RESEARCH ARTICLE

Youth Policy And The Development of Quality Education As Factors In Reducing The Level of Radicalization In Society

La política de juventud y el desarrollo de una educación de calidad como factores para reducir el nivel de radicalización de la sociedad

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Summary

The article is devoted to the consideration of youth and youth policy as factors of terrorism in the 21st century. The authors have identified factors that increase the effectiveness of recruiters of terrorist organizations in attracting young people, as well as formulated and justified the principles of improving the effectiveness of youth policy in the framework of anti-terrorist activities of the authorities. According to the authors, an important factor in the radicalization of young people is the low level of education in the country. The authors draw attention to the fact that the low level of education does not create opportunities for the development of young people. This, in turn, leads to a radicalization of the relationship between the authorities and students. If graduates are unable to find jobs that meet their expectations, then the risk of radicalization of young people increases. A good education not only allows the state to train qualified specialists, which effectively affects the social and economic development of society. Specialists in demand do not belong to social groups prone to violent and radical actions in relation to other citizens, both within the country and abroad. Therefore, it is necessary, on the one hand, to develop educational programs that allow college and university graduates to be in demand in the labor market, constantly improve their skills, and increase the level of knowledge. On the other hand, it is necessary to develop students' skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, respect for the institutions of society, and skills in solving social and professional problems.

Keywords: Youth, Youth Policy, State, Terrorism, Radicalization.

Introduction

The number of young people in the world in the past 15-25 years has been at a record high. According to the UN, this is more than 30% of the world's population. This demographic "youth bulge" is unparalleled and is further compounded by the fact that 85% of all young people live in underdeveloped countries and areas, mainly in Africa and the Middle East, where terrorist activities are gaining momentum. In most countries where terrorist organizations (ISIL, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al-Shabab, etc.) operate today, young people make up more than half of society. In this regard, experts and scholars have been identifying the causes of the active radicalization of young people for a long time. They establish a causal link in the life history of those who committed or planned terrorist acts in recent years, left the European continent or the United States to join terrorist organizations, and were suspected of wanting to become a terrorist.

Most of today's young people are left to their interests and have almost no opportunity to show civic activity, participate in political activities, manage society, engage in entrepreneurship, or find a job following their desires, needs, and interests (Flanagan, Levine: 2010; Flanagan, Christens: 2011; Henn, Foard: 2014; Shaw et al.: 2014; Zelenkov et al.: 2020).

Historically, revolutions tend to occur in countries with a predominantly young population. M. Musaelyan (2010) emphasizes that "the bulk of people in terrorist and extremist organizations are teenagers from 14 to 18 years old, and these young people can be not only performers but also leaders of extreme right-wing cells". For example, according to the South Africa Foundation, at least 70% of young people in 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa are concerned about the growing influence of terrorism in their region and the increased interest of terrorist organizations in their persons (Quenum: 2020). This influence resulted in, for example, the actions of a 12-year-old child born in Germany to a family from Iraq, who tried to commit two terrorist attacks in December 2016 in Ludwigshafen (Le Parisien: 2016). The first attack failed because of a technical defect in the explosive device, and the second attack did not take place because the child did not perform religious actions before the attack (Klenk: 2018). This detail demonstrates the power of faith, even for a 12-year-old. In Denmark, a minor citizen who

converted to Islam was sentenced in November 2017 to prison for planning attacks on a Jewish school in Copenhagen. The investigation revealed that the girl left many traces of her commitment to the ideology of ISIL, trying to contact officials through social networks (RTL: 2017).

As Russian historian R. Landa notes, "the most important key to the success of fundamentalists is their reliance on young people. They managed to win support from traditional sports clubs, popular among young men. Later, they also began to study the Qur'an and the works of Muslim leaders under the guidance of mullahs" (Landa: 1995).

The results of sociological research also serve as proof of the relevance of the problem. Thus, in 2001, the Islamic University of Gaza "surveyed 1,000 local young people aged 9-16 and found that 45% of students were actively involved in violence, and 73% would have liked to become martyrs" (LIKOED: 2003). A study of students from Mut University, Jordan, found that their radical worldviews and beliefs were heavily focused on the ideas of martyrdom, violence, hatred, and jihad. Scholars note the fruitful and engaging nature of students, as they can be easily molded to become frontline activists for conscious social change, as this age group is made up of "identity seekers, defenders, and rebels with formidable energy" (Ghosh et al.: 2016). According to a Population Action International report, 80% of civil conflicts between 1970 and 1999 occurred in countries where more than 60% of the population was under 30 years of age (Beehner: 2007).

