

The Modern Faces of Terrorism: Trends and Features

Ekaterina Gnatik^{1,*}

¹ Department of Ontology and Epistemology, The Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia

*Corresponding author. Email: ekaterinagnatik@rambler.ru

ABSTRACT

The article states that the rapid growth of terrorism is one of the signs of our time. The number of challenges, dangers and threats is increasing, and the uncertainty of their consequences is growing. Currently, the forms of terrorism are becoming more and more multi-faced, more sophisticated, and more difficult to control by international and national organizations and security agencies. Extremists often attempt to manipulate public consciousness using the mass media. Increasingly, science and related technology are becoming a source of tools and opportunities for transnational crime, so that the knowledge-intensity of modern terrorism can be deemed its main feature. The last decade has seen a significant increase in efforts by international terrorist organizations to gain access to biological weapons, technologies of their synthesis and use. Biological terrorism is among the least controlled and most serious threats to international stability, which necessitates the development of special security measures and the creation of unconventional methods and areas of anti-terrorism activity. Basic and applied scientific research together with the development of legal mechanisms to neutralize potential risks to the existence of humankind must become a foundation for developing an international security system.

Keywords: *Biological (bacteriological) terrorism, Global challenge, Knowledge intensity, Biological weapons, Threats to the security.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Having a very significant impact on the lives of every individual and communities, modern global processes in their economic, political, demographic, cultural, psychological and other aspects cannot but have an impact on crime, including terrorist activity which is now becoming transnational. The security issues have always been among the key ones, and their solution was associated with the creation of necessary conditions for human life and the very existence of humankind in the twentieth century. However, while in the second half of the last century in the face of the confrontation of two Powers, there was only one global danger hanging over the planet, namely the danger of nuclear strikes, currently, there is a global insecurity in the world due to multiple threats. The expansion of the conflict space due to the dynamically changing

processes of the world order, and the emergence of a number of new transnational threats, etc. call for serious transformations in the international security system.

As we know, terrorism in one form or another has been existing for thousands of years. The criminalization of social relations is one of the oldest historical processes. Since times immemorial, there have been individuals or groups of people who in their desire to subordinate others by any means and to impose their ideology and their will have not considered it necessary to pay attention to such "trifles" as rules of conduct, morality, traditional order, etc. Apparently, the principle of "the ends justify the means" has guided the actions of some individuals or their communities ever since it became apparent that power over other people promised various benefits, including material ones.

*Fund: The research has been supported by The Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR). Project № 19-011-00383/19 *Bio- and Ecophilosophy in the Modern Culture*

2. KNOWLEDGE-INTENSITY AS A HALLMARK OF MODERN TERRORISM

Today, terrorism is undergoing significant and unprecedented changes, as, however, the entire world is. The radical transformation of the world order is evidenced by the formation of a unified financial and trade system, the emergence of transnational corporations, the intensive development of mass communication, artificial intelligence technology, information technology, etc. In this context, terrorism is becoming more multi-faced, more sophisticated, and more difficult to control by international and national organizations and security agencies. The situation is complicated by the weakening of the role of states, which are gradually losing their weight and importance (more and more prerogatives and functions are being transferred to transnational forces, demands for providing greater autonomy to various national, cultural and religious groups, etc. are becoming more frequent and more insistent). As a result, "the world has entered a phase of extreme instability, uncertainty and reduced security. The mechanisms of state, regional and international control over the processes that take place in the world are increasingly failing. The forces that would like to use the factor of instability and partial loss of control in order to expedite their own tasks, usually destructive ones, are attempting to take their place." [1]

In the third millennium, terrorism has acquired a new quality, a new coloring, having become a strategic tool for influencing various military, geopolitical, economic, interfaith and other processes. Thus, the world globalization of the world contributes to the globalization of crime or, more precisely, makes it inevitable. Increasingly, science and related technology are becoming a source of tools and opportunities for transnational organized terrorist crime. In this context, the knowledge-intensity of modern terrorism can be deemed one of its main features. The scientific and technological progress has dramatically changed many areas of life, including transportation, instrumentation, health care, communications and information processing. The globalization processes play in favor of the disregard of national borders. Currently, public access to scientific information, including the most advanced one, has increased significantly. The goal of such revolutionary transformations was certainly to bring new benefits to many areas of human life. However, the same

changes provide unprecedented, opportunities for destruction that were unthinkable just two or three decades ago, which are capable of turning into a tragedy and even a collapse for individual states and ethnic groups.

Rapid advances in information and communication technology (in particular, the advent of satellite television, audio and video equipment, mobile communications, etc.) have contributed to an extraordinary increase in the speed of information exchange. The Internet provides transnational criminals and international terrorists with exceptional opportunities, making it easier to conduct and disseminate propaganda from almost any corner of the globe. The process of recruitment into a criminal organization has also been greatly facilitated, since it is now possible within the framework of cyberspace.

3. THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY IN PREVENTING AND COMBATING TERRORISM

Extremists actively use not only the arsenal of achievements of high technology and natural sciences, but also that of humanities. Thus, in addition to mastering certain technical skills, the use of knowledge and techniques of psychology is of great importance in training perpetrators of terrorist attacks. Suicidal terrorism has become very common at the present stage. The selection and training of potential suicide terrorists require a long time and highly skilled work of psychologists, whose tasks include "fumbling for weak points" in the personal characteristics of their wards. As a rule, these "weak points" include decreased resistance to emotional stress, low self-assessment, high anxiety and weak capabilities of psychological defense. Specialists in psychological training use suggestive addiction of potential terrorists and resort to detection and further development of their guilt complex, drug addiction, hypnotic influence, etc. [2] As it is known, suicidal terrorism is very difficult to combat. This is due to the fact that in order to prevent it, among other things, a deep scientific understanding of the hidden human behavioral mechanisms is a prerequisite.

Recently, terrorist kidnappings, maritime and air piracy, and hostage-taking have not been uncommon. In such situations, the ability to negotiate with criminals, regardless of the goals they pursue, is of great practical importance. For combating these most dangerous manifestations of

terrorism, it is required to take into account the motivation of criminal behavior, that is why scientifically sound ideas about the identity of the extremist assume particular importance. In recent decades, there has been a gradual accumulation of scientific information in this area, and this is of interest both to theoretical and practical psychology and psychiatry, and to criminology in creating some general theory of terrorism prevention and combating its specific manifestations. This process encounters considerable difficulties and is very slow. Information about the characteristics of the terrorist personality is often sketchy, because it is mostly taken not from research work carried out directly with particular criminals (i.e. not in the course of empirical research) but from media reports and often based on scientists' own ideas about some or other personal qualities of extremists. However, these still purely schematic and incomplete psychological profiles of the people resorting to violent methods of struggle are of considerable interest and have some value for the success of anti-terrorist activities.

One should note that as of today, science has not formulated special features inherent in terrorists as a special psychological and psychiatric and social type; their obvious mental abnormality has not been revealed. There is also no clarity on the issue whether a special extremist type of consciousness exists or not. At the same time, there is no doubt that despite of all their psychological "diversity", individuals with specific personal predispositions become terrorists. According to scientific research, people, who are characterized by a readiness for killing and other violence in order to achieve their goals, a readiness to risk, including up to self-sacrifice, and a desire to belong to organizations with strict discipline, clearly have such common psychological traits as predominance of emotions over reason, narrow-mindedness, narcissism, intolerance for dissenters, lack of proper self-control and, most importantly, a tendency to externalize, i.e. to search the sources of personal problems outside [3].

4. TERRORISM AS AN ONLINE SHOW

Another hallmark of modern terrorism is enabling the entire world community to watch crimes by TV and in the Internet in real time. The desire to turn an act of terrorism into a global show with the maximum psychological impact on the public is a new way of manipulating public

consciousness. In this case, the work of the media "plays into the hands" of extremists, one of main goals of whom is to sow fear among as many people as possible. If it were not for the guaranteed availability of information about a committed criminal act as obtained through information channels in every house, it seems that modern terrorism would lose much of its meaning. Indeed, as Yu.V. Gromyko rightly points out, "the main task of a terrorist event is to place a demonstrated act of defenseless population death on the screen. It is the presentation to the civilian population of a sudden possibility of death and the absolute insecurity of any inhabitant in the face of such a threat that transforms civic identity and causes a profound distrust in authorities. Consequently, an act of terrorism in general is a game on the field of artificial transformations and identity transformation". [4]

5. BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS AS A SUPPLIER OF NEW THREATS TO THE HUMANKIND

The recent global situation has led to a shift in priorities in assessing potential threats to the national security of states. For the purpose of improving the effectiveness of the standard methods of terrorism like the use of violence and intimidation, the criminal environment is constantly searching for new ways and means of impact. As a result, the possibility of a nuclear, radiological or chemical attack by extremists is no longer considered as something out of the world of fiction. This circumstance is a vivid evidence of the growing rate of knowledge-intensity of international terrorism and generates a need to develop unconventional methods and areas of anti-terrorism activity.

Biological (bacteriological) terrorism appeared to be among the least controlled and most serious threats to international stability today. This is due to the fact that the progress of modern biology, especially molecular biology, microbiology and genetic engineering, leads to the creation of new bio-objects, providing new opportunities for their use, including their use for anti-humane purposes. Some of the viruses and bacteria have highly pathogenic effects on humans and animals and, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire world population has fully realized this. Until now, microorganisms for which nature is an inexhaustible storehouse are the least studied part of the biosphere, and infectious diseases take a

leading position among the factors that weaken the biosecurity of states. The current level of scientific development does not yet allow us to fundamentally change and remedy the unfavorable situation with the spread of so-called “socially significant” infections (tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C, etc.), both locally and globally.

