

Formation of The Terrorist's Personality: Mechanisms of Socio-Anthropological and Psychological Transformation

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Abstract: This article analyzes the phenomenon of terrorism from socio-philosophical and anthropological perspectives within the context of the human factor. The necessity of studying the terrorist's personality not as a ready-made psychological or pathological type, but as a subject formed under the influence of a specific social environment, ideological influence, group relations, personal experience, and socialization processes, is substantiated. The historical and scientific content of the concept of "terrorist", its political and ideological interpretations are considered, while the anthropology of terrorism focuses on the issue of involving an individual in terrorist activities. In the process of a terrorist's personality radicalization, their identity, value system, moral criteria, life meaning, and the transformation of their sense of belonging to a group are analyzed. Special attention is also paid to the mechanisms of resocialization within a terrorist organization, the mastery of group roles, the adoption of political and ideological goals as personal goals, and the moral justification of violence. Based on the analysis of scientific approaches, it is substantiated that there is no single universal psychological model of a terrorist personality, and terrorist activity is formed as a result of the interaction of individual, social, ideological, and group factors.

Keywords: Terrorism, terrorist personality, anthropology of terrorism, radicalization, socialization, resocialization, social identity, ideological influence, transformation of values, group identity, moral justification, political motivation, violence.

Introduction: The socio-philosophical and anthropological study of the phenomenon of terrorism is not limited to studying its external manifestations, ideological foundations, or political goals. Because at the center of any terrorist act is a specific person, their consciousness, values, identity, and social experience. Therefore, in modern anthropology of terrorism, the object of study shifts from the external appearance of a terrorist act to the process of forming the personality that commits it.

From this perspective, the object of research in the anthropology of terrorism is not the terrorist act itself, but the social being, worldview, value system, and the process of radicalization of the perpetrator. Because a terrorist act is formed as a result of socialization, identity, attitudes toward ideological influences, and interaction with a specific individual's social

environment. Therefore, before analyzing the anthropological model of the terrorist personality, it is necessary to define the scientific content of the concept of "terrorist".

METHOD

"Terrorist" as a political term was primarily applied to Jacobins and their supporters during the French Revolution, especially those associated with Revolutionary Tribunals during the "Reign of Terror". Later, it began to be used in relation to individuals seeking to implement their views through methods of intimidation and coercion [1, – P. 2].

From this definition, it is evident that the term "terrorist" was originally used to denote a specific historical-political reality, and over time, its content expanded and became a general scientific concept regarding individuals seeking to achieve political goals

through intimidation and violence. Therefore, in modern research on terrorism, this term signifies not only a representative of a specific historical period or political movement, but also a person who uses violence and fear as a means to achieve specific ideological goals.

One of the most complex issues in the scientific and legal definition of terrorism is that the content of the term “terrorist” is interpreted differently under the influence of different political and ideological approaches. In practice, the same action or the same person can be evaluated in completely different ways. This shows that the concept of terrorism is used in most cases under the influence of political positions rather than objective legal criteria. From this point of view,

B. Ganor puts forward the following important idea: “Persons who have committed a certain attack can be simultaneously called by different subjects by the terms “terrorists”, “partisans”, “freedom fighters”, “revolutionaries”, and others”. This shows that evaluation depends not on the event itself, but on the point of view and interests of the evaluation subject [2, – P. 5]. Consequently, the term “terrorist” is used in many cases not depending on objective scientific criteria, but depending on political interests and the point of view of the evaluation subject.

As noted in Alex P. Schmidt's work “The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research”, the term “terrorist” is one of the most ideologized concepts in political vocabulary. Very few terrorists use the term “terrorist” to describe themselves. Usually, they prefer to call themselves “revolutionaries”, “freedom fighters”, “martyrs”, “city partisans”, “resistance participants”, or even “soldiers” [3, – P. 40].

