research

Before proceeding to the conclusion, the limitations of the research should be mentioned once more. The author of this thesis recognises several limitations of the research and hereby recommends further analysis in order for the findings to eventually be confirmed. In this thesis, a wide array of limitations was already discussed. The collected sample consists of only 11 interviews, which represents a rather small sample for making any final conclusions. The chosen approach relies heavily on the ability of the researcher to interpret the data, and as such, the researcher's inexperience is recognised as a possible obstacle to gaining further data.[110] In addition, specific psychological drivers might have compelled the

[110]What are here referred to as "obstacles to gaining further data" are specific moments during particular interview sessions when a deeper understanding could have been gained; the researcher could have further pursued the current topic under discussion and thereby deepened his knowledge, yet for different reasons he

interviewed individuals to portray themselves in the best, most rational possible way. Nonetheless, as most of these obstacles and limitations were expected, the researcher attempted to approach the data with as (self-)critical an approach as possible. Lastly, it should be stressed, yet again, that several of these limitations were a result of the chosen methodology and research design – which allowed for mapping the phenomenon and gaining foundational data for further research.

7.4.2. Implications For the State

Building on the empirical findings presented, several implications for the state can also be established, yet the current state position toward NM must first be clarified. Briefly summarising what has been previously included in footnotes: since January 30th 2021, Parliamentary Leaflet 669 ("Hamáček's Law" or the "Law about militias") involving a ban on militias has been in force – including a "Ban of armed groups". The eventually-enacted law states the following: *"§3 (1) It is forbidden to establish, organise or supply with weapons an armed group, or participate in its activities. (2) An armed group is understood as a group of people that simultaneously a) fulfils the nature of a paramilitary armed unit, b) is designated for armed promotion of objectives based on political, religious or other ideology and c) handles weapons, strives for gaining access to weapons, or organises individuals that handle weapons.*" (Poslanecká sněmovna Parlamentu České republiky 2021).

The fact that NM proceeds with its activities (without being prosecuted by the state) can be explained by one of two assumptions: 1) the ban was not aimed at NM and thus fulfils its purpose without contradiction; and 2) the ban was aimed at NM (and organisations alike) and thereby fails its purpose.

Assumption 1

According to "Assumption 1", the ban on the militia should be perceived as effective, preventing the emergence of organisations of a different type than NM. According to this assumption, the law has a primarily preventive purpose and was never aimed at any specific organisations, as there are no organisations fitting the definition of 'militia' or 'armed group', as defined by the law (Gawron 2020). The incorrect assumption of the law being aimed at

decided not to pursue this knowledge. The main factor affecting these "field decisions" was the limited time window in which individuals were willing and capable of participating in the research. Another important factor was the perceived sensitivity of particular topics, which (should they be approached in the wrong way) might lead to the premature end of the interview. The researcher believes that his capability of addressing these situations increased with each interview, yet recognises some space for improvement (especially in the initial phase of the research).

organisations like NM is then explained via the framing of mass-media, which was founded on misinterpretation of the intention (Ibid.)

The adoption of this assumption bears implications, as the state either demonstrates a significant shift in its assessment of NM as a threat (no longer seeing it as one); or the state indirectly indicates a lack of synergy (or even severe dissonance) between its departments. Adopting the assumption of "the ban" not being aimed at organisations like NM, the current state of affairs can be explained in two ways. The first is a shift in perception of NM as a threat (by state agencies). Should NM no longer be perceived as a threat, the state would have no interest in banning it and it would *de facto* recognise its legitimacy/legality. By changing the assessment, however, previous reports and policies would become irrelevant, implying an inconsistent or ambiguous state approach, as NM, which has been labelled as a threat, engages in same activities as it did when labelled as a threat. The second possible explanation of the ban not being aimed at organisations like NM would then be dissonance between the security agencies and Parliament. This explanation would correspond with both BIS and Ministry of Interior reports, both of which included paramilitary and militia-like organisations in their latest reports (BIS 2020, p. 12; Ministerstvo Vnitra 2021, p. 12) and in those same reports suggested the ban to be aimed at these organisations (Ibid.). Thus, the only plausible explanation of the law not aiming at these types of organisations would be disagreement about their assessment as a threat by Parliament. Should either of these explanations be true, it would imply a potential crisis in Czech internal security, either due to dissonance on the highest levels, or to suddenly changing priorities (and/or threat assessments).

