

TERRORISM OF OUR DAYS: GLOBAL AND REGIONAL MANIFESTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Today, terrorism has developed into a highly specific phenomenon, the content of which and the conditions in which it was taking shape are fairly complicated. It figures prominently in domestic and foreign policies of certain states and international organizations. It is rooted in hoary antiquity, yet its various manifestations are

characteristic of our days as well. The global, political and ideological processes unfolding in the world are accompanied by international terrorism in different forms and carried out under specific ethnic or religious slogans. We have analyzed Islamism and "Islamic" terrorism and their radical or extremist manifestations camouflaged as Islamic values.

KEYWORDS: *terrorism, radicalism, extremism, Islamism, Russia, the Middle East, the U.S., methods of opposition, ethnocultural resource.*

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Introduction

Since time immemorial, mankind has been aware of terrorism, which became a very common phenomenon and one of the global problems of our days. Viciousness, known since the end of the eighteenth century as terror or terrorism, was one of the instruments used by practically all states on their paths toward becoming great empires, paths that were dotted with wars and territorial acquisitions. While differing from one epoch to another in form, methods and scale, terrorism has never disappeared from the history of human civilization. At the turn of the twenty-first century, terrorist acts became a favorite subject of the media, some of them watched online by huge TV audiences (suffice it to mention the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September, 2001).

What is terrorism as a social and historical phenomenon? Whence its hectic activities? Why has religiously tinged terrorism (brandishing Islamic banners, in particular) spread far and wide to become one of the most dangerous threats?

Terrorism: Content of the Phenomenon

The terms radicalism, extremism and terrorism describe phenomena that are close in meaning and invariably go to extremes either in statements or in action. Terrorism is more than violence: it does not merely threaten lives and security of states and will not stop at total extermination of individuals or groups. It relies on extremely radical methods of vice and violence; at all times, it was and remains an extremely radical method of deterrence used by the weaker side to impose its demands, conditions, laws and beliefs on the stronger side, or vice versa. Here is what Sergey Nechaev, a Russian revolutionary of the latter half of the nineteenth century, had to say about the role of terror in social struggle: “Any revolutionary joins the state, the social and the so-called educated world and lives in it for the sake of its prompt and complete destruction... Those who are especially harmful to the revolutionary organization and those whose sudden and violent deaths might spread fear in the government, deprive it of its brightest and most energetic members and shatter its power should be liquidated in the first place.”¹ “Terrorism in the most widely accepted contemporary usage of the term is fundamentally and inherently political. It is also ineluctably about power: the pursuit of power, the acquisition of power, and the use of power to achieve political change.”² “Terrorism is thus violence—or, equally important, threat of violence—used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim.”³

Over the course of history, terrorism as a phenomenon acquired different forms and employed different methods, yet its core remained the same: extremist-minded individuals or groups of people or even states that rely on demonstrative psychological, moral or physical intimidation or even extermination, when deemed necessary, of people to insist on their state, political, social, ethical, confessional and other socially important demands and conditions.

This, however, should not obstruct the specific features of terrorism of the last decades of the 20th and the first decades of the twenty-first century.

¹ S.G. Nechaev, “Katekhizis revolutsionera,” pp. 13; 16 in: *Revolutsionny radikalizm v Rossii: vek deviatnadsaty. Documents, Arkheografichesky tsentr, Moscow, 1997.*

² B. Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Columbia University Press, New York, p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

Due to globalization and widespread mobile communication terrorism has spread far and wide beyond the old national and territorial limits to transnational and international levels. Terrorism of the twenty-first century no longer entails isolated acts of violence carried out by individuals. It is a multilevel and ramified system of ideological and practical actions perpetrated, for geopolitical, ideological and religious purposes, by ultra-radical forces with considerable financial, informational, material and technical resources and armed units at their disposal. This explains the U.N. Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism adopted on 9 December, 1994 and the U.N. Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted on 8 September, 2006.

Terrorism in Russia: From Past to Present

In the last third of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, terrorist acts in Russia committed by members of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) organization and their ideological descendants, the SRs (Socialist-Revolutionaries), were aimed at the czars and top officials (ministers and governors). Czar Alexander II was assassinated on 1 March, 1881; Grand Prince Sergey Alexandrovich, Governor General of Moscow and uncle of Czar Nicholas II was killed on 4 February, 1905; Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Pyotr Stolypin was mortally wounded in the Kiev Opera House on 14 September, 1911.

