

*Law*

## Possible Use of Children in International Terrorism

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**Threats posed by terrorism will remain as one of the main challenges to international security. This paper identifies such focal factors as the possible impact of cyber and religious terrorism using high technologies on the younger generation. The study of modern terrorism allows us to say that the age of terrorists is declining. Terrorist organizations are interested in the younger generation. This is due to several factors, primarily to increase its influence in the future, as well as the fact that the psyche of minors is quite fragile, consequently, it is easy to influence it. Today terrorist organizations are investing enormous resources in shaping children into future terrorists. They are well aware of the high tech capabilities in terrorist activities. This paper aims to analyze and evaluate the above mentioned factors, which will allow the civilized world to see the challenges before it in a new light. The paper focuses on the cyber addiction of children and the youth and its possible negative impact, in the context of terrorism. A next-generation oriented strategy by terrorist groups has made children victims of both psychological and physical violence, whose subsequent reintegration into a healthy society will remain a foremost challenge. While it is difficult to predict what is going to happen in the future, well-conducted studies allow us to make predictions. As the cycle of generational change is an irreversible process, the study of terrorism in the context of the next generation will make it possible to determine what types of challenges will be on the agenda in the future. © 2020 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.**

Terrorism, religious terrorism, high technologies, cyber terrorism, terrorist children, violence, terrorist organizations, cyber addiction

Terrorism remains the most dangerous threat of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the aim of this article is to underline the importance of a specific aspect of this threat.

Combating terrorism is a challenge for the entire civilized world, both individually and collectively.

The fight against terrorism does not merely require a set of physical capabilities or special antiterrorist measures, but must also be based upon the study and analysis of specific events and trends within historical, social and political contexts as

well as with regard to national and international law. It is also noteworthy to raise the issue of cyberterrorism and the other type of terrorism that can be led by technological progress, the development of artificial intelligence (AI).

The following question arises during any study of terrorism: Will this global problem in future continue to be one of humankind's most difficult challenges? The answer is undoubtedly 'yes', for terrorism not only affects but also devours younger

generations. The generation that will replace us is already influenced by terrorism, and trying to forecast when it will explode is difficult and indeed often impossible—particularly if we consider the scientifically proven fact that many young victims of violence later tend to become oppressors themselves. In 2015, the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry published research about Violent Behavior in Children and Adolescents and has concluded that a complex interaction or combination of factors leads to the increased risk of violent behavior in children and adolescents [1]. These factors include:

- Previous aggressive or violent behavior
- Being the victim of physical abuse and/or sexual abuse
- Exposure to violence in the home and/or community
- Being the victim of bullying
- Genetic (family heredity) factors
- Exposure to violence in media (TV, movies, etc.)
- Use of drugs and/or alcohol
- Presence of firearms at home
- Combination of stressful family socioeconomic factors (poverty, severe deprivation, marital breakup, single parenting, unemployment, loss of support from extended family)
- Brain damage due to head injury (ibid.).

In the process of becoming "terrorists," children become victims of violence (coercion) and/or victims of manipulation by terrorist groups. The reasons for juvenile's involvement in violent extremism vary and largely depend on local (specific regional) and individual characteristics. Moreover, in recent years the development of social media and cyberspace has had a very serious impact on the psyche of the next generation.

In today's world, some children have either become direct victims of violence and turned into oppressors through recruitment by terrorist organizations, or are learning violence under the influence of the virtual world.

Mankind expects artificial intelligence (AI) to solve the problems it faces within the shortest time possible. However, the following question arises – is humankind secured in this setting? For, if artificial intelligence (AI) starts to analyze the problems of mankind, it will most likely discover that the main source of problems is humankind itself.

This data should not exclude the recruitment of children with fragile psyche addicted to cyberspace, especially since there is a lot of evidence already. For example, the online game "Blue Whale" pushes adolescents to self-harm and suicide.

This game took the lives of quite a few teenagers, especially in 2015-2017 [2]. The purpose of this game was self-harm with the final task of committing suicide. While the content of other games incites adults, minors to harm others. For example, in America, in Louisiana, an eight-year-old child intentionally killed his old caregiver after watching a video game [3].

