

Fighting Terrorism by Exterminating Terrorists is Like Scooping the Flood with a Spoon

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Commentary

ABSTRACT

Our society views terrorism as the result of terrorists' activities. This perspective is rather superficial though. More appropriate question, although a more difficult one, is about the cause of terrorism and terrorist worldview, which is spreading in a pandemic way. This question becomes even more important in view of the qualitative transformation of contemporary terrorism: single terrorists have been replaced by organized groups and armies with thousands of members, which claim to be separate states and political subjects, so that the leading countries had to form a military coalition to fight them.

Keywords: Terrorists, Military, Armies

INTRODUCTION

Why so?

There is no simple answer to this question. Most authors analysing this topic do not fully cover it. Before discussing the problem of terrorism as such, let us outline historical background of its contemporary version.

Most Western people, including North Americans, are convinced that they are the leaders of modern civilization. Moreover, most Europeans agree that they should help less developed nations accept their model or even impose it on them by force. This idea could be mistaken though. It is a question whether the entire non-European world (79% of the Earth population) really wants to join superficially reputable and nice smelling Western civilization that has its stinking sides though. These include uncontrollable stratification of people with different income, social injustice, alcoholism, lack of faith, drugs, dissolution of families, prostitution, pornography, unreliable friendships, double standards, corruption etc. All these things together are usually called "the Western lifestyle" and "the consumption society". Thorough analysis shows that this social project is not universally attractive even for Western people.

On Western lifestyle

This lifestyle leaves less and less space for elevated ideals, meanings and morality, which are substituted by fetishism of commodities and sacralisation of financial wealth. These tendencies have been discussed for long time and negatively assessed by people from almost any country and any level of society, with the exception of the wealthiest ones perhaps. The mass media mention the issue of social justice more and more frequently, although it is more correct to speak about increasing injustice. This problem has been discussed in post-Perestroika years but in rather apathetic manner, just as a statement that this is the modern reality, and nothing can be done with it.

It has not been noticed that the main contradiction of capitalism "between communal production and private ownership of the produced goods" has drastically increased in the last century and has reached the insane proportion by now. For instance, about 0,1% of the US citizens own the same wealth as the other 90% of the population. In Russia, the situation is 100 times better, like in the world in general; according to this upsetting statistic, about 10% of the Earth population owns 89,1% of the total wealth. Stratification of people with different income in average is the following: 10%

of the wealthiest people are 15 to 40 times (different numbers in different countries) richer than 10% of the poorest people, and 1% of the wealthiest people are 1000 and more times richer than 1% of the poorest employed people. The shameful phenomenon of “the employed poor” has been discussed in the media.

People with lower income have less opportunity in relation to education, health care and quality of life, and they are less protected from crime, the rate of which has increased in ten times in the last 40 years; in addition, social lifts are less effective for them. It is natural that the society, especially the youth, gradually becomes dissatisfied with it. First of all, it concerns young people from migrants’ families who were born in Western countries; officially they are citizens of these countries but are often perceived there as “second rate” people.

The new citizens

It should be mentioned that these “new citizens” differ from migrants of the first wave who were happy to move into safe places with no starvation, thirst and epidemics and to change their huts for more or less comfortable houses with water and central heating. The new citizens, though, received education and had access to TV and Internet and other aspects of Western civilization, both positive and negative ones. However, “the melting pot” described by sociologists and philosophers did not work: these people remained a separate foreign group, and this foreign part of population in leading Western countries is increasing. This is a highly religious group oriented to traditional values and very critical towards morality of the Western civilization ^[1-3].

What have we arrived at?

The human progress and changes of economic formations have been related to slogans of fight against injustice and attempts to bring more justice into economic, social and psychological relationships. However, these slogans existed separately from real economic relationships, and these ideas have become discredited. The slogans exhausted their potential, and it has become obvious that the main forces of progress were the economic elites’ striving for power and greed, according to description given by Engels.

