SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF MURDER
CHALLENGE FOR INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM
ON THE EXAMPLE OF BIOGRAPHIES OF SERIAL KILLERS
IN PEACETIME AND TIME OF WAR

Dangerous and extreme social phenomenon of murder is the subject of research in the field of sociology (especially sociology of deviance), criminology and of course, in the narrower range, science of law. It should be noticed that interdisciplinary analysis of determinants of murder includes the psychological, psychiatric, biological and genetical factors but the main goal of the article is to underline the social factors, wide range of social background of murder. The identification of patterns of chosen phenomenon with extrapolation potential is possible based on presentation of extreme cases. According to the macrostructural tendencies we should point out that percentage of serial killing is highly connected with social changes (and social tensions based on them). Especially in USA the largest percentage of serial killing was in eighties, so called “The Reagan Era”\(^2\). Behind the Iron Curtain, mainly in Soviet Union, the most extreme cases were noticeable in the same period, when the decomposition of this camp had just started.

The extreme character of serial killing - ultimate, criminal, risky behavior – is a real challenge for institutional system\(^3\) and - depending on the length of serial killing - may cause serious disturbance of social order. In this context should be highlighted especially:

- parts of social system which are realizing socialization functions, such as family, school and the other institutions connected with the educational process
- parts of social system which are the elements of social control such as criminal justice system, police and the other institutions based on protection and prevention

\(^1\) Dr Bartosz Łukaszewski, socjolog, wykładowca akademicki, kierownik merytoryczny Klubu Młodzieżowego „Alternatywa” Fundacji „Naszym Dzieciom”, przewodniczący Dzielnicowej Komisji Dialogu Społecznego w Dzielnicę Bemowo m.st. Warszawy.


\(^3\) This type of danger is situated in the field of internal threats to internal security. See in this context T. Bąk, Z. Ciekanowski, *Zagrożenia zewnętrzne i wewnętrzne bezpieczeństwa państwa*, Zeszyty Naukowe 2(2015), p. 12-13.
In reference to above-mentioned dependencies it should be claimed that analysis of individual biography in social context is one of the main keys to identify source of data which includes potential independent variables. In light of this there are two fundamental fields of analysis of serial killing with opposite social conditions and structure:

- peacetime
- time of war

**Definitional introduction**

Murders – intentional, criminal acts of killing the other individual are one of the extreme parts of wider social phenomenon of risky behaviors (serial killing “is the rarest form of homicide, occurring when an individual has killed three or more people who were previously unknown to him or her, with a ‘cooling off’ period between each murder”). So, it’s important to describe above mentioned criminal acts in this context. We can also describe murders as a repercussion of antisocial, aggressive behavior or explosion of tension based on asocial, alienated attitude. The analysis with sociocentric point of view (useful for identification of etiology of murders and location them in the context of institutional system and internal security) is presented below. At first there are presented theories with wide, philosophical background but then theories with operationalization potential and character.

The neo-kantian German sociologist, philosopher and anthropologist H. Plessner (connected with neo-kantian school from Baden) claims in one of his most important lectures that the real human nature is hidden. He develops the concept of homo absconditus (hidden human) – the root of human nature structure are not the outside observable patterns of culture, habits of everyday life but internal axiology, internal values, wishes and desires. According to that we can see the “good” and “bad” side of human nature. E. Fromm, the member of critical theory and Frankfurt School claims that one of the basic parts of “bad” side are based on “malignant

---

4 Social phenomenon of terrorism, terrorist activity is the intermediate category, between the peacetime and time of war and is excluded from the analysis. Terrorist acts are connected with individual, ideological motivation (“lone wolfs” - one of the most famous cases of “lone wolfs” is Anders Breivik), activity of revolutionary social movement and also with supporting or creating terrorist groups by chosen states.


aggression"8. This type of aggression is strictly connected with social background of individuals and groups and distinctive for human – animals have only the defensive form of aggression. Malignant form of aggression has two subcategories – necrophilia (to destroy everything just for destruction) and sadistic (to control everything and everyone). The examples of above mentioned types of malignant aggression are, in order, A. Hitler and J. Stalin9. It should be noticed that living in authoritarian or totalitarian states with adequate social systems and also functioning in hierarchical institutions may be highly related with specific type of social determined personality – authoritarian personality10. This type of personality is based on absolute obedience to people with higher social position or institutional position and oppression and dictatorial attitude for people which are situated lower in structure of chosen group11.