The words Stephen Hawking said in 2014 are becoming even more urgent today. He noted, "Whereas the short-term impact of AI depends on who controls it, the long-term impact depends on whether it can be controlled at all" [4].

According to Bushman and Anderson, enough research has been done to conclude - violent video games can lead to the augmentation in aggressive behavior, an increase in violence, which on the other hand can be an effective tool for terrorists [5].

In 2007, the terrorist group Hezbollah released a video game – Special Force 2: Tale of the Truthful Pledge – illustrating the war in Lebanon from the perspective of a Hezbollah fighter. This version, unlike the previous one, was only in Arabic, although it successfully sold 100,000 copies in the Middle East [6]. Overall the game was tailored to the children's tastes, to inspire and recruit them.

This was confirmed by Hezbollah spokesman Ali Dahmer when he said – "the game presents the culture of the resistance to children: that occupation must be resisted and that land and the nation must be guarded" (ibid.).

In 2014, Islamic State released the video game “3D third-person shooter Grand Theft Auto 5” (which sold 75 million copies as of February 2017), aiming to recruit young people [7].

Daesh has also released a trailer for the game – “Grand Theft Auto: Salil al-Sawarem”. It is not yet clear whether the full version of the game has been sold or not, but the teaser had a large audience. According to the trailer, the action takes place in the desert, where terrorists attack police, soldiers and military convoys and kill them. The main character of the game yells out “Allahu Akbar” while shooting [8]. According to today's data, this teaser is blocked on the youtube channel.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) allows cybersecurity thinking to reach new levels. Cognitive technology provides faster analysis of current and future threats. However, the question here is whether it is possible to fight against virtual terrorism as vigorously as with the other forms of solving this problem? While the technologies are often used effectively to combat terrorism, on the other hand, they are also used by terrorists, as they master technological progress as well and use them on the most vulnerable groups – on minors.

The second problem that may arise in the future is the younger generation, which has been directly or indirectly influenced by religious terror.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 revealed an entirely new face of terrorism, and the creation of the so-called Islamic State crossed a critical line.

Terrorist acts around the world have turned terrorism into a dangerous political tool.

Religiously-motivated terrorism is a special type of terrorism, the study of which requires not only a good knowledge of the issue but also the ability to analyze its psychological, political, and philosophical aspects [9]. Any analysis of terrorism must underline the exceptional nature of Islamic terrorism, whose aims go beyond specific political results to include the goal of confronting Western civilization and the world order it has established in

order to make the Islamic civilization the world's most powerful and influential force [10].

Unresolved conflicts in the Middle East have become arenas for the development of a religious (Islamic) terrorism that poses a threat to regional and global security.

By prosecuting an unconventional war, the so-called Islamic State have made terrorism even more comprehensive. Their ambition has grown to such an extent that they aim to establish a caliphate based upon terrorist ideologies over the territory they seize from independent states.

Given the scale of its expansion, the so-called Islamic State has become synonymous with religious terrorism in the modern world and public consciousness, even though other organizations have also resorted to this type of terrorism.

The world's increasing social imbalance and myriad socio-political upheavals and socio-economic crises are accompanied by a growing trend towards nihilism in society. It is becoming ever clearer that there is a need to compensate for spiritual starvation. This need has been instrumentalized by different terrorist groups in the guise of religious or non-governmental organizations in order to radicalize vulnerable and dissatisfied people. For this purpose, terrorist groups compound the impact upon society of major terrorist attacks by bringing into play methods of political management. When the collective consciousness is under their influence, they begin to manipulate society itself.

Terrorist organizations use children and adults in propaganda videos and publications, including those recently released by the Islamic State.

A large part of this propaganda is devoted to publicizing violent executions in which children are the executioners. Recent Islamic State propaganda has shown dozens of such children as well as training and field exercises.

Kidnapping is the main method used to force children and young people living in Islamic State-controlled areas to join terrorist groups. However, the Islamic State also systematically engages in

psychological coercion by oppression and ideological-religious indoctrination from an early age. In areas controlled by terrorists, it is also common for children and young people to join extremist groups out of fear for the terrorists themselves [11].