Should Assumption 1 be right, the data collected by this study would imply a heightened probability of internal political tensions (and perhaps a clash). Building on statements captured in this study, many respondents view NM as a legitimate tool in addressing their fears and frustrations. The state, in reference to these frustrations, is viewed as an important (if not the most important) source of these frustrations, namely for its foreign, but also domestic policies. As fear of the potential ban of NM represented a strong reason to disengage from NM, the elimination of the fear might increase the numbers of the organisation, but also provide it with legitimacy in the eyes of the law, and thereby de facto legitimize both their means and ends. As most of these ends are aimed the changing political

and security status quo, Assumption 1 would imply a higher probability of NM's efforts to change it, leading to rising internal tensions or even clashes[111] (at least temporarily).

Assumption 2

According to Assumption 2, the law was designed to ban organisations like NM, yet the state is either unwilling or incapable of enforcing it (at least for now). Contrary to the first assumption, Assumption 2 assumes the law, and the included "ban of armed groups", to have the ambition of banning groups like National Militia or Land Militia. Yet either due to the changed nature of the organisation (in the eyes of the law), or due to other obstacles, the state is either unwilling or incapable of enforcing the law.

Similarly to Assumption 1, the adoption of Assumption 2 already bears implications: as the issue of NM is still unaddressed, the state might thereby appear weak. After marking NM (and similar organisations) as a threat[112] and declaring their intention to dismantle it by enacting a "ban of armed groups", the fact that the organisation still exists and the state does not prosecute it suggests the impotency of the state. In these terms, the impotency either resides in the effort to formulate an efficient law, or in the inability to enforce the law. As a result, the state further tolerates an armed group engaged in politics on its territory, which might be the first sign of a weak or failed state (see e.g. Ahram 2011).

Should either be true, the collected data suggests the following implications: a) the effect of the law itself is disputable, b) enforcement of the law might bring undesirable consequences and c) the law itself does not address the primary motivations leading to the emergence of NM.

a) The disputable effect of the "Ban on armed groups": The introduction of "Parliamentary Leaflet 669", suggesting banning militias, has already led to a fluctuation in the membership numbers of NM, though its final balance is inconclusive so far. When introduced, the proposal to ban militia-like organisations did resonate within the community. One of the largest organisations – Land Militia – announced its disbanding and even NM itself has admitted to losing many members. Nevertheless, according to the interviewees, the proposal also drew some members to

[111] The term "clash" does not necessarily refer to physical struggle. It rather refers to strongly contradicting worldviews and stances towards NM among e.g. the Foreign Policy Committee, BIS and others.
[112] As documented in Chapter 5, NM has been identified as a threat by state institutions (see e.g. Ministerstvo Vnitra 2018, 2019a or 2019b). Other agencies then labelled the organisation as "*not representing an immediate threat"* (e.g. BIS 2020).

NM, leaving the balance allegedly "at zero" (bringing the same number to join NM, as the number of those leaving it). Even now, as the law is in effect, there is no indication of a significant decrease in the number of NM members. As even during interviews some respondents openly questioned the state's ability to enforce this ban, the emerging implication suggested the necessity of enforcing the law if the disbanding of militias is the objective.

b) Enforcement of the ban and potential consequences: Even the enforcement of the law has implications and consequences; in this regard, three scenarios (not mutually exclusive) are expected: 1) transformation of NM, adjustments to its nature (officially) 2) transformation of NM into a political organisation, 3) individual cells going off-radar. As will be further discussed in subchapter 7.4.4., the "ban of armed groups" is aimed at organisations of a paramilitary and paramilitary-like nature. Should it be enforced, however, NM might "only" cease some of its activities, transforming itself into a different type of organisation, whose members might (of their own free will and time) continue organising such events as groups of friends (e.g. in the form of airsoft[113] drills, or visits to shooting ranges). As such, the organisation might overcome the barriers built by the law. Secondly, as NM gathers like-minded individuals who are driven by similar frustrations, eventual (official) politisation of the organisation might be a result of the state ceasing their other activities. A militant political party which refuses official state policies (domestic and foreign) might be a consequence of the law. Finally, as has already happened in some cases, individual cells might continue their activities – only without the official support of their mother-organisation, going off radar. Given the common anti-government rhetoric and strong stances against specific issues, this might represent an even bigger security threat in the eyes of security agencies.