Above mentioned theory is connected in the field of analysis of the main factors of deviance behaviors etiology with classic, sociocentric theories of deviance behaviors. Theory of authoritarian personality and also classic perspective of deviance behaviors analysis is focused on the main parts of adolescent life – family, school environment and neighborhood, social structure/materially-economic factors. According to that there should be highlighted three main theories useful for analysis of background of risky behaviors. Structural strain theory (R.A. Cloward and L.E. Ohlin) is focused on the shape of social structure which influences on possibilities of social progress of individuals and groups12. Closed way of realizing existential goals leads directly to finding the alternative way – also outside the system of law. Structural tensions are noticeable especially in terms of dynamic social changes, holistic transformations of social system. We can see here a wide connection with cultural conflict theory (F. Znaniecki and T. Sellin) – in the moment of social change and transformation the old values and cultural patterns are not longer useful for individuals and groups13. It’s the reason of looking for, searching and finding the new axiological base. So, there are noticeable wide possibilities of risky behaviors – this base may be opposite for social order. Theory of rebellion and negation (A.K. Cohen) has in this context the additive potential. Individuals touched by structural tensions and useless cultural patterns are engaged into questioning the present social system and creating the groups focused on common

9 Ibidem.
11 Ibidem.
problems\textsuperscript{14}. It should be noticed that behaviors contrary with social norms, and norms in chosen group which may be contrary with norms of the whole society, determines social reactions, resistance. The structure of stigmatization is described by authors such as H.S. Becker, E. Lemert, K. Erikson in labeling theory\textsuperscript{15}. After the stigmatization (when society makes the label for individual) appears phase of “fill in the role” and developing the risky, delinquent behavior\textsuperscript{16}. It’s the main factor which influences on difficulties of readaptation attempts.

Synthesis and empirical reference of presented theoretical multifariousness leads to general strain theory (R. Agnew), which has wide operational potential and is supplement and also development of above-mentioned analytical frames. The general strain theory focuses on negative relations with the other people, connections and influences which are blockade for individual aspirations and possibilities of realizing the positive values and positive goals\textsuperscript{17}. Therefore interpersonal relations which determines frustration and negative feelings influences on the constitution of strain with simultaneous necessity of its reduction\textsuperscript{18}.

**Biographies of serial killers in peacetime**

The analysis of biographies of serial killers is based on chosen cases after the end of Second World War and comparison of western cultural circle and eastern Europe, especially in context of differences and similarities between USA and USSR. The main criteria of selection of cases is connected with effect and influence on social reflection after the disclosure of crimes\textsuperscript{19}. The explorative character of research should be underlined – the main goal is to identify common biographic factors with determining influence. According to above presented logic of selection nine cases should be highlighted and short described\textsuperscript{20}:

- Ed Gein – acquired mental disorder connected with religious fanaticism, extreme parental control (including violence) of mother and alcoholism of father (place of residence – lonely farm); Ed Gein was the serial killer, necrophiliac and body snatcher

\textsuperscript{17} Ibidem, p. 206.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Connected also with the influence of media and mass culture.
\textsuperscript{20} Five cases from USA, two cases from USSR, one case from Germany and Canada.
(complete costume of human made of human skin, belt made from human female nipples, masks of human skin, bowls made of human skulls)\textsuperscript{21}

- Jeffrey Dahmer – deepening of disorders connected with touching of genitals by the doctors (before and during the operation of hernia), disintegration of the family (family with high prestige and material status), necrophiliac and cannibal (Dahmer killed 17 males with one goal – to create a sexual zombie)\textsuperscript{22}

- Charles Manson – illegitimate child of prostitute, founder of “Family” sect, multiple incitement of sect members to commit murders\textsuperscript{23}

- Jim Jones – founder of “Peoples Temple” sect, in 1978 in Jonestown (French Guiana) 909 people committed mass suicide\textsuperscript{24}, compensation of family dysfunctions\textsuperscript{25} through the internalization of religious patterns of behavior

- Armin Meiwes – in 2001 killed and ate (partly) the man which he met by Internet, there was previously fixed (mutual agreement) conditions of above mentioned act\textsuperscript{26}, his father left the family when Meiwes was 8 years old, when he was 12 years old he had cannibalistic fantasies of the “objects” which will be always with him

- Serhiy Tkach – victim of unrequited love, police investigator, revenge on society for emotional failure, killed and raped 36 girls and 10 boys\textsuperscript{27}