Even though recruiting through kidnapping has become a focus of study, the subject is not on the agenda currently. The tactic of using children has been employed by the PLO, Hamas, Al-Qaeda, LTTE (the “Tamil Tigers”), Al-Shabab, and others. The first American soldier to be killed in Afghanistan, for example, was shot by a 14-year-old child sniper [12], and in 2009 Boko Haram in Nigeria recruited around 8,000 children [13]. According to the UN, in 2015 the Islamic State in Syria recruited 274 children and had 124 boys between the ages of 10 and 15 undergoing military training (ibid.,).

In 2014, the so-called Islamic State abducted 800-900 children, and in September 2015 over 1,000 from the city of Mosul (ibid.,). Battles with ISIS in 2015-2016 led to the death of 89 children from Iraq and Syria. Of course, there were children from Australia, France, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Great Britain (including Northern Ireland), and Yemen as well. (ibid.,).

It should be emphasized that these figures do not include children who had joined Islamic State with their parents or with their permission.

**Terrorist organizations not only use children and young people for ongoing tasks but also as a future means or channel for the propagation of radical ideas and the realization of their long-term plans for their own survival and expansion as a terrorist group.**

The leaders of radical terrorist groups believe that children who, from an early age, grow up under psychological and religious pressure will become more accomplished and ruthless fighters compared to current terrorists.

Minors can be involved in terrorist or extremist groups in different ways: kidnapping, human

trafficking, forced or voluntary recruitment, being born into an extremist environment, etc. That said, most are the victims of kidnappings, trafficking and violent recruitment.

Children and young people, including those who volunteer, are vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist organizations for several reasons:

### **The Prospect of Honour, i.e. Forging a Reputation and Earning the Respect of their Peers**

Being under the ideological influence of the group can lead to vulnerability towards extremist propaganda. Youngsters are particularly vulnerable to terrorist narratives, and although the vast majority of propaganda is communicated through public media, it is also noteworthy that even educational institutions sometimes encourage the promotion of radicalization [14].

According to available information, the Al-Shabaab group actively employs Islamic schools (madrasas) to recruit children. Equally notable in this regard is the fact that the Islamic State’s educational system is based upon indoctrination: through a well-organized ‘educational’ system based upon religious propaganda, the indoctrination of children begins in schools and is then intensified in special camps in which children aged 10-15 are introduced to Sharia law and military training. During their studies, they develop a radical worldview and specific skills to serve the cause of ‘global jihad’.

The curriculum in Islamic State-controlled primary schools does not include disciplines such as painting, music, philosophy or literature; instead, children are intensively taught the Koran and so-called ‘jihadist training’, which includes the use of firearms and explosives. In addition, some extremist schools (madrasas) operate beyond the borders of Syria and Iraq with the support of Islamic State followers and supporters.

The focal textbook is *I am Muslim*. Course materials are illustrated with pictures of hand

grenades, tanks, and tactical positions to link education with the Islamic State's military strategy [15]. This 'curriculum' synthesizes three elements:

- Theory: identifying different types of weapons and the situations in which they are best deployed.
- Ideology: the key focus being 'Us against Them'.
- Physical strength: endurance, obedience, and planned action (ibid.,).

Some aspects of the course show trainees that violence and beheadings are an integral part of daily life. A video shared across a social network notably showed a child being taught to first behead a toy before progressing to real people; its instructor also instilled in it a sense of belonging to the terrorist group, with its family in second place.

### **Personal Connections, Including Family and Friends, as well as the Influence of Social Networks**

Extremist groups use both open (social networks) and closed (individual selection) sources to recruit new members, the latter case involving family ties, peer networks, and social institutions (including schools). Many people are recruited out of sympathy for family members, or believe that membership will help them to protect their own families, community, or society. Most of the minors in extremist groups operating in Africa are involved in groups with the support of friends or acquaintances [14].

We should include in this category women and children who were automatically associated with extremist activities when their husband or father voluntarily joined a terrorist group.

### **Their Real (or Perceived) Social, Political, or Economic Marginalization or Exclusion**

It is noteworthy that one of the main factors behind the radicalization of young people may be the

frustration some of them experience, even when educated (ibid.,).