In her fundamental study of terrorism in Russia of the early twentieth century, Anna Geifman has quoted official figures: "During the one-year period beginning in October 1905, a total number of 3,611 government officials of all ranks were killed and wounded throughout the empire... By the end of 1907 the total number of state officials who had been killed or injured came to nearly 4,500." She has estimated the total number of victims in 1905-1907 as "more than 9,000 casualties" and further: "From the beginning of January 1908 through mid-May 1910, the authorities recorded 19,957 terrorist acts and revolutionary robberies, as a result of which 732 government officials and 3,051 private persons were killed, while 1,022 officials and 2,829 private persons were wounded";⁴ "Moreover, it is also very probable that, in the general chaos of the revolutionary situation, a significant number of local acts went unregistered and did not become part of either the official statistics or the records of the radicals. It therefore seems plausible to conclude that in the period under consideration, close to 17,000 individuals became victims of revolutionary terrorism."⁵

During the 1905-1907 revolution the SRs reached the peak of their terrorist activities: 233 acts of terror in which 2 ministers, 33 governors and 7 generals lost their lives; between 1902 and 1911, Socialist-Revolutionaries carried out 216 terrorist acts.⁶ Members of the Narodnaya Volya Party and the SRs were convinced that the czars and officials were responsible for the suffering of the people, that each of them was corrupt and despotic, which added great symbolic value to the acts of their assassination.

On 6 July, 1918, that is, after the October Revolution in Russia (carried out on 25 October, 1917) a member of the SR party murdered the German Ambassador to Russia Wilhelm von Mirbach, a provocation that started the SRs' power struggle with the Bolsheviks, which later developed into terror waged by both sides.

⁴ A. Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1993, pp. 20-21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶ See: "Partiia sotsialistov-revolutsionerov," available at [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Партия_социалистов-революционеров].

It should be said that during the Civil War that followed the October Revolution, “red” and “white” terror alike was an instrument of struggle between antagonistic classes. Today, terrorist acts are justified by the principle of collective guilt: those who support the ideas of extreme radicalism regard any individual, a group of people or a nation not so much as an opponent or an enemy, but as a vehicle of guilt that should be publicly punished and exterminated. This makes the ideology and political practice of terrorism not only merciless, but also amoral. Abdusalam Guseynov, a prominent Russian philosopher, has justly described terrorism as “an embodiment of absolute evil.”

Today, the public is well aware of violent actions and linguistic aggression of ultra-radicals. In the past, terrorists invariably strove to spread the knowledge about their crimes and assassinations far and wide, especially among their potential enemies. In the twenty-first century, terrorist acts became a TV show of sorts, an instrument and an object of publicity that throws the highly contradictory role of the media into sharp relief. Indeed, TV normally exposes and criticizes all manifestations of extreme radicalism, a function that cannot be underestimated. At the same time, it indirectly admires or even exonerates them. The vast audience that watched the TV broadcast of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September, 2001 “could see that the maximally effective killing of thousands of civilians could be easily realized with minimal instruments. . . . In recent years, media reports have become a textbook of sorts for potential terrorists.”⁷ It seems that the media coverage of terrorist acts and the methods employed should be discussed in detail.

It is highly unlikely that today terrorists are “not guided by religious convictions and are not tempted by money but by the chance to appear on TV screens as central figures in a show,”⁸ as some people believe. Money is not the main motivation, yet the role of religious convictions should not be underestimated: “Today the psychology of terrorists,” writes Valentina Fedotova, “brings them closer to people of deep convictions, if not to Luther (‘I cannot and I will not recant anything’), rather than to fanatic bandits who take up arms to commit crimes.”⁹

The religious factor figures prominently in contemporary terrorism: it does not merely justify terrorist acts, but, more importantly, tinges them with religious colors and tries to infuse their antihuman nature with spiritual and theological meaning and values; religious radicalism and religious terrorism being its extreme and logical form.

Terrorism: Ultra-Radical Islamist Forms

“Islamic” or Islamist terrorism (we prefer to avoid the terms “terrorist Islam” and “terror in Islam” as inadequate and hardly correct) actively use certain misinterpreted religious principles and ideas for their anti-humane and basically anti-religious purposes. Indeed, the combination of the religious and the ultra-radical in the contemporary religious-political discourse should be further specified. It is fundamentally important to distinguish between “Islamic” terrorism and Islam as one of the world religions with its spiritual wealth and values common to all mankind. The U.N. Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy stresses that “terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.”

The following definition is probably the most adequate interpretation of the essence of “Islamic” terrorism. “Islamic” terrorism is an ideology and political practice of extreme radical organiza-

⁷ “Terrorizm,” in: *Bolshaia aktualnaia politicheskaia entsiklopedia*, Eksmo, Moscow, 2009, p. 329.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 329-330.