c) Unaddressed motivations leading to the emergence of NM: The third and final implication of the presented findings for the state is the continuous presence of reasons supporting engagement in NM. The long-term challenge, left completely unaddressed by the "ban", are the remaining factors increasing the attractiveness of NM (and similar organisations). According to the respondents, fear as a factor did indeed

[113] Airsoft is a competitive team sport using replicas of weapons, shooting spherical plastic projectiles. The game usually involves two or more teams, who eliminate each other's members by hitting them with plastic projectiles fired from airsoft guns. Players usually wear equipment similar to that used by professional armies, adopting even some of their tactics and drills. Over the last few years, the sport or its variations are used during training of select armed forces.

decrease, but frustration appears to be rising. Assuming the state wants to prevent such an organisation (or similar ones) from emerging again, it should address these issues. Perhaps most importantly, feelings of frustration, marginalisation, insignificance and others are shown to lead individuals to join paramilitary organisations to address them. Should the state eliminate these feelings, a substantial part of the current membership can be assumed to reconsider their membership, or even leave NM, as frustration and other factors stemming from it (e.g. quest for significance via political statement) represent major factors motivating militiamen to join/stay in NM.

7.4.3. Suggestions For Further Research

In terms of suggestions for further research, this study calls for general confirmation of the presented findings, but also suggests directions for further research. As this study was intended to map the field and not to test any specific hypothesis, its findings were expected to be broad. As such, this study repeatedly stressed the need to confirm the hereby presented findings and it does so again. As most findings are part of complex theories and concepts, they should not be considered easily identifiable. To confirm them, multiple studies should come to the same (or at least similar) conclusions.

As for suggestions for further research, the two significant ones are: a) radicalisation studies in general are suggested to further study the relation between specific personality traits and resulting motivations to join radical organisations; b) for those studying NM, further attention should be focused on the non-existence (or lower number) of previously established acquaintances – leading to a deeper understanding of the emergence of NM.

7.4.4. Possible Future Scenarios

Finally, based on the information gathered and presented in the research, the likely scenarios are the following: a) NM will re-activate and establish its position within the Czech security environment; b) it will remain as active as when the interviews were taken and eventually either transforms itself or disbands itself; c) particular cells become independent and go “off radar”; d) organisations with a similar agenda appear. It should be stressed that the following scenarios are based on interpretation of the data and situations and trends observed while the research was conducted; that being said, these scenarios have foundations in reality and data, though are still of a rather speculative nature.

a) **NM as an established part of the Czech security environment**: The first possible scenario regarding the development of NM assumes its "reactivation" and the strengthening of its position within the Czech environment. As a result of the decreasing importance of the threat of migration, shifts in motivations and numbers of militiamen and lately also COVID-19 related restrictions, NM has continuously decreased the intensity of its activities. However, as a combination of these restrictions being lifted and the enacted ban on armed groups (which in practice tolerates the existence of NM), the leadership might try to "reactivate" the organisation. Supported by the perceived legitimisation of NM and the elimination of related disengagement factors, NM might eventually become increasingly active and pursue some of its objectives. As it is currently tolerated by the state, it might eventually establish a position for itself in the security environment.

b) **Natural disbandment or transformation:** In their claims, several interviewees expressed their concerns regarding the leadership of NM and often claimed allegiance either to their specific cell, or to the general idea (rather than to the leadership of NM). As such, should the conditions remain the same as they are now (*NM does not re-activate itself*), NM might further weaken, become more passive or even disband completely. Given its politically laden nature, however, the organisation might also transform, e.g. into a branch of an already existing party, or a new political movement / party. This scenario of transformation is assumed to be more likely should the ban of armed groups be enforced, as many militiamen perceive the ban as a political gesture, rather than an attempt at increasing the security of the Czech Republic. As such, the ban might eventually serve as a political mobilisation driver.

c) **Individual cells going independent:** More importantly from the security point of view, as NM slowly becomes more passive, some cells have already become independent. Either unsatisfied with the leadership or the (low) intensity of activities, these groups still remain active, yet on their own. This possibility was spontaneously considered by approximately a third of respondents (the rest did not open the topic at all). Should the approach of NM's leadership and situational factors remain the same, this trend might continue, eventually leading to the emergence of individual paramilitary cells, locally or regionally based, operating independently on any mother organisation. In this context, it should be noted that several of these cells already left NM, either in a desire for a more radical approach, or to seek out more advanced drills (though usually as a hobby, according to informants).