- Andrei Chikatilo – victim of “soviet experiment”, witness of the crimes of the Wehrmacht in Second World War, when he was 5 years old his mother told him that his brother was eaten by the neighbors 2 years before his birth, revenge on society for lack of possibility to get an erection and sexual satisfaction, convicted of 52 murders, biting off and cutting off parts of bodies\textsuperscript{28}

- Luka Magnotta – Canadian actor of gay pornographic films, killed Chinese student by ice pick, cut out internal organs which was next sent to chosen institutions (the whole

\textsuperscript{25} Lack of parental care.
act was filmed by delinquent), previously Magnotta was bullying animals (kittens)\textsuperscript{29} and had disorders of sexual identity\textsuperscript{30}

We should also add to above mentioned list not the serial killers (because of effective action of the relevant parts of institutional system\textsuperscript{31}) but perpetrators of extreme crimes (with wide possibility of serial killing without noticed action) – musicians of Mayhem band and Varg Vikernes (Burzum band) – Norwegian black metals. Vikernes killed one of the Mayhem guitarists (several dozen of knife blows) and burnt three churches, three amulets for members of Mayhem band was made from skull of dead vocalist of Mayhem (pseudo “Dead”)\textsuperscript{32}.

Analysis of biographical variables and factors

The main independent variables and factors of these variables were identified in the field of biographies of serial killers in peacetime. These variables are noticeable in all of the above mentioned cases and were highlighted below:

\begin{itemize}
  \item family dysfunction
  \item lack of realization of socialization and upbringing needs
  \item isolation of interactions with outside social world/interpersonal relationships
  \item blockade of socio-personal developmental possibilities
\end{itemize}

According to the first point it should be noticed that family dysfunction is connected with disintegration of family environment, risky behaviors in the range of pathology, interactional strain between the parents, lack of parental care and incidentally the holistic lack of family and lack of transmission of values process\textsuperscript{33}. The range of family dysfunction influences of course on lack of realization of socialization and upbringing needs. This field of disorders contains at first the lack of realization of emotional closeness needs, lack of realization of identity needs, lack of transmission of ethical and prosocial values, lack of discussions with parents on important adolescent’s problems, inconsistency between parental attitudes and declared as worthy and valuable personal model. According to the third point it should be highlighted that isolation of interactions with the outside world may be the result of above

\textsuperscript{29} See http://murderpedia.org/male.M/m/magnotta-luka.htm, 27.07.2015.
\textsuperscript{30} And is a child from broken family.
\textsuperscript{31} The cases of Armin Meiwes and Luka Magnotta are also reduced to single acts of the same reason.
\textsuperscript{32} J. Kristiansen, Metalion: The Slayer Mag Diaries, New York 2011, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{33} In the case of Charles Manson.
mentioned disorders of socialization process or the reason of them. Therefore, these variables are always widely correlated. The ways and contexts of isolation were presented below:

- isolation of interactions and interpersonal relationships with women
- isolation of interactions with outside world based on extreme religious model (spending all the free, childhood time in the church with guardian[^34])
- individual, mental isolation and alienation based on stigmatization connected with unaccepted by society sexual preferences, sexual disorders (paraphilias), sexual disabilities (the lack of possibility of sexual satisfaction)
- isolation in the state context (USSR - Holodomor, Second World War, “behind the Iron Curtain”)

Blockade of socio-personal, developmental possibilities is always the result of third previous points and causes wide range of individual strain[^35]. The ways of compensation of individual strain in analyzed cases were presented above in the field of biographies of serial killers in peacetime. The analysis of common determinants of serial killing leads directly to reconstruction of the whole structure of the process. The relevant phases of the process presents the diagram below.

```
Family dysfunction
↓
Lack of realization of socialization needs
↓↑
Isolation from interactions/interpersonal relationships
↓
Blockade of socio-personal development
↓
Strain
↓
Necessity of strain reduction
↓
Crime (murder)
```

[^34]: Compensation of the lack of parental care.
[^35]: There should be also stressed the secondary variables such as the influence of mass culture and evolution of risky subcultural activity.
Biographies of serial killers in the time of war

The analysis of biographies of serial killers in the time of war was reduced to the period after the end of Second World War and contains The Yugoslav Wars (from 1991 to 2001), First and Second Chechen War, The Transnistria War, The War in Abkhazia, The Russo-Georgian War, Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, The War in Donbass. In this context the field of research is mainly connected with European and American territory of the crimes and adequate nationality of the European nationalities/American nationality. According to above presented structure of selection ten cases were chosen and should be presented as an exemplification of the noticeable tendencies:

- Slobodan Milošević – one of the leaders of the League of Communists of Serbia and then Socialist Party of Serbia (left-wing nationalist), the President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, President of Serbia and the President of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, judged by International Criminal Tribunal for the crimes during the Yugoslav Wars (including war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide), lawyer

- Radovan Karadžić – known as the “Butcher of Bosnia”, one of the founders and leader of Serb Democratic Party and the President of Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, judged by International Criminal Tribunal for the crimes during the Yugoslav Wars (including war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide), psychiatrist

- Ratko Mladić – also known as the “Butcher of Bosnia”, member of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Colonel General and Chief of Staff of the Bosnian Serb Army, judged by International Criminal Tribunal for the crimes during the Yugoslav Wars (including war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide)

- Željko Ražnatović – also known as “Arkan”, Serbian criminal and the founder and member of The Serb Volunteer Guard (also known as Arkan’s Tigers), indicted by

---

36 Otherwise, the analysis should contain conflicts such as, among others, The Vietnam War and Cambodian Genocide, Iran-Iraq War, Soviet-Afghan War, First Iraq War, American War in Afghanistan, Second Iraq War, conflicts in the Latin America after the Second World War, Arab-Israeli Wars/conflicts and the whole decolonization issue.


38 See for example, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2008/07/22/D12008072201921.html, 23.08.2015.

International Criminal Tribunal for the crimes during the Yugoslav Wars\(^{40}\) (including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, participated in the Srebrenica massacre and Battle of Vukovar), founder of Party of Serbian Unity

- Igor Girkin – also known as “Strelkov”, former FSB\(^{41}\) and GRU Colonel\(^{42}\), minister of defense of Donetsk People’s Republic, Chief of Staff of United Armed Forces of Novorossiya\(^{43}\), participated in six wars (Bosnian War\(^{44}\), The Transnistria War\(^{45}\), First and Second Chechen War, Crimean Crisis, War in Donbass\(^{46}\) – he started this war in spring of 2014 with 51 soldiers under his command directly after Annexation of Crimea\(^{47}\), indicted for genocide during the Višegrad massacre and the Chechen Wars\(^{48}\), responsible for the shot down of MH17 flight\(^{49}\), murder of Ukrainian politician Volodymyr Rybak\(^{50}\) and unknown number of death sentences during the Chechen Wars and War in Donbass (especially the Siege of Sloviansk\(^{51}\)), indicted for series of explosions in the apartment blocks in Moscow in September 1999\(^{52}\), founder of Novorossia Movement, Russian nationalist and monarchist.


\(^{41}\) http://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2014/04/140430_ukraine_donetsk_pushilin_moscow.shtml, 29.08.2015, see also an interview to his former chief, retired FSB major general Gennadiy Kazantsev, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sqBfMYpYGs, 29.08.2015.


\(^{43}\) Ibidem.


\(^{45}\) http://www.kp.ru/daily/26225/3108701/, 29.08.2015.


\(^{48}\) According to human rights group Memorial responsible for forced disappearances and murders. As the result of that two sisters of Strelkov’s victims turned to terrorism and participated, among others, in the Beslan school siege.


\(^{51}\) See for example http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/7/24/grave-mass-sloyvansk.html, 29.08.2015.

• Igor Bezler – known as “Bes”, former GRU Lieutenant Colonel, participated in the Soviet war in Afghanistan, Annexation of Crimea, War in Donbass, commander of defense of Gorlovka city during the Donbass War, responsible for the shot down of MH17 flight and murder of Ukrainian politician Volodymyr Rybak and unknown number of death sentences during above-mentioned war.

• Alexander Mozhaev - known as “Babaj”, Cossack’s leader, he was engaged probably in The Russo-Georgian War, Annexation of Crimea and War in Donbass, well known for his threats against the President of the USA and anti-Semitism, his unit was occupied the penal colony for women.

• Arseny Pavlov – known as “Motorola”, soldier of Russian Naval Infantry, leader of Sparta Battalion, participated in the Siege of Sloviansk, Battle of Ilovaisk, Second Battle of Donetsk Airport, Battle of Debaltseve during the War in Donbass, he has confirmed murder of 15 Ukrainian prisoners (most likely by headshot).

• Mikhail Tolstykh – also known as “Giwi”, leader of Somalia Battalion, engaged in the Battle of Ilovaisk, Second Battle of Donetsk Airport, Battle of Debaltseve, famous of torturing and abusing Ukrainian solider (video document which contains Giwi’s engagement in tortures was widely commented in the international media).