⁹ “Terrorizm v sovremennom mire. Opyt mezhdistsiplinarnogo analiza (material ‘kruglogo stola’),” *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 6, 2005, p. 12.

tions, movements and religious groups that take hostages, organize explosions in crowded places, destroy objects of life support, murder officials and respected people and use suicide bombers to sow fear among common people, suppress their will to resist, disorganize social and state life by imposing certain behavior patterns on the stronger of the opposing sides, force it to retreat on certain issues, replace the leaders or, in extreme cases, the form of government.

One cannot but wonder how the Northern Caucasus, with its deeply rooted democratic norms, traditions of coexistence of different peoples and cultures, lofty examples of spirituality and morality became a scene of extremism and terrorism, anti-humane and shockingly cruel phenomena.

It was the comprehensive social, political, economic and moral crisis caused by the Soviet Union's disintegration and the highly exacerbated ethnopolitical relations between individual subjects, and between them and the federal Center, which made religious terrorism, the plague of the twenty-first century, possible. Tempted by President Yeltsin's highly provocative statement "Take as much sovereignty as you can stomach," the Chechen Republic (Ichkeria), which emerged as the result of the splitting of the Chechen-Ingush A.S.S.R. into its component parts, opted for independence from Russia and entered the path of seemingly independent development. Moscow perceived its Dudaev-style sovereignty as separatism and violation of integrity of the Russian Federation. Restoration of the constitutional law and order took the form of an armed confrontation between Russia and the separatist forces, as a result of which the Dudaev-Maskhadov regime was liquidated at the cost of a huge loss of life, destroyed economy and the ruined capital Grozny.

It should be noted that both during and after the armed confrontation, terrorist groups and movements operating in Russia, both internal and external, hoisted the banner of Islam as their philosophy, operant ideology and mobilizing force.

Islamization of society and the politicization and radicalization of Islam were the two most obvious processes. One of contemporary authors has written that Muslim peoples started "identifying themselves with Islam," while "extremist trends, the consolidation of which provoked another war in the region" became part and parcel of Islamic resurrection.¹⁰ The adepts of North Caucasian terrorism were influenced and are influenced today by the ultra-radical ideas of Salafi authors from other countries that exonerate acts of terrorism and subversion.¹¹

Neo-Wahhabis are determined to disintegrate the Islamic world, while ethnoconfessional organizations and movements that represent the interests of those international political forces that support the idea of a regional or world Caliphate and Islamic states play into the hands of extreme Islamic radicals. Despite the different levels and forms of Islamic radicalism, "all radical Islamic groups are tied together by a common aim — creation of Islamic states on the entire (or parts of) territories of their countries. This implies radical changes and Islamization of all social, economic and state political institutions."¹²

Radicalization of the Islamic movement in Russia and in other geopolitical regions of the world is strongly affected by globalization and the related aggressive insertion of Western values into the spiritual space and life of peoples of the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia (the process is most apparent in those that follow Islam and have no statehood of their own). They have already come dangerously close to the loss of their ethnic, confessional and social identities.

This should not be taken to mean that all achievements of Western culture should be pushed aside, yet the cult of material riches, a lack of spirituality, as well as the standardization of nation-

¹⁰ V.Kh. Akaev, *Sufijskaia kultura na Severnom Kavkaze: teoreticheskie i prakticheskie aspekty*, 2nd edition, GUP Knizhnoe izdatelstvo, Grozny, 2011, pp. 150, 194.

¹¹ See: I.P. Dobaev, "Politicheskie protsessy na Severnom Kavkaze," *Nauchnaia mysl Kavkaza*, No. 1, 2008, p. 32.

¹² I.P. Dobaev, *Islamskiy radikalizm: sushchnost, ideologiya, politicheskaia praktika*, Author's abstract of a doctoral thesis, Rostov-on-Don, 2003, p. 19.

specific characteristics of social and spiritual life and gradual destruction of the traditional moral bases of the family, social and public forms of life should be avoided. To save their national identities, traditions and customs, faiths and tongues, psychological makeup and world outlook, individuals or whole nations have to use radical and extremist means and methods. We should accept the fact that international terrorism is an instinctive response to globalization in the interests of the “golden billion” and “the mounting and unceremonious worldwide domination of the West.”¹³

There is another, frequently underestimated, source of religious ultra-radicalism. Religion, and Islam in particular, has become one of the most politicized forms of public consciousness used by those who support terrorism to justify the most monstrous of crimes. Indeed, religious forms addressed to the masses explain the world in terms that require no arguments and no deliberations on whether religious principles are true or not and are, therefore, easily understood by the general public, or, to be more exact, the spiritually and secularly uneducated milieu. Such people, especially young adults, are highly susceptible to the ideas of terrorism and terrorist acts, which have nothing to do with genuine Islam.