In such circumstances, if the interests of young people are ignored, they threaten a stable civil society and find their greatest manifestations in the growth of drug addiction and violence and the drift of disenfranchised youth to terrorist activities. Against this background, terrorist groups, through their propaganda, increase the frustration of those young people unable to realize their legitimate ambitions and thus create fertile ground for them to decide that terrorism is the only sure way to change their political, spiritual, and socioeconomic status (Zelenkov et al.: 2020). Based on this, the research hypothesizes that the effectiveness of recruiters of terrorist organizations is directly dependent on the effectiveness of youth policy and the level of education of young people.

Methods

The methodological basis of the study was a system-complex and factor analysis, which made it possible to identify and characterize the roles of youth and youth policy in the system of modern terrorism. The epistemological potential of statistical and sociological methods of quantitative and qualitative research allowed us to adequately identify modern youth as the main source of human resources for terrorist organizations. The novelty of the work and its results are determined by an original approach to identifying the dependence between the effectiveness of youth policy and the activities of recruiters of terrorist organizations to attract new members to their ranks.

Results

Several fundamental factors can be identified that make today's young people extremely vulnerable to recruitment into terrorist organizations and, therefore, are the basic objects of youth policy (Fig. 1).

Figure (1): Fundamental factors of radicalization of modern youth

Society
Ideology
Economic marginalization
Mental health
Identity
Family and peers

Fundamental factors of radicalization of modern youth
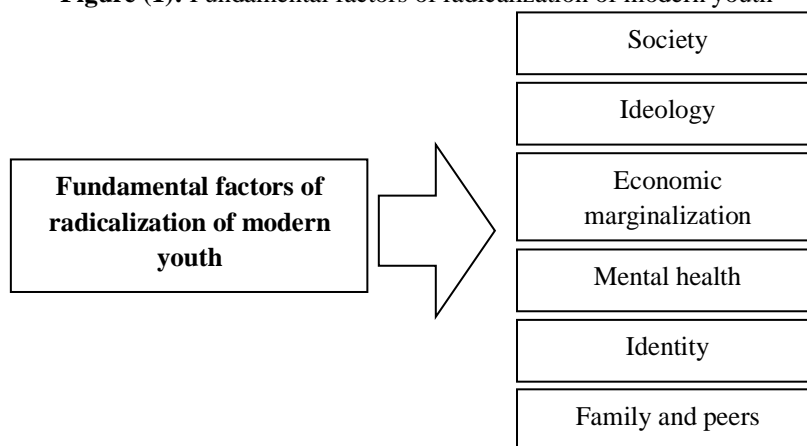
Let us reveal the essence and mechanism of the influence of these factors on youth and the effectiveness of youth policy.

1. Society. Modern society in many countries is increasingly atomized, and in this kind of society, only successful people can be self-confident and individualistic. This is because, in conditions of social heterogeneity, such factors as the low level of school and university education and the high level of crime in the area of residence, as well as the presence of places of deployment of terrorist organizations and weapon and drug dealers, become catalysts for the radicalization of young people. With this in mind, terrorists offer young people the opportunity to express themselves and fight for what they see as civil rights by taking on a perceived unfair system wherever they live.

2. Ideology. Ideology is a complex concept and, therefore, needs to be handled with much greater care than is often the case in practice. This is because young people recognize the truth and orientation that reveal and explain to them the meaning of life. The content of jihadist ideologies that divide the world into good and evil, right and wrong gives young people the necessary orientation and instills a sense that they can control their lives.

3. Identity. Confidence in belonging to the right group and in the right way has a stabilizing effect on the consciousness of young people, especially those who are characterized by complex life stories and lack of self-confidence. Based on an alienated biography, young people in a radical group gain a self-reinforcing identity. The idea that one belongs to an exclusive secret group with a peculiar form or worldview and a high mission against the evil forces of the world is tempting for them. Not having achieved success in this life, young people look for a completely new identity and do not want to have anything to do with their past activities. They want a complete change, especially in appearance (clothing, hairstyle, facial hair, etc.), language, and culture. Having become a member of a radical group, the individual feels safe, because everyone is around them. Everything seems clear and obvious, the rules are understandable, and the truths are simple.