These approaches demonstrate the use of the term “terrorist” as a tool for legal or political assessment, which is insufficient for the anthropology of terrorism. The main object of scientific analysis is not what a person is called, but how they were involved in terrorist activities and under the influence of which social and psychological processes they became terrorists. Therefore, in the anthropology of terrorism, attention is focused not on the question “who is a terrorist?”, but on the question “how does a person become a terrorist?”.

Is a person born a terrorist or becomes one? In modern anthropology of terrorism, this issue is one of the most important scientific discussions. Because terrorist acts do not arise by chance or on their own. They are expressed through human activity formed under the influence of a certain social environment, ideological influence, personal life experience, and changes in the value system. Consequently, to deeply understand the

phenomenon of terrorism, it is necessary to analyze what socialization process a terrorist person has undergone, and what factors have influenced their consciousness, identity, and worldview.

John Horgan also shares this view. He emphasizes that when explaining the causes of terrorism, it is not enough to limit oneself to the question “why?” and argues that the question “how?” is of greater scientific importance. In his opinion, “the search for the root causes of terrorism is primarily aimed at answering the question: “why does a person become a terrorist?” However, in practice, the question “How is a person involved in terrorism?” allows for a much more precise understanding of the factors influencing a person's involvement in terrorist activities” [4, – P. 73].

This approach indicates the need to analyze terrorism not only as a consequence or event but also as a product of changes occurring in the socialization, value system, motivation, and identity of the individual. In this sense, the anthropological analysis of the terrorist's personality serves to reveal not the external forms of terrorism's manifestation, but the human factor that generates it and the mechanisms of its formation.

The formation of a terrorist personality does not end with the adoption of a certain radical idea or joining a terrorist organization. Conversely, after being involved in terrorist activities, a person undergoes a process of resocialization under the influence of the organization's internal structure, distribution of duties, organizational discipline, and group relations. In such an environment, an individual decision is increasingly combined with group goals, organizational requirements, and political-ideological tasks. Therefore, it is insufficient to explain a terrorist's behavior in isolation from the social and organizational context that shaped it. As J. Horgan notes, “Terrorist events also occur not in space, but within the framework of social, political, and organizational structures. All these factors can influence the nature, direction, and scale of a specific terrorist act” [4, – P. 94].

This opinion demonstrates that the nature and direction of a terrorist act are determined not only by personal motives. The decisions of a terrorist person are formed under the influence of the internal order, leadership mechanism, distribution of duties, and certain political and social conditions of the group to which they belong. Consequently, in the anthropological study of the terrorist personality, alongside individual motivation, it is necessary to consider the processes of their entry into organizational environments, mastery of group roles,

and gradual adaptation to violent practices.

J. Horgan interprets involvement in terrorism not as a specific psychological characteristic of the individual, but as a gradual social process. This approach in the anthropology of terrorism allows for understanding how an individual under the influence of a radical environment restructures their values, identity, and life goals.

Jerrold M. Post, developing this approach, notes that there is no single psychological model for terrorists. In his opinion, the diversity of factors leading to terrorism means that the process of forming the personality of each terrorist also proceeds differently. From this perspective, he asserts the following: "Since the causes leading to terrorism are diverse, it is scientifically unfounded to believe that there is a unified psychological model or a universal terrorist psychology inherent to all terrorists" [5, – P. 6].

D.V. Olshansky notes that for a person involved in terrorism, the status of life as the highest value gradually changes, and its place is taken by absolute devotion to an idea, ideology, or organization. In his opinion, renouncing property and private property ultimately leads to renouncing life. If a person perceives their life as their own property, it becomes possible to risk it, evaluate it as a "pledge", "exchange" it for the life of a terrorist victim, sacrifice it for a certain idea, or even sacrifice it as a "sign of protest" [6, – P. 112].

This thought, from the perspective of the anthropology of terrorism, signifies that a transformation of the anthropological and moral value of life occurs within the terrorist's personality. A person begins to perceive their life not as an independent value, but as a means serving a specific idea or goal. As a result, self-sacrifice or an attempt on the life of others is formed in the mind of a person not as an unnatural, but as a morally justified action.

Olshansky links another important change in the consciousness of a person involved in terrorism to the restructuring of their moral criteria. He emphasized: "Terrorists also seek moral grounds for their actions. Sometimes they come to such a complex and false logic that they believe that by destroying someone's body, they are saving their soul" [6, – P. 104].

This approach is important for the anthropology of terrorism. Because here, violence manifests not as a common crime, but as an action morally reinterpreted by the individual. In this case, the terrorist perceives their actions not as a crime, but as a virtue, a duty, or the fulfillment of a sacred mission. Thus, radical ideology changes a person's value system, restructures their moral evaluation mechanisms, and transforms

terrorism into a socio-anthropological phenomenon that harmoniously combines with personal convictions.

According to Olshansky, the formation of a terrorist's personality is not limited solely to changing the value system or morally justifying violence. To systematize the psychological transformations occurring in the mind of a person involved in terrorism, the author conventionally describes them using models such as "zombie syndrome", "Rambo syndrome", and "Kamikadze-martyr syndrome". These models are not independent states, but rather various psychological and anthropological manifestations of personality in the process of radicalization.

The author argues that a person with "zombie syndrome" tends to live in an atmosphere of constant confrontation and enmity and cannot perceive a state of rest as a natural social environment. "Rambo syndrome" is characterized by the formation of a missionary spirit in a terrorist. In this case, violence is interpreted not as a means of personal gain, but as a means of implementing a certain "high idea" or "sacred mission". At the highest stage of radicalization, "Kamikaze-martyr syndrome" manifests itself, when a person becomes psychologically ready to sacrifice their life for an ideological goal. Regarding this, D.V. Olshansky writes the following: "An important psychological feature of the "Kamikadze-martyr syndrome" is a person's readiness for extremely high self-sacrifice, reaching the level of sacrificing their life" [6, – P. 108].

This approach, from the perspective of the anthropology of terrorism, demonstrates that the process of radicalization occurs not with specific psychological characteristics of the individual, but with the consistent transformation of their identity, value system, moral criteria, and life meaning. The Zombie, Rambo, and Kamikaze models represent different stages of this transformation. In this sense, this typology proposed by Olshansky allows for the understanding of terrorism not only as an act of violence but also as a result of deep anthropological changes occurring in human consciousness, values, and social existence.

A.Yu. Pinchuk, analyzing the mechanisms of terrorism ideology's influence on human consciousness and social identity, substantiates that the terrorist's perception of themselves as part of a specific socio-political movement is precisely the result of ideological influence. In this regard, he emphasizes the following: "The ideology of terrorism, as an expression of a specific system of values and beliefs, serves to make terrorists identify themselves as part of a specific socio-political movement. Such self-awareness is explained

by the idea of liberating certain individuals or communities from someone or something. This occurs when they act as “liberators”, “fighters against the regime”, or “jihad fighters” [7, – P. 136].

This approach is important from the perspective of the anthropology of terrorism. Because by joining a terrorist movement, a person not only adopts a specific idea but also restructures their social role and identity. As a result, he begins to perceive himself not as an ordinary criminal, but as a “liberator”, a “fighter for justice”, or an “executor of a sacred mission”.

D.V. Olshansky emphasizes that in the mind of a terrorist, violence is perceived as a morally justified action. Albert Bandura explains the psychological mechanisms of this process in more detail. In his opinion, “people usually convince themselves of their moral correctness before committing harmful acts. Social and moral justification mechanisms sanctify harmful practices, linking them to noble goals. Thus, noble goals serve as a justification for harmful means” [8, – P. 49].

This approach explains that in the mind of a terrorist, violence is perceived not as a criminal act, but as a means of protecting supreme values, fulfilling religious duty, or achieving social justice. From this perspective, the violence used in terrorism is first morally justified, and then perceived by a person as acceptable and even mandatory behavior.

A.Yu. Pinchuk asserts that under the influence of the ideology of terrorism, a person begins to realize that they are part of a specific socio-political movement. This approach shows that it is no coincidence that a terrorist feels as one with a radical group and perceives its goals as their own. The theory of social identity developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner is of significant methodological importance for a deeper understanding of the socio-psychological mechanisms of this process. They argue that social identity is formed as a result of three interrelated processes: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison [9, – P. 37]. In this process, a person begins to perceive themselves as members of a specific group and accept its values, goals, and norms as their personal views.

Such transformation of social identity also directly affects the motivation and decision-making process of the terrorist personality. In this context, Ted Robert Gurr argues that a terrorist links their actions not to personal interests, but to the common goals of the community to which they belong. In his opinion, “killers and terrorists consciously take extremely high risks on the path to a goal they consider a collective interest” [10, – P. 211]. This shows that a terrorist's actions are

determined not by an individual, but by a formed social identity and group interests.

The main idea put forward by Gurr is that a terrorist person perceives their actions not as criminal activity, but as a selfless activity serving collective interests. As a result, personal danger and the likelihood of victims become secondary in the decision-making process, while the collective goal becomes the primary motive.

Hoffman pays special attention to the terrorist's motivation as the most important characteristic of their personality. The scientist asserts that a terrorist pursues a political goal rather than personal wealth or individual interest. He expresses this idea with the words: “a terrorist pursues not only personal, egocentric goals”. He perceives himself as a subject serving the interests of a certain idea, organization, or a broader social group [1, – P. 37].

Hoffman's approach demonstrates that a terrorist's violent actions should be understood not in their personal interests, but through motivational mechanisms serving political and ideological goals. In this regard, a terrorist personality differs from an ordinary criminal not only in the method of action but also in the form of awareness and justification of their actions.

While Bruce Hoffman focuses on the political and ideological motivation of a terrorist as a primary personality trait, Martha Crenshaw deepens this approach from a psychological perspective. He emphasized that evaluating the identity of a terrorist as a specific pathological personality type is not scientifically grounded. According to Crenshaw, “limited data on terrorist individuals show that the most common trait of terrorists is that they are normal people” [11, – P. 390]. This approach shows that terrorism should be understood not only as a result of mental disorders but also as a human activity formed under the influence of certain social, political, and psychological processes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that the anthropological study of the terrorist's personality allows for understanding the phenomenon of terrorism not only as a set of violent actions, political goals, or ideological views, but also as the result of complex social, psychological, and spiritual transformations occurring within the human personality. Analysis shows that a person is not born a terrorist, and there is no single universal psychological type that explains a tendency toward terrorism. On the contrary, involvement in terrorist activities manifests as a gradual process that encompasses personal life experience, social environment, political and ideological influence, group

relations, and changes in identity.

In the process of radicalization, the former values and moral criteria of the individual are reinterpreted, and the place of individual goals is beginning to be taken by the interests of a specific group, organization, or ideological idea. As a result, the individual realizes themselves not as an individual, but as part of a specific socio-political movement. The strengthening of group identity leads to the transformation of organizational goals into personal ones, the relegation of personal risks and sacrifices to the background, and the perception of collective interest as a priority value.

One of the most important transformations in the terrorist's consciousness is the change in their attitude toward human life and violence. Under the influence of radical ideology, human life may lose its status as an independent and supreme value and be interpreted as a means of achieving a specific political, religious, or ideological goal. At the same time, through the mechanisms of moral rupture and justification of violence, a terrorist act is perceived in the human mind not as a crime, but as a "duty", "justice", "freedom", or "sacred mission". This situation shows that alongside ideological influence, changes in the system of moral assessment of the individual play an important role in stabilizing terrorism.

In this sense, effective anti-terrorist prevention should not be limited solely to combating the consequences of a terrorist act. It should be aimed at early identification of social and ideological factors leading an individual to radicalization, reducing negative group influence, forming a healthy social identity, developing critical thinking, and strengthening the value of human life as a supreme value.

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