d) **Emergence of new organisations:** Although NM might cease to exist, if it does, it will most probably do so for organisational reasons. From the perspective of radicalisation factors, the situation leading to the emergence of NM has changed only slightly. Although the fear factor became *de facto* of secondary importance, the frustration appears to be growing (in respondents), especially in relation to COVID-19 restrictions. As the frustration has been identified as one of the most important factors leading individuals to join NM, its continuous existence, combined with the already existing connections of affected individuals, might give rise to another organisation like NM. Yet perhaps this time with a more effective organisational structure, or officially denying its paramilitary activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research appears to be successful, in that it is able to answer the research questions and fulfil its purpose. The collected field data suggest that respondents were primarily motivated by a set of interacting push and pull factors: whereas fear, frustration, a need for belonging and thrill seeking dominated the motivations to join, it was bonding, ideological alignment and quests for significance (personal factor), that motivated interviewees to stay engaged. As one might notice, these motivations appear to have shifted over time, being affected primarily by situational factors, personality traits and the influence of the group.

Specifically, this study suggests that respondents were primarily motivated to join NM by a mix of push and pull factors: namely, fear of external threat and frustration (push) and need for belonging and thrill seeking (pull). Addressing the push factors, the interviewed individuals expected to find an organisation that would provide them with training, tools and community, offering them a feeling of safety for them and their families. They also believed NM to be a community of like-minded people, who share their grievances and blame the same actors, offering them conformity and identity (re)validation In terms of pull factors, as already suggested, NM sought conformity, safety, and a group of like-minded people, reacting to emerging push factors. As an additional factor (thrill seeking), NM was expected to offer these individuals a unique experience, teaching them or allowing them to handle weapons, join an adventurous group of people and perhaps live up to a masculine ideal. Simultaneously, the thrill might also have resided in the unique nature of NM and its position in Czech society, making it an interesting life experience or just a topic for conversation.

These motivations, however, transformed, disappeared or decreased in importance over time, as bonding, ideological alignment and quest for significance are those dominating the motivation to stay. For most individuals, NM became a group of friends, establishing brotherly relations. While in this close group, several respondents appeared to have accepted a collective identity, making their membership in the group even more valuable, as it provides them with stability and order in their lives. This attractiveness and desire to belong to the group often manifested itself via ideological alignment, as interviewees appeared to have completely accepted both the ends and means suggested by NM. Resultingly, these individuals tried to further strengthen their position in the group, being more likely to accept group norms, submit to group pressure and trying to justify their actions, statements and overall behaviour to other militiamen. Finally, as the role of frustration appears to be

increasing in NM, a majority of members appear to see it as a chance for (re)gaining their significance. Whereas for some, it represents a chance for making a political statement in correspondence with their moral guidelines, others are assumed to see it as a chance for gaining social status and generally improving their self-esteem (via chasing a particular role).

As the main factors affecting this shift in motivations were the identified changing situational factors, the influence of personality traits (dispositional factors), and the influence of the group. Situational factors embodied e.g. by a fading fear of migration eliminated some initial motivations (leading some other members to disengage from NM). As for those members remaining, their motivations appear to have changed according to their personality traits. Those manifesting a combination of a higher level of conservativism and authoritarianism usually highly value bonding and a need for belonging, as NM provides them with a hierarchical society, following a conservative set of rules. Those with the highest conservativism (from the sample) then appear to see NM as a chance for regaining personal significance via political statement. Finally, those identified as narcissists are assumed to perceive the NM as a chance to increase their significance by chasing a specific role – providing them with a social role, dominance and a feeling of self-esteem. As for the third factor, group influence, activities and the size of the group are assumed to amplify certain motivations and support specific traits. Whereas in smaller and less active groups, it is bonding (with a focus on conformity) and "political statement" that dominates their motivations, in bigger and more active groups, it is a quest for personal significance via pursuit of roles that prevails. Apparently, these bigger collectives also allow for greater development of narcissistic ambitions.