Let us add that most analysts neglect a number of specific factors in the contemporary situation. Money has gradually lost its main functions and transformed into a kind of short-term storage commodity. The banking sector, which produces nothing but financial operations, has grown bigger. Development of new lands does not mean increase in industrial production and population anymore. Mostly, it means extracting their natural resource and highly qualified human resource that are relocated to the countries which are leaders of globalization. At the same time, there is a prohibition to share high technologies with countries which are not leaders of globalization. A popular saying “we all are in the same boat” now ends in a sarcastic way: “...but some of us are just food for others”, which refers to some countries and their population. We all know about it, but we take it for granted. Other nations, however, also understand what they are doomed to, and they are hardly eager to accept it.

It is rarely mentioned that in contemporary capitalism, classic proletariat has been replaced by a new class of “humiliated and offended”. Highly qualified and educated hired professionals, who have almost no rights and social guarantees comparing to employers, are called “precariat” (from “precarious”). Lower subclass of precariat in every country consists almost exclusively of migrants, and a threat of destabilization of otherwise so comfortable Western world is increasing.

Romantics of flight

In any society there is a number, usually not very big, of young people who can be described as “romantics of flight” and characterized by maximalist position, inclination to doubt the established norms and rules and aggressive psychological attitudes. In a situation of ideological vacuum, the youth looks for any ideals or anything more meaningful than fetishism of wealth.

In any society, there is a number of oppositional activists striving for change and longing to be heard. It is natural and normal. However, if the society does not accept these activists’ ideals, does not even discuss but rather rejects them, and there is no explanatory system to afford these social activists, they can easily transform into social fanatics. In general, dissolution of any ideals and illusions might lead to “a kind of insanity”, as Nikolay Berdyaev defined fanaticism.

This is a brief outline of historical background, without which it might be difficult to understand why some young people, including ethnical Europeans, become involved in the ISIS, the organization forbidden in Russia^[4,5].

What attracts them?

Many analysts have tried to answer this question. One of the most common answers is that these people are striving for social justice. This slogan is very attractive and is actively used by recruiters. Those who propagate the ISIS, organization forbidden in Russia, promise the youth much more: the new world without rich and poor, without citizens

who are “more equal” than others, without servants and masters, unjust courts, bribery and corruption, smoking and drugs, alcohol and prostitution, double standards and same-sex marriages, without pornography and so on. These promises are undoubtedly just illusions and manipulations based on the main factors of societal dissatisfaction. However, they might be very attractive for young activists disappointed in the Western lifestyle.

I frequently have meetings with students. The majority of educated young people agree that these slogans are just an illusion, and they recognize that building such a society is impossible. Let me stress that these are well-educated young people with clear social perspectives. However, even some of them would say: “It is only your generation that agrees to consider this impossible!”. Others formulate this idea in even more aggressive and desperate way; let me quote one of such statements: “Even if it is impossible, we should get out of the historical moral stalemate, where the deceptive Western democracy and the idea of consumption society that turns people into cattle have led the world”.

The Western media stress that the number of such social activists is increasing even among ethnic Europeans. These young people, not only migrants from the East or Africa, are ready to fight for a new society although they do not clearly understand what it should look like. They are dissatisfied, but nobody has given them any other ideas, meanings and models of the future. To have a model of the future is important, and it should be attractive for the majority of population and for all social groups ^[6,7].

The number of terrorists is increasing

Most analysts focus on the topic of Islam. Although it has become situationally important after Arabic “colourful revolutions” - or, to be more precise, after attempts to forcefully impose the European democracy onto Arabic countries, which led to formation of the ISIS, the organization forbidden in Russia - nevertheless, the abovementioned factors might be more significant.

Specialists state that increased involvement in terrorist organizations and groups is due to significant success of propaganda of the ISIS, the organization forbidden in Russia, in the Arabic world as well as in Europe, where the number of migrants is also increasing. The same processes go on in Caucasus and in Asia. Nothing counteracts this propaganda. Considering the fact that there is no vision of the future, nothing can counteract it at all.