Anybody wishing to grasp the meaning of contemporary “Islamic” terrorism and learn more about the ways and means of opposing it efficiently should take into account the new features of this religious and political movement. Analysts have pointed out that

- (a) in the twenty-first century the ranks of radical Islamic movements swell with mainly young people; the same applies to the network structures organized into ethnically homogenous jamaats. This is closely connected with another typical feature of the radical Islamic movements, namely, a higher educational level of those who organize terrorist acts and those who obey their orders. “Terrorism has become younger, intellectually stronger and demonstrates the ability to organize and reproduce itself;¹⁴
- (b) religious, ethnic and criminal sides of terrorism supported by similar international structures are intertwined on the ideological foundation of radical Islam¹⁵, which makes it much harder to fight it.

International experience has taught us that as of now concerted efforts of several countries are not sufficient to oppose, let alone liquidate religious radicalism. Certain aspects of this highly topical subject have not been studied yet, while others need further comprehension. This poses a question: What is the most relevant spiritual and intellectual resource of counter-terrorism? It should be said that by “counter-terrorism” we do not mean armed struggle against terrorists, but, rather, the struggle against terrorism as a religious and political movement and an ideological doctrine. Law and order structures should liquidate terrorist organizations and groups along with their material and technical bases; today, this is also the job of the armed forces (the Russian VKS in Syria). It is the task or even the duty of theoreticians and intellectuals, whose profound knowledge of secular and spiritual aspects helps them reveal the false and anti-Islamic nature of extremist ideas, to fight terrorism as a system of social, political, ethnic and religious ideas and ideological provisions that justify terrorist acts and terrorists.

Counterterrorist struggle should be well-organized, it should be waged consistently and take into account the fact that there are different levels and forms of radical manifestations; it is highly important to involve specialists and experts in ideological issues in this process. Today, the situation is strange, to say the least: there is an ideology of terrorism but no counterterrorist ideology. Not all educated people or even scholars can become ideologists. An ideologist is expected to blend knowledge and political, historical, religious, scholarly, ethical and philosophical values into an ideology.

¹³ “Terrorizm v sovremennom mire. Opyt mezhdistsiplinarnogo analiza (material ‘kruglogo stola’),” p. 7.

¹⁴ See: A.I. Lukienko, “Kulturno-ideologicheskie aspekty rosta napriazhennosti v Severno-Kavkazskom regione,” *Nauchnaia mysl Kavkaza*, No. 4, 2011, p. 103.

¹⁵ See: I.P. Dobaev, *Islamskiy radikalizm: sushchnost, ideologiya, politicheskaya praktika*, p. 16.

Prevention looks like the most promising trend: we should move purposefully and consistently toward immunizing young people against this anti-human ideology. It is highly important to plant, at all levels and in all forms of education and upbringing, the precepts that prohibit murder and insist on moral purity, fulfillment of one's moral obligations to one's relatives, family, teachers, nation, Motherland, God, preservation of clear conscience and religious tolerance, etc. as supreme values for all those who believe in God (Allah). There is no chance of dissuading the young men who have already been drawn into a terrorist organization and taught that the murder of those who adhere to different ideas or follow different faiths is a worthy deed endorsed by God.

Anti-Terrorist Struggle: Ethnocultural Resource

The anti-terrorist potential of all available means and methods should be used in the struggle against religious and political radicalism. In the Northern Caucasus, we should rely on the ethnocultural resource of the local, including Chechen, peoples: honor, dignity, courage, respect for the honor and dignity of others, love of freedom, respect for their history and love of the land of ancestors planted in the souls and minds of all Chechens since childhood has powerful potential that should be tapped to the fullest extent in our struggle against Islamic radicalism. Cultures of other peoples of Russia are also brimming with humanism, spirituality and morality.

It is wrong to limit our opposition to terrorism by ethnic and cultural potential: we should tap into a wider range of cultural and educational resources; values shared by mankind as well as scientific, political, legal, moral, artistic, esthetic achievements that belong to all of us.