• Alexander Zakharchenko – leader of Oplot – paramilitary, pro-Russian and nationalist organization (in the second phase of Donbass War leader of the Oplot Battalion).

---

57 We can compare biography of Alexander Mozhaev with the activities of Battalion Vostok in the Second Chechen War, The Russo-Georgian War and The War in Donbass (between 2003 and 2008 Vostok was Spetznaz unit of GRU and then one of the most important battalions of Novorossiya Armed Forces and was engaged, among others, in the Battles of Donetsk Airport and the Battle of Debaltseve).
Head and Prime Minister of Donetsk People’s Republic\textsuperscript{65}, especially engaged in the Second Battle of Donetsk airport and the Battle of Debaltseve\textsuperscript{66}, Major of DPR armed forces

- Igor Plotnitsky – former reserve officer of the Soviet Army, Head of Luhansk People’s Republic, especially engaged in the Battle of Debaltseve and probably in the murders of Alexander Bednov\textsuperscript{67} (also known as “Batman”) and Alexei Mozgovoi\textsuperscript{68} (the leader of Ghost Brigade of LPR armed forces) – the rebels of former Luhansk People’s Militia which were conflicted with him and LPR government

Analysis of biographical variables and factors

It should be noticed that ideological factors are noticeable in the field of analysis of serial killers in the time of war but they aren’t the main factors which influence on the crimes. We can of course underline the left-wing Serbian nationalism, Soviet communism, Russian imperialism (the concepts of Holy Rus, Third Rome, Orthodox Christian Empire, Saint War etc.), but the ideology in this context is only the useful set of slogans, useful for the development of political power, control and domination of chosen political group/party. So, there should be made a conclusion (the analysis provides us directly to this reflection based on above mentioned variables). The main independent variable which influences on serial killing in the time of war is the activity and inspiration of the chosen state and its institutions. Above highlighted influence has got two possible variants:

- serial killing is connected directly with activity of the chosen government/governing party and parts of institutional system of the state with the main role of regular army (for example the Yugoslav and Chechen Wars)
- serial killing is connected with inspiration of the chosen government/governing party and parts of institutional system of the state and funding the advanced activities of mercenaries on the territory of another state (with the role of ideology – the

\textsuperscript{67} http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/rebels-killing-spurs-war-between-luhansk-insurgent-groups-376893.html, 29.08.2015.
mercenaries are often the ideological fanatics\textsuperscript{69} with the reduced role of regular army (for example the War in Donbass and partly the Annexation of Crimea\textsuperscript{70})

Recapitulation

The analysis in the two fields (serial killers in peacetime and the time of war) leads directly to a few important conclusions in terms of internal security. Serial killing in peacetime is connected with the set of variables with the root in the family dysfunctions, dynamic social changes and social inequalities. It’s the real and difficult challenge for institutional system because of, among others, possible criminal activity of employees of the security institutions (there should be highlighted the case of Serhiy Tkach, the Soviet policeman) which may be covered by their everyday work. Despite this fact it should be concluded that the conventional security measures are adequate but should be supplemented by the permanent analysis of social changes in the context of the network society (network phase of the society development) and risks of the range of above mentioned changes.

In the light of war the most dangerous for the chosen state and its institutional system is the activity of the other state. It should be widely and suggestively underlined that today’s measures of defense are inadequate for the new forms of danger. The wide range, levels and different ways of hybrid war (including sub-ways such as informational war, cyber war etc.) are the serious challenge for institutional system of the state and quality of the internal security. The new forms of danger should determine the development of the measures of defense. Only the coordinated cooperation of the adequate institutions in the context of different forms of risks can be the real internal secure.

\textsuperscript{69} And sometimes the agents of intelligence services.

\textsuperscript{70} These examples visualize the new type of war – hybrid war – with the important role of the information war, see in this context J. Darczewska, \textit{Anatomia rosyjskiej wojny informacyjnej. Operacja krymska – studium przypadku}, in: Punkt Widzenia 42(2014), p. 9-36.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

3. BARTROP P.R., A Biographical Encyclopedia of Contemporary Genocide: Portraits of Evil and Good, Santa Barbara 2012.
7. CHIDESTER D., Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown, Indiana 1991.
27. URBAN B., Zaburzenia w zachowaniu i przestępczość młodzieży, Kraków 2000.
russia-lifenews-reports-live-shocking-video/, 29.08.2015.
59. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/3933579/Man-sentenced-


66. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sqBfMYpYGs, 29.08.2015.