During the epoch of Russian “great self-deception” there was a model of the future, however illusory and primitive. Now there is no model at all. To formulate it more clearly: economic and power elites of leading countries claim that the current model of society and world order is the highest stage of humanity development that should be maintained as it is. It is difficult to prove in the brief outline, so the reader has to believe it: the absence of attractive vision of the future and loss of meanings are closely connected, and these two factors might lead to decrease of self-preservation striving in the youth. This is the root of unprecedented growth in popularity of child-free movement and extreme sports and entertainments, such as street-racing, street-challenge, roofers, jumpers, train surfers, as well as increase in youth suicide and the number of cult groups and extremist groups ^[8,9].

The terrorists: who are they?

They are often described as insane criminals. They are undoubtedly criminals, but they are not insane. The most puzzling question which also stirs the most intense resentment is what lets them kill innocent people. It is difficult but important to understand that in their view there are no innocent people, with the exception of those who share their ideas and ideals, however illusory and perverse. Let us add that terrorists are trained by different methods, including religious indoctrination and brainwashing so that they have no moral prohibitions in relation to their potential targets. Their training includes highly emotional preaching with the following message: “This is being done not because of our desire to kill others but because jihad should go on. Everything is legitimate if it helps achieve our goals».

Let us mention, without lengthy scientific explanations, a psychological mechanism, which is well-known to specialists and which is the basis of such a worldview. It is projective identification that leads to transformation of psychological attitudes, which is most vividly expressed in paranoid personal development, not only its pathological version. In such cases, even in absence of external provoking factors, one gradually develops unshakeable belief that it is not he who hates, blames and persecutes innocent people. In his mind, it turns the other way: he is hated and unjustly persecuted, so he only responds to the perceived humiliation, reproach and persecution. When an ethnic group suffers a severe psychic trauma, especially a historical trauma, real or mythological, caused by a hostile group of a different ethnicity, such paranoid development might become massive. According to scientists, this mechanism is the basis of interethnic conflicts: those between Arabs and Jews, Armenians and Turks, Irish and Brits, Russians and Ukrainians ^[10].

Do they believe in God? It is difficult to understand for us, who have almost lost our faith, but most of them do sincerely believe the school of traditional Islam, or a kind of digression from it, that they belong to. They are believers, just like those people in medieval Europe, in times of Crusades, when dozens of witches and heretics were exterminated in

presence of joyful crowds of true Christians. In addition, they believe in their messiah role to purify the world from uncleanness.

What do they want? If we try to take a detached position (which is difficult, considering their crimes against humanity), we can see that they are trying to eradicate the vices of contemporary Western society, first of all, the injustice and privileges of “more equal” citizens. What is even more important, they are ready to fight against entitlement of “more equal” countries, which show disregard to national traditions, lifestyle and interests of other countries and ethnicities.

Goner countries

It is well-known that in the second half of the XX century the term “goner countries” was coined in political sciences: these are countries that would never have adequate education system, health care, high technologies etc. Superpowers silently agreed that these countries should stay on the sideway of history, and they can be punished on the basis of unconfirmed accusations by any means including shelling and bombing. There have been plenty of examples, starting from Yugoslavia, then the lies about Saddam Hussein’s atomic weapon, and the recent lies about chemical weapon used in Syria. It is natural that population of these countries and those who emigrated from them and became citizens of other countries are not satisfied with this situation. This gives the answer to the question discussed by the Western analysts, why these migrants from Arabian countries who became citizens of Belgium, the UK or France and received education there behave in a manner in which citizens are not supposed to.

It should be recognized that there have been multiple examples of rather arbitrary labelling someone as a terrorist. The USA claimed that Slobodan Milosevic (1999), Saddam Hussein (2003), Muamar Kaddafi (2011) and current Syrian leader Bashar Assad were terrorists, and in Ukraine they call so citizens of Lugansk and Donetsk Republics. It is noteworthy that what is considered “terrorists groups” in Syria might suddenly be renamed into “moderate opposition” and vice versa. Actually, it has become a label that can be applied to anyone and depends on current political aims. In our time, leaders of some Western countries and those media who agree with them are trying to apply this label to Russia. This label allows Western superpowers to do anything in relation to such groups or countries, including their extermination or occupation. We have to think about it and understand that measures of defence taken by the leaders of our country are timely and adequate ^[11].