In discussing the additional findings, three should be pointed out: 1) several shared personality traits were identified among informants, 2) there appear to be no previous relations between the majority of respondents, 3) there was no evidence of particular private life issues. As suggested in the previous paragraph, analysis identified several shared personality traits: heightened conservativism, authoritarianism and moral arbitrariness, shared by all respondents or a majority of them; and a few then manifested traits of narcissism and rescue personality. As for point 2, only three respondents knew another member of NM (prior to their enrolment), two of who entered NM together. The further questioning of the respondents suggests that also among other members was only a limited number of those who knew each other before joining NM. This suggestion is especially important, as it implies no previous connections to groups labelled as extremist (as some media suggested in the past).

Finally, during the research, there was no conclusive evidence suggesting the existence of personal issues, other than those directly related to (or addressed by) NM.

Presenting these findings, other suggestions and implications can be drawn, both for the state and for academic research. Starting with the former, generally speaking, the role of frustration as a motivation appears to be rising among respondents, increasing their urge to address it. The resulting quest for significance (via political statement) stems from the low election success of favoured parties, suppression of such parties by the mainstream public, but also other factors. As such, if the state wants to eliminate the possibility of other similar organisations arising, it should address this frustration, or address the equivalent drivers of other motivations, to solve the issue permanently. The current strategy, enactment of a ban of armed groups (not enforced so far), serves rather the opposite purpose – as all respondents perceive the ban as politically motivated and thereby increasing their feeling of frustration. This tendency is supported by the fact that so far, the fear of a 200,000 CZK fine (for being a member of NM) did indeed drive some members away, though it appears that a similar number have enrolled as a reaction to it (thereby making a political statement).

As for suggestions for further research, the general confirmation of the hereby presented findings is highly recommended, but also analysis of the pattern of no previous relations among NM members and testing of the presented radicalisation process formula are suggested. As already suggested many times in the study, given its limitations, the general confirmation of the presented findings (and conclusions) is required. An additional suggestion, also important, directs future research regarding NM to study the non-existence of previous relations. An understanding of this pattern would not only further explain the emergence of NM, but would also shed some light on processes individuals go through when joining it. Finally, as a suggestion for the field of radicalisation studies, the data presented indicate that personality traits played a significant role in assigning importance to individual motivations. A formula presented in Chapter 7 suggests that once individuals are exposed to unexpected situational factors, specific needs and urges emerge (push and pull factors). Their priority is, however, designated not only by the nature of situational factors, but also by dispositional factors (as e.g., personality traits). This finding does not bring a breakthrough to the field, though it offers yet another step in understanding the radicalisation process. As such, this is considered an important contribution of this research.

Summary

The primary objective of this thesis is to identify, understand and explain motivations that lead individuals to join the National Militia (NM). To achieve this objective, the research adopts ethnographic methods of inquiry, primarily qualitative interviewing. Collecting data from 11 semi-structured in-depth interviews with members of NM, the analysis revealed a set of push, pull and personal factors as the most influential in an individual's decision-making process (leading the individual to join the NM).

As for specific motivations, they appear to have changed over time. In early phases of NM, fear of outer threat, frustrations, need for belonging and thrill seeking were identified as the most influential in an individual's decision-making process. Currently though, dominating motivations (to stay engaged in NM), are bonding, ideological alignment and quest for significance.

Seeking to explain the shift/development in motivations, the study identifies changing situational and dispositional factors. According to available data, situational factors, such as perceived imminence of the threat, changed over the time and so did related motivations. Regarding dispositional factors, analysed data suggest that personality traits (in some cases) determine the dominant factors affecting an individuals' decision to join the group. Generalizing this finding a hypothesis emerges, claiming that once individuals face changing situational factors, specific needs may occur, and dispositional factors (personality traits) strongly affect the priority of these needs.

Finally, building on these findings, implications and suggestions for both the state and future research are formulated. The state is advised to reconsider its approach, as available data question the efficiency of its current policies and the debate in Chapter 7 reveals inconsistencies in the general approach. As for further research, the researcher strongly recommends validating presented findings, given the limitations of this study. As for specific suggestions, a) situational-dispositional hypothesis is advised to be tested and b) limited previous inter-personal connections among members of NM are recommended for examination, as its understanding might help to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon of emerging paramilitary organisations (not only in the Czech Republic, but perhaps generally in Europe).

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List of Appendices

Appendix no. 1: (Figure 1) Suggested Scheme of Forces Affecting Radicalisation Process