According to some studies, more educated people are involved in terrorism than those whose education is incomplete. When socially and politically marginalized, young people feel excluded from their community, and this appears to be a determining factor behind their involvement in a terrorist organization. In some cases, terrorist organizations offer them an alternative space to participate in various social, political or economic processes.

### **The Probability of Economic Benefit or Long-Term Economic Stability**

Economic factors and recruitment are intertwined processes, but according to research carried out in the Middle East and North Africa, economic factors are only rarely the main cause of radicalization and recruitment: in Jordan, for example, economic benefit was apparently far from the minds of those who joined Al Nusra – a group affiliated with the Islamic State and Al Qaeda. In North Africa, on the other hand, economic benefit is a defining factor among those who join Boko Haram or Al Shabaab, and these groups actively profit from the lack of job opportunities and the promise of free 'education' to encourage recruitment (ibid.,).

### **Geographical Proximity to Conflict**

Proximity to a conflict is one of the most vital risk factors for both forced and voluntary terrorist recruitment, perhaps the best examples of which are the mass kidnappings carried out by Boko Haram. This latter phenomenon also involves young people in politics: Boko Haram's attacks and kidnappings encourage young people to join armed groups opposed to the terrorists (Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger). It is worth mentioning that over half of former members of Boko Haram stated that they owned a business, and that they had been motivated to join the group by the guarantees and financial benefits they could hope to receive for their

business. They therefore saw membership of Boko Haram as a promise of a better economic future (ibid.).

### **The Search for a Group Identity through the Fulfilment of Ideological, Social and Religious Obligations**

With the loss of its territories, ISIS has intensified its deployment of armed children on the front lines, and the deaths of 89 Islamic State fighters between 1 January 2015 and 31 January 2016 reveal the following: 51% died in Iraq and 36% in Syria; 31% of the dead were Syrians, 11% were Iraqis and 25% were dual Syrian-Iraqi citizens; 33% of those killed were children from Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Libya, Britain, France, Australia and Nigeria [16].

Young Islamic State fighters who have returned to their countries of origin or have migrated to various Western states are slow-acting bombs, the jihadists of the future.

According to a 2018 report by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), 12% of the 41,490 international citizens from 80 countries affiliated with IS in Iraq and Syria were minors. Only 26 of these countries provided reliable information [17]. A total of 1,460-1,525 adolescents returned to their home countries from Syria and Iraq, accounting for 20% of returnees. Between April 2013 and June 2018, approximately 730 children were born in IS-controlled areas to families of foreign fighters ('unverified estimates' put their number at over 5,000) (ibid.). At present, around 12,000 foreigners (4,000 women and 8,000 children) are being held in refugee camps in north-eastern Syria. In May 2019, 73,000 people were living in the Al Hawl Camp alone, 90% of whom were women and children (ibid.).

Given these figures, it is important that the UN make available official data on the number of child migrants in Western countries having travelled from regions and states that have suffered the most as a result of terrorist attacks.

According to the 2019 data [18]:

In 2019, the total number of migrant children was 202,945 – a 6% increase over 2018.

Syria is the main country of origin of migrants and asylum seekers (21%). In terms of countries of registration, the data is the following:

- Afghanistan 11%,
- Iraq 7%,
- Venezuela 4%,
- Eritrea 4%,
- Nigeria, Turkey, Colombia and Albania 3% (ibid.).

Germany remains the most attractive destination, accounting for 35% of migrants; followed by

- France: 13% (26,160 children),
- Greece: 12% (25,165 children),
- Spain: 11% (21,715 children),
- UK: 5% (10,295 children) [18].

### **Conclusion**

In light of the above consideration, it can be said that the future of international terrorism is real. A child is born to discover the world; he asks questions to get information, which in turn helps him in the formation of his worldview. Along with the physical development of a child, his psyche develops and improves as well. A negative impact during this period leads to a damaged psyche and development of various complexes, which for its part contribute to the formation of the wrong vision of the world.

Given facts in this research indicate that some children are under the influence of international terrorism. Meanwhile, we should not forget that more and more children are affected by a virtual world full of violent content. The virtual world is so close to the real world that often it becomes quite difficult for children to realize where the line goes between them. This ultimately turns a child into an oppressor and makes him vulnerable for the international terrorism.

Based on the aforementioned it would be good if the civilized world started to study the above

mentioned issues more actively and worked in a coordinated manner to combat given challenges. International organizations should comprehensively study possible factors of the involvement of children in terrorism in risk countries. A definite strategy should be developed against the integration of children and adolescents into terrorist organizations; we should also determine the age and sex, strengthen social programs, conduct awareness-raising trainings in educational institutions as well as with families and staff engaged with children.

Furthermore, we should develop special security programs for educational institutions, use social networks and television to prevent misinformation and provide correct information to

children, also conduct targeted monitoring of cyberspace to stop programs and games with violent content.

At the same time, further attention should be paid to the description of children in areas affected by terrorism as well as to the monitoring of their migration. In case of the migration of the above children, they should be watched and monitored unnoticed by the relevant state agencies and non-governmental organizations of recipient countries, for instance what environment they continue to live in, who they are friends with, what their interests are and, finally, it is vitally important to develop social programs to adapt children and to further integrate them into a healthy environment.

*სამართალი*

## ბავშვების შესაძლო გამოყენება საერთაშორისო ტერორიზმში

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ტერორიზმისგან მომდინარე საფრთხეები საერთაშორისო უსაფრთხოების ერთ-ერთ წამყვან გამოწვევად დარჩება. წინამდებარე ნაშრომი ახდენს ისეთი მნიშვნელოვანი ფაქტორების იდენტიფიცირებას, როგორცაა მაღალი ტექნოლოგიების გამოყენებით კიბერტერორიზმისა და რელიგიური ტერორიზმის შესაძლო გავლენა ახალგაზრდა თაობაზე. თანამედროვე ტერორიზმის კვლევა გვამღვებს იმის თქმის საშუალებას, რომ ტერორისტთა ასაკი კლებულობს. შეიმჩნევა ტერორისტული ორგანიზაციების დაინტერესება ახალგაზრდა თაობით. აღნიშნული განპირობებულია რამდენიმე ფაქტორით, უპირველესად მომავალში გავლენის გაზრდით, ასევე იმ გარემოებით, რომ მცირეწლოვანთა ფსიქიკა საკმაოდ მყიფეა, შესაბამისად მასზე ზეგავლენის მოხდენა ადვილია. დღეს ტერორისტული ორგანიზაციები დიდ რესურსებს იყენებენ ბავშვების მომავალ ტერორისტებად ჩამოყალიბებაში. მათ კარგად აქვთ გააზრებული მაღალი ტექნოლოგიების შესაძლებლობები ტერორისტულ საქმიანობაში. წინამდებარე ნაშრომის მიზანია, გაანალიზდეს და შეფასდეს ზემოთმოყვანილი ფაქტორები, რაც საშუალებას მისცემს ცივილიზებულ სამყაროს სწორ ჭრილში დაინახოს მის წინაშე არსებული გამოწვევები. ნაშრომში ყურადღება გამახვილებულია ტერორიზმის ჭრილში ბავშვებისა და ახალგაზრდა თაობის კიბერდამოკიდებულებასა და მის შესაძლო უარყოფით გავლენაზე. ტერორისტული დაჯგუფებების მხრიდან მომავალ თაობაზე ორიენტირებულმა სტრატეგიამ ბავშვები, როგორც ფსიქოლოგიური, ისე ფიზიკური ძალადობის მსხვერპლად აქცია, რომელთა შემდგომი ჯანსაღ საზოგადოებაში რეინტეგრაცია უდიდეს გამოწვევად დარჩება. მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ რთულია განისაზღვროს რა მოხდება მომავალში, სწორად ჩატარებული კვლევები პროგნოზის გაკეთების საშუალებას იძლევა. რადგან თაობათა ცვლის ციკლი შეუქცევადი პროცესია, ტერორიზმის შესწავლა მომავალი თაობის ჭრილში გახდის შესაძლებელს განისაზღვროს რა ტიპის გამოწვევები დადგება მომავალში დღის წესრიგში.

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