Scientists’ opinion and actual practice

Scientists, whose opinion is often neglected, insist that in addition to forceful solutions we should think about humanitarian counterterrorism strategies adequate to the contemporary world: it is not only special services that should counteract this evil but knowledgeable and consolidated society convinced in its moral and historical truth. On the international conference on counterterrorism that was hold after Beslan tragedy (2004), it was said that to fight terrorism by exterminating terrorists is like trying to fight flood by using spoons.

It should be mentioned that the idea of humanitarian counterterrorism strategies was initially perceived in a negative way. However, socio-psychological and socio-political situation in Chechnya have convincingly shown that methods other than forceful oppression are effective. Could it be that, worldwide, we should not rely on qualitative and quantitative growth of army and law enforcement and huge investments into systems of surveillance and control? Could other solutions of this problem be less costly? However, in order to apply them, it will be necessary to review the existing stereotypes of socio-economic, interethnic and international relationships.

As early as in 1996 I said that the world is on the edge of paradigm change that might happen in a painful and non-civilized way. This development is caused by intense resistance to this change from power and economy elites with their situational superiority that is illusory from historical perspective. The change of paradigm is a historical process, and however powerful is resistance to this process, it will go on anyway. To be more precise, it is already going on, and for now, it follows the predicted scenario.

Role of law enforcement structures

We are still far from understanding of the world processes, although not as far as it seems. However, this is the current situation. Therefore, most citizens understand that law enforcement structures need to be strengthened, and rights and freedoms might need to be limited to some degree in exchange for the increased level of safety. However, the works of law enforcement structures, that deserve the greatest respect, face some difficulties. We have not established cooperative relationships between population, police and Special Forces yet. On the one hand, it is caused by post-Soviet syndrome of negative attitude to any forms of such interaction, which is still often described in negative terms as “snitching”. On the other hand, an opinion was formed in the post-Soviet time – and is still common – that law enforcement structures protect those who have power and money (those “more equal ones”) rather than ordinary citizens. This negative stereotype should be overcome not by means of propaganda but by real examples, by state decisions and legal acts that will help to increase the population’s trust to these structures.

What do we need to understand?

We have already mentioned here paranoid type which is often described as fanaticism in lay terms. This psychological phenomenon includes passionate adherence to one's ideas and beliefs, be they advanced or distorted, combined with extreme intolerance to other views, blind adoration of a leader or leaders producing these ideas and relevant organizations, cults or groups. From this perspective, most terrorists are fanatics who are ready for self-sacrifice and murder. However, analysis of their texts and instructions for terrorists shows that a terrorist attack is also a message. In some instructions for terrorists it is written straightforwardly: "The more casualties, the sooner they understand it". What exactly should be understood is often not formulated or cannot be considered realistic and attainable. Of course, this call for understanding is perverted and criminal, but this factor should not be underestimated. Let us repeat it: experience of Chechnya has shown that it is possible to resolve these problems in other ways, especially if sensible leaders of national elites have authority and real power and can be heard even by zealot terrorists.

The psychological portrait of a terrorist

These are mostly young people who were brought up in patriarchal and religious environment. They have persistent mythologized beliefs about historical traumata of their nations combined with ideas of revenge. Their most typical social feelings include grief and hatred, hurt national pride and acute feeling of injustice inflicted upon their native group as well as distorted perception of the historical perpetuator and striving for revenge. They have rather distorted ideas of good and evil, they are ready for self-sacrifice on behalf of their faith and ideals, which is perceived in their environment as heroic devotion to their sacred mission. Mostly, they are recruited via their closest friends (43%) and relatives (84%) or they can be recruited after their relatives' murder or after aggression from superpower countries towards their historical Motherland, even if they were born in Western countries and hold their citizenship. According to the international statistics, recruiting by blackmailing happens in less than 5% of the cases. Overt or covert national or religious discrimination at school or university, including such insignificant from European perspective cases as forbidding headscarf, facilitates recruiting. Let us clarify that it is not burka that was forbidden but headscarf, which is still used in some Russian villages.