4. Economic marginalization. Most terrorist acts are committed by individuals from the poorest regions. Scholars and experts have long established a critical link between unemployment and the increased participation of young people in terrorist activities.

5. Mental health. Poor mental health is a basic factor contributing to the radicalization of young people. The main reasons for this are the vulnerability of the psyche, the experience of violence, asocial disorder of the individual, alcohol dependence, drug addiction, suicidal tendencies, psychosis, neurosis, and depression. Weak behavioral self-control, impulsivity, hyperactivity, attention problems, low IQ, and low achievements in school and university do not allow a young person to correctly assess the information received from recruiters of terrorist organizations, and they fall into cleverly placed networks.

6. Family and peers. Community and family disorders are the driving forces of terrorism. The presence of small social groups to which the individual belongs, antisocial friends and peers, low socioeconomic status of the family, its low cohesion and lack of attachment to members, parental conflict in the family or parental divorce in early childhood of the individual, severe physical punishment in respect of an individual or physical violence on the part of parents, and weak parental control enhance the propaganda effect of terrorist propaganda.

Thus, the study also showed that the most susceptible to the adoption of terrorist ideologies are young people aged 15 to 25 years, who are at the age of development, forming their traits, strengthening self-confidence, and seeking the meaning of their lives. This age group is very much focused on practical actions rather than theory and is usually characterized by higher risk.

We believe that an increase in the effectiveness of youth policy can be achieved if it is implemented based on the following principles:

– *security*: for the implementation of youth policy, adequate funds are needed (financial, material, etc.);

– *participation*: direct developers of youth policy – youth representatives supervised by state and local authorities;

– *continuity*: youth policy should have a long-term strategy;

– *personification*: youth policy should have a specific target audience, aimed to solve the main problems of young people.

Discussion

No theoretical model explains why a young person takes the path of terrorism. The analysis of scientific literature, conducted by Professor F. Glowacz (2020), shows that scholars mostly pay attention to psychological and social vulnerability, associated with the risk of violent radicalization (Campelo et al.: 2018; Ludot et al.: 2016). Thus, in particular, the model by F.M. Moghaddam (2005) defines the perception of injustice and "the lack of legal opportunities to combat this injustice" as the beginning of the process of radicalization. Q. Wiktorowicz's research (Wiktorowicz: 2005) combines the individual and social factors underlying the subject's susceptibility to new ideas and perceptions of the world and highlights the role that social influences play in moving a person towards a radicalized group, establishing the state of crisis in which the subject is to be receptive to it. A.W. Kruglanski's model (Kruglanski: 2014) focuses on the search for meaning (conceptualized as the fundamental desire to gain respect or "count for something" and "be someone"), which increases the likelihood of adopting extreme behavior. F. Glovacz (2019), having conducted a psychological and criminological analysis of criminalized minors, proposed a model illustrating the articulation of various components and the activation of radicalization through intermediaries who advocate for an imposed ideology (which, in particular, can be transmitted through social networks) and group dynamics leading to the adherence and commitment of young people to the ideology and actions of terrorist organizations.

Numerous studies prove that relying on profiles of ethnic, religious, or other identities means further alienating young people and arousing feelings of hatred and discontent in them. C. Kinnvall (2006) argues that people seek one stable identity (regardless of its actual existence) to achieve biographical continuity in the context of the uncertain and confusing flow of globalization.

Today young people do not care about old traditions; they are idealists and crave creativity, looking for a social identity that can lead them to fame. Thus, in his work on the reaction of youth to the war in Iraq, K. Horschelmann (2008) calls for greater recognition of young people as politicians who participate in "creating, negotiating, and opposing global politics". Scientific works have repeatedly proved that if young people are unable to realize their legitimate ambitions (Horschelmann: 2008) they become disillusioned with life, which is what recruiters of terrorist organizations use (Zelenkov: 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). This process is most actively influenced by civic attitudes, beliefs, and skills developed in chi;ldhoodand adolescence (Finlay et al.: 2010). As one youth leader in Lebanon noted, "Recruiters use politics in their tactics to convince young people of alienation from the state". In his opinion, governments and non-governmental organizations should better tackle the problem of counterterrorism with programs and policies that increase hope and trust, rather than fear, for example, through the creation of jobs, the provision of social services, and involvement in civic communities (Norman, Mikhael: 2017).