Indeed, poorly educated people, especially young people, cannot assess the situation critically; their vague moral convictions make them easy prey for those who draw them into hazardous adventures or even criminal activities. Radicals and ultra-radicals spare no effort in explaining to the young people the meaning of such concepts as shahid, jihad, takfir, gazavat (jihad by the sword), etc. and concentrate on those particular meanings that support extremist ideologies and extremist political practices. Speaking at the International Theological Conference in the Republic of Ingushetia the Secretary General of the International Union of Muslim Scholars Sheikh Dr. Ali Muhiuddin Al-Qurra Daghi had the following to say about jihad: "This excellent word has been distorted. Jihad does not mean war since Islam bans all wars. Jihad is related to the ideological side of Islam, it is inside each of us. It means that we should study, work in various spheres and help our relatives. In the Koran, all ayats that deal with war talk about defensive wars."¹⁶

It should be said that the problem of choosing anti-terrorist means and methods is one of the most complicated and least studied. Without going into detail, it should be noted that

1. Radicalism in its extreme manifestations makes it very difficult to prevent terrorist acts carried out by shahids; it is very hard, if at all possible, to liquidate terrorism. Acts of terror exclude any possibility of moral or more or less productive dialog with carriers of absolute evil; retribution is the only adequate response. This means that ideological and theoretical opposition to terrorism should be consistent, preventive and planned out for many years to come.
2. Successful struggle against "Islamic" terrorism as an ideological doctrine cannot and should not be limited to a simple statement that it is criminal and anti-religious. People should be

¹⁶ Ali Muhiuddin Al-Qurra Daghi, "Vystuplenie na mezhdunarodnoy bogoslovskoy konferentsii v Respublike Ingushetia," *Serdaro*, 16 May, 2015.

informed that, besides Islamic radicalism, there are other social, political and religious movements and groups that can implement spiritual and social aims and dreams in adequate (even if contradictory) forms. Regrettably, the collapsed Communist ideology left a void in the greater part of Russian society, which still remains unfilled with a commonly shared world outlook as a system of knowledge and convictions to be followed and defended. A great part of the Russian society, first and foremost, its younger segment, has no clear spiritual or moral landmarks, lofty aims or meanings; they do not believe that a fair social and state order is possible, hence their psychological instability, social and civil apathy and vagueness which makes them easy prey for those whose job is to replenish the ranks of terrorists.

3. At one time, Descartes offered the following heuristic idea: “The more assured he [a person] is of choosing truth and goodness, the more likely he is to avoid error.”¹⁷ This is true: deeper knowledge suggests correct decisions. The seeds of extremism will never sprout in the soul and mind of a young man who grew up in intellectual and socio-cultural milieu guided by lofty divine and humane values, including awareness of moral duty and responsibility to parents, teachers, society, the state, Motherland and God, acquisition of a profession and skills needed to serve society, a taste for and skills of independent thinking, conscience, and an ability to feel shame for his weaknesses and misdeeds. The words of the first President of the Chechen Republic Akhmad Haji Kadyrov “We need intelligent, educated youth healthy in body and spirit” are as topical as ever.

Conclusion

Specific features of contemporary terrorism are closely connected to the global, economic, political and ideological processes that have betrayed themselves differently in different regions, whose cultural and civilizational values turned out to be incompatible with Western materialism and hedonism. Certain forces in Islamic countries present the West as a natural enemy that follows in the Crusaders’ footsteps to capture lands and holy places—Mecca, Medina, Najaf, Karbala, etc.

Public Muslim discourse accuses those Muslim rulers who have accepted the dominance of Western Christian states that capture the riches of the Muslim world, occupy Muslim lands and torture those who live on them as is the case, for example, in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Chechnia, Bosnia, the Philippines and Iraq, not to mention the U.S. Guantanamo concentration camp in Cuba.¹⁸

People who support political Islam blame Muslim countries for moving away from their religious traditions, and the Shari‘a as the foundation of their lifestyle and culture. They harshly criticize the ongoing Westernization of Muslim habits and traditions and suggest sometimes too radical means and methods of opposition.

Movements and organizations designed to wake Muslims up to politics are forming in Muslim countries. Violence and terrorist acts that threaten lives and social systems have become more or less accepted methods of struggle. This dents the image of Islam and its law-abiding followers who seek a dignified life and the right to peacefully realize their creative abilities in their countries and in the West.

¹⁷ R. Descartes, *Sochineniia*, in two volumes, Vol. 2, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 1994, p. 118.

¹⁸ See: G. Korm, *Religiozny vopros v XXI v. Geopolitika i krizis postmoderna*, Institute of General Humanitarian Studies, Moscow, 2012, p. 203 (see also: G. Corm, *La Question religieuse au XXI^e siècle: géopolitique et crise de la post-modernité*, La Découverte, 2006).