New Trends Of International Terrorist Activities In Recent Years

Zhibo Nie[1, *], Minle Wang[1], Liqiang Liu[2]

[1]Xi'an Hi Tech Research Institute, Xi'an, China;

[2]Engineering University of Xi'an, Xi'an, China.

E-mail: nerpenmath@yeah.net

Abstract

In recent years, the scale of global terrorist activities has been expanding and terrorist cases has gradually increased. The structure of terrorist organizations shifted from hierarchical leadership to flat structure, and its form stretched from the tangible space to the virtual space, and its means changed from conventional weapons to weapons of mass destruction. The attempt to know the new trends of global terrorist activities will provide a reference to China's anti-terrorism campaign.

Keywords

Terrorist Activities; Organization; Form; Means; Trends.

1. Introduction

In recent years, from a global perspective, the situation of global anti-terrorism campaign is still very grim, and there are serious limitations on global anti-terrorism campaign, the soil where the terrorism breeds has not yet been eliminated, "but it constantly appears in new forms", [1]Global terrorism tends to be expanding in scale and increasing in cases, and it is often intertwined with ethnic issues and religious beliefs, terrorist organizations have gradually built a well-formed organizational system and evolved into an international network, and in particular, they have enhanced the ability to exploit modern techniques to seek sensational effect, instead of using traditional methods of attack such as kidnapping and assassination as they committed in the past times. In this sense, their globalization feature is increasingly obvious, making it more difficult to conduct the world anti-terrorism campaign, [2] This brings about a series of new difficulties to the world anti-terrorism campaign. Therefore, as we can see in the recent trend of world terrorism, the terrorist activities under the banner of religion are the most rampant, Al-Qaeda has pulled its force together, radical organizations represented by the Islamic "jihadists" have extended their branches in many places in Europe and the United States, the structure of terrorism shifted from hierarchical leadership to flat structure, and its form stretched from the tangible space to the virtual space, and its means changed from conventional weapons to weapons of mass destruction and related materials.

2. Aim at New and High Techniques, Demonstrate Intelligent Quality

Some researchers studied over 40 Palestinian suicide bombers and Hezbollah fighters who committed terrorist attacks, and found that they behaved more educated than ordinary Palestinian and Lebanese youths in the same period. [1] This would make it easier for terrorists to be adapted to the information society, and allow then to plot terrorist activities by means of internet-enabled techniques. Terrorists often use the internet skillfully, make acquaintance with each other, apply for documents, allocate funds and obtain various technical drawings. Today, the common medium used by world terrorist organizations to recruit new members, seek further help and discuss attach schemes is online chat room. [3]By leveraging this facility tool, Al-Qaida has a developed information technology base, demonstrate a strong ability to

drive the media. It not only releases various electronic publications and operates "Al-Sahab" and other media, but also uses the internet extensively, and has more than 4,800 sites. Undoubtedly, this provides cyber terrorism with technical support. Al Qaeda, Taliban and other terrorist organizations have greatly improved their technical level of using arms, including shoulder-type low-altitude missiles, heat-seeking missiles, or the great efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction, which is supposed to have something to do with their intelligent quality. In an attempt to provoke the Iraqi civil war, Al Qaeda has a good command of media use. "In addition to TV, radio, newspaper and other traditional media, internet has been considered as an important tool for international terrorists to promote and instigate the civilians". According to an expert from the CIA, "whenever you go to a cyber café connect to a special website, you can learn how to make bomb in a few minutes". [4]In this context, international terrorists tend to use hi-tech skills, especially biological, chemical, nuclear (radioactive) and cyber terrorist attacks provide new options for terrorist organizations. Associated with this, "many members in the new generation of international terrorist organizations were educated in the western countries, they clearly know the technical means of terrorist crimes and Western security loopholes" [5]. In this regard, international anti-terrorism campaign faces new challenges and issues.

3. Change the Way of Recruiting Members, Younger Age Group

Terrorism is a very bloody and cruel offence, most members who engaged in terrorist activities look hateful, savvy, and sinful, but young people in some terrorism-affected countries or regions due to the infiltration of terrorist thoughts and awareness and the erosion of social inequality have been new terrorist members for different reasons. In recent years, many signs indicate that members of international terrorism are getting younger and younger. UK MI5even believes that many extremists who plot terrorist attacks in the UK are middle-class, well-educated youths. US intelligence department in the follow-up study of "Al-Qaeda" concluded that the new generation "leaders" of Al-Qaeda are around 35 years old, and most of them have combating experience in Afghanistan or Chechnya. In fact, it is exactly young people that played an important role in some terrorist incidents, especially in the Middle East and South Asia, many attackers were young. In 2015, most terrorists who were arrested in the UK were in 29-46, and the youngest terrorist was surprisingly 18 years old. Most members of local terrorist network identified by US officers were around 20 years old. Evidence shows that among the members who completed Al Qaeda and Taliban training classes, the youngest member was only 12 years old. [6] In recent years, the average age of the terrorists captured dropped from 30 in the September 11 Attack to around 20. [7] The age of terrorists captured by Russia was in 17-35. [8] This reflects the fact that international terrorism has been getting more and more mad and rampant. They become even more dangerous by attempting to achieve their wicked purposes at the cost of the future of a generation.

4. Intervene in Social Concerns, Members with Different Backgrounds

In the past, most members who participated in terrorist activities were former soldiers who had experienced the wars such as Afghanistan War or dissenting political exiles. However, the outbreak of Iraqi, Syrian Wars was a different case, because the members who participated in these terrorist activities had different works or identities. Most actors of terrorist organizations are from the lower-class families, while most leadership members were from the middle and upper-class families, and female members are not a few. [9] In 2015, the members who were involved in terrorist activities in Iraq include re-regime party, government, military, special police, and police officers, and armed Shiites and Kurds groups and Al Qaeda branches in Iraq. [8] In Europe and the United States, immigrant communities such as Muslim doctors and

engineers were involved in terrorist activities for complex state of mind because they have long been excluded from the mainstream society. [1] According to a report issued by US intelligence agency, Al Qaeda is absorbing white Muslims as members in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because Arabs can be easily recognized. [8] Today, important Al Qaeda leaders are from different countries and ethnic groups, not only from Arab countries but also from other countries, especially the range of recruitment is extended to Western Europe; its members include solders who previously fought in Afghanistan or Chechnya, and graduates or undergraduates. This change of structure makes it easier for terrorist organizations to identify various types of members who can complete the mission more successfully, penetrate to different social classes, and establish a broader social foundation.

5. Terror for Terror'S Sake, Variety of Targets

Attack target reflects the terrorists' idea of action. The variety of targets in recent years is a vital symbol that terrorist activities have evolved into the terrorism for the sake of terror. Although the statistics show that the number of terrorist attacks against military men, police officers, and politicians has been on top of all types for many years [10]; the target of terrorist attacks is more than that, they target at politicians, diplomats, military men, and police officers in many countries, cause many casualties among ordinary civilians, attempt to put pressure on government, threaten the government prestige or damage its international image. [11] Meanwhile, terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda have recently shifted some attention from terrorist attacks against the United States and overseas US targets, to the moderate government of the Islamic world (Saudi, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan) and US anti-terrorism allies (Spain, UK), so as to strategically isolate the United States and intervene in the hot issues of international conflicts including India, Pakistan, Palestine, Lebanon, Israel and Syria. Some research has found that the attack targets in recent years cover a wide range with feature of variety, especially tend to choose civilian targets with inadequate defense means, including commercial, cultural targets and civilians. For example, BLA mainly targets at the public facilities with economic significance and the government authorities, in 83.3% of total number of attacks; Taliban mainly attacks private targets for the purpose of revengefully killing sectarian dissidents, in 42% of total number of attacks. As the experts have asserted, current terrorist attacks are not only traditional governments, military men, leaders of famous political figures, but are extended to all targets against which the purpose of terrorism can be achieved, especially pursuing for the mass destruction of civilians, at the terrorist carrier of children and women, seeking to use hi-tech weapons as attack tools, including nuclear and chemical weapons, in order to "kill more people, make more people feel fear". [13] In this situation, the current target of terrorist attacks is flexible and changeable, especially from attacking "hard targets" to "soft targets", and it becomes an indisputable fact that banks, churches, schools, hospitals, tourist attractions and other "soft targets" are subject to the growing threat of terrorism. This not only indicates that international terrorists are going out of mad, but also makes it more difficult to prevent terrorist activities and make terrorism more devastating.

6. Change Strategic Tactics, Networking Organization

After the Afghanistan War, Al-Qaeda members fled to other countries around the globe, its decision-making power was decentralized, several scattered teams were built which maintained loose horizontal relationship, and formed action team for each specific campaign. As a result, organizational miniaturization has become the common practice for international terrorist activities. After the outbreak of Iraq war, this situation became more obvious, namely terrorist activities have changed from a single center to a multiple centers. In recent years, statistics show that the Al- Qaeda network has been mapped all over to 60 countries, Al-Qaeda's

Iraqi branch activities have spread to about 40 countries, 24 regional organization networks have been formed, the specific implementation of intelligence collection, personnel training, plotting and organization, and raids for terrorist attacks can be scattered and completed in different countries. And Thailand's PULO has established a complex network of relations with terrorist organizations in the southern part of Philippines and the Indonesia. Western intelligence agency also