V.A. Kapranov believes that "It is a mistake to assert that young people are progressive by nature. After all, conservative and reactionary movements can also attract young people. Young people are neither progressive nor conservative by nature – they are ready for any undertaking. Being young means standing on the edge of society, being an outsider in many ways" (Kapranov: 2009). Research shows that young people need to be given opportunities to identify problems and priorities, think about and advocate for solutions to social problems, and contribute to the common good (Chaskin et al.: 2018a, 2018b). That is why encouraging the participation of young people in the communities and contexts in which they live and build their capacity as social actors can support their positive development as individuals, enhance their future role as citizensб and help ensure a better response to their needs (Flanagan: 2013; Sherrod et al.: 2010; Yates, Youniss: 1999).

The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (Israel) conducted a study that examined the characteristics of terrorists who carried out attacks in Judea and Samaria (September 14 – November 15, 2015). The analysis of the results allows deducing the fundamental features of young terrorists: a Palestinian, usually a man, unmarried between the ages of 22 and 26 (sometimes 16 to 20), usually unemployed, without experience in terrorist activities, but belongs to one of the terrorist organizations; a terrorist attack is carried out alone without instructions from higher-ups and sometimes without the knowledge of the family under the influence of national and religious motives, frustration, desire for fame, as well as strong incitement in the media and on a Palestinian street (Israel Ministry og Foreign Affairs: 2015).

The analysis of scientific works shows that it is possible to distinguish various elements of the system of factors that most actively contribute to the growth of violence in the minds of young people. Thus, L. Beehner (2007) highlights factors such as rapid urbanization, high expectations among young people looking for work, and environmental stresses.

It is worth paying special attention to the factor of rapid urbanization. Over the past two decades, the world's urban population has grown to an unimaginable level, and the rural population is sharply declining (United Nations: 2014). In 2015, 53% of the world's population lived in urban areas (Population Reference Bureau: 2015), and it is estimated that by 2050 it will be 69% (Zubairu: 2017). Against the background of the growing urban population, especially in developing countries, and the lack of infrastructure, resources, or jobs, black market activity increases dramatically, which, in turn, often contributes to the formation of groups and paramilitary groups (Beehner: 2007).

The migrant policy also plays an important role in urbanization. According to Eurostat, the number of migrants in the EU countries has been increasing since 2014, and over the past 25 years has reached the figure of 627 thousand people per year. According to the OECD, this

number is 783 thousand people. In 2015, from 1 to 1.8 million people arrived in the EU, 1.2 million in 2016, and 1.3 million in 2018. The largest number of migrants came to France, Austria, Italy, Sweden, Hungary, and Germany. The total increase in the number of refugees in Europe between 2008 and 2015 was 278% (Tarasov: 2021). As a rule, these are young people without high-quality education and professions.

It is legitimate to talk about education as one of the factors of the radicalization of young people. In this regard, let us turn to the S. De Silva report entitled "The role of education in preventing violent extremism", which argues that young people are often the most targeted and at risk of radicalization because "education can be used to both radicalize and de-radicalize young people". After graduation, newly qualified workers shall have employment opportunities, since unemployed graduates of educational institutions are at a higher risk of radicalization if they are denied employment (De Silva: n.d). The opinion of B. Auza, a permanent observer from the Holy See at the UN in New York, is coherent in this regard: "The importance of shaping the head and heart cannot be overestimated, since a good education gives people, especially young people, a critical ability to evaluate destructive speech and demagogic calls and also the confidence that they, as citizens, proclaim to others in their constructive messages" (ONU: n.d).

Today's youth have a gap in basic skills, such as creative and independent thinking and problem-solving and initial, as well as in industry and functional, skills, including due to low levels of technical and vocational education and training. This gap can become a driving force for terrorist recruitment, as the recruiter can provide training, for example, first in trading skills and then in terrorist activities.

Conclusion

Thus, traditional youth strategies of state governments aimed to strengthen national security measures often further alienate and deprive young people who feel that they are under the supervision of the authorities of the right to vote. Excessive policing of public space, frequent interrogations and detentions of young people, and rhetorics from government officials and the media that fuels the narrative of demographic "dangerous youth" only further pushes alienated youth to the sidelines. This allows us to claim that our hypothesis has been confirmed.

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