Biological weapons are one of the most monstrous inventions of the human mind in their consequences. One of its distinctive features is the agent reproductivity: bacteria and viruses in a favorable environment have a property of self-replication. The presence of an incubation period as the stage of infectious disease complicates and slows down the process of pathogen identification. In recent years, international terrorist organizations have stepped up their efforts to gain access to biological weapons, technologies for their synthesis and use. This is due to the high lethal efficacy of pathogens, their relative availability, simplified manufacture, ease of storage and transportation, relatively low cost, ease of use, possibilities of covert application, economic damage and a very significant psychological impact on the general population [5]. For example, there are some reports on the synthesis of a biological toxin called “ricin” in the terrorist laboratories, the lethal human dose of this toxin is smaller than a pin-head.

The threat to international stability and security was somewhat mitigated by The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1972. Following its ratification by 22 States Parties, including the USSR, The Convention entered into force in 1975 and was the first multilateral treaty to ban an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. Having reduced the potential danger of the use of these weapons, up to date the Convention still plays a certain role in maintaining stability in the world. In the same year, i.e. 1972, biological science made a leap forward by creating genetic engineering technology. As a result, the scientific world has obtained the broadest opportunities to manipulate genetic material up to the creation of chimeric organisms that do not exist in nature. These discoveries attracted attention of military developers and became a theoretical and experimental basis for creating new means of mass destruction. The lethal effects of genetic weapons are based on the use of properties of specially designed DNA molecules or genetically modified microorganisms [6].

Another reality of today does not add optimism: there is now an open sale of biomaterials and equipment for scientific laboratories through the Internet. The list of biological raw materials offered may also include, among other things, potentially dangerous initial DNA components of some viruses. Moreover, public websites place information regarding the genetic sequence of various bioagents, including those that are deadly to people, which can be used to build weapons. Obviously, the operations of the services controlling the biotechnology market on the Internet become a very important new challenge in combating bioterrorism [7].

The rapid growth of terrorism is one of the signs of our time. The number of challenges, dangers and threats is increasing, and most importantly, the uncertainty of their consequences is growing. As frightening as it may sound, the presence of biological weapons in several countries of the world is a political and military reality that cannot be ignored. And science, this great brainchild of the humankind, is inexorably becoming a supplier of the means that arm international terrorism. In addition, nowadays, terrorists practically do not need the support of any state, since they are capable to implement their plans with the help of a relatively small subversive group. Moreover, they attempt to manipulate public consciousness skillfully using the mass media. Unfortunately, they are not bad at it.

6. CONCLUSION

The current situation (expansion of the conflict space due to globalization, dynamically changing processes of the world order, emergence of a number of new transnational threats, etc.) dictates the need to develop special measures to ensure security and produce unconventional methods and areas of anti-terrorism activity. The development of a general framework necessary to build a unified global mechanism for combating international terrorism, i.e. a framework that fixes its international and legal composition in a universal international treaty, should become an important step along this way. Strange as it may seem, there is still no such universal international treaty, despite the abundance of different organizations involved in combating terrorism around the world [8]. It is no doubt that science cannot keep out of solving the problem of terrorism: the capabilities to detect and prevent terrorist acts largely depends on the level of basic and applied research.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Ekaterina Gnatik.

REFERENCES

- [1] V.V. Shchupalov, V.Yu. Kravchenko, The priorities of the Russian Federation in the field of national security: problems of military security // *Security of Eurasia*, 2007, № 4(30). p. 437.
- [2] Yu.M. Antonyan, Suicidal terrorism // *Vestnik RAN (Bulletin of the Russian Academy of Sciences)*, 2005, vol. 75, № 9, pp. 819-822.
- [3] Yu.M. Antonyan, The identity of the terrorist and counter-terrorism issues. // *Combating Terrorism*, Moscow: Nauka, 2004, pp. 93-108.
- [4] Yu.V. Gromov, The political anthropology of transnational security: Can we foresee and calculate terrorist acts? // *Security of Eurasia*, 2005, № 1(19), pp. 239-240.
- [5] G.G. Onishchenko, L.S. Sandakhchiyev, S.V. Netesov, R.A. Martynyuk, Bioterrorism: a national and global threat. *Vestnik RAN (Bulletin of the Russian Academy of Sciences)*, 2003, vol. 73, № 3, pp. 195-204.
- [6] M.A. Paltsev, On biological security. *Vestnik RAN (Bulletin of the Russian Academy of Sciences)*, 2003, vol.73, № 2, pp. 99-109.
- [7] V.S. Ovchinsky, A.I. Fursov, The new world disorder // *Terrorism in the Modern World*, Moscow: Nauka, 2008. p. 100.
- [8] Yu.S. Romashev, The international and legal framework for combating terrorism. // *Terrorism in the Modern World*, Moscow: Nauka, 2008, p. 304.