Terrorists' childhood memories are usually related to colonial times, war, occupation and exile, which were witnessed by them or by their parents; in 32% of cases, their parents say they accept their children's involvement in terrorist groups although they would mourn them in case of fatality. This is related to the fact that the main factor influencing terrorist worldview is not propaganda but rather religious and political indoctrination since infancy including being exposed to examples of national heroes; recruiters come much later. It is not a secret that families of exterminated terrorists often receive a substantial refund from special funds sponsoring terrorists.

Terrorist groups are structured as a net, in which separate cells have no contact with each other. Actually, it is a deep echeloned underground. In terrorist attacks and hostage taking, negotiations with perpetrators will almost never be successful because the attack is directed from outside, and the group of perpetrators has to complete the mission by any means regardless of its consequences.

For the sake of what?

What do terrorists commit their crimes for? The readers, who are mostly atheists, will find it unconvincing, but they sacrifice their lives for their faith as they understand it and for the future of their people. This factor is underestimated when they are called "suicide terrorists". I do not think that this term is helpful for understanding this tragic contemporary phenomenon. But whatever their faith is, the society will always consider them criminals as they murder innocent people.

In the Western literature, terrorists are frequently described as enemies of the Western world and the Western lifestyle who hate the Western culture and the Western society in general. It is not completely true. In many cases, contempt to modern Western society for its vices rather than hatred is cultivated in terrorists' environment.

Another common misperception is that most of them are criminal mercenaries, primitive uneducated people who perpetrate their abhorring attacks to get money. There are such cases, especially in countries where there are very few options to earn money other than to become a member of an armed group. This is not true for the majority of terrorists though. To understand that, it is sufficient to analyse the recent terrorist attacks in Western Europe committed by citizens of these countries, who had jobs and looked rather law-obedient and adequate citizens. It leads us to rather upsetting conclusions: terrorism acquires younger and more educated followers, new technologies and sophistication, and our technological achievements (airplanes, cars, buildings etc.) can be easily turned into its murderous weapons in our rear.

A survey of terrorists incarcerated for their crimes shown that 0–1% feel sincere guilt and regret in relation to their crimes, while 77% of them intensified their terrorist worldview, group identity and devotion to their caused during their prison term. 84% of these people admitted that they plan to return to their terrorist activities after release. 99% of them were proud with what they have done. When asked how massacre of innocent people can be in accordance with Koran,

they almost always give a standard answer that they serve their faith, they are on the war, and all their sins are absolved. Any attempts to convince the incarcerated terrorists that their goals were unattainable are unsuccessful.
About recruiters

Mass media usually depicts recruiters as greedy antisocial scums who are trained to use manipulative methods to get naive young people involved into their networks. It is true that they are trained to use methods of propaganda. However, in addition to those who earn their money, there are many romantics and fanatics of fight who are eager to reveal the vices of the contemporary world and are sincerely convinced that these vices should be eradicated. That is why their methods were often so effective. Those in counter-propaganda, unfortunately, have neither such unshakable belief that they are right nor such irrefutable arguments favouring the contemporary situation in the world.

CONCLUSION

Terrorism is a weapon of the weak

It is true that we should counteract terrorist propaganda and violence. The most important aspect of such counteraction is working with the youth. The methods used in the past are not effective, though. The youth of informational epoch is qualitatively new, not like it was in times of pioneer brigades. Time is different, and the youth is much more intellectual, educated, they grow up earlier, they look more attentively at the contemporary world and our society. That is why before we speak about their place in the world or counteract propaganda, we should listen to them; give them some spiritual fundament and attractive image of the future. And only then we can patiently and persistently explain them that justice is not found but rather acquired in struggle. This struggle, however, should take civilized forms: they will study, acquire knowledge and experience, become politicians and public figures, they will suggest new ideas and they should be strong. Terrorist attacks are a primitive weapon of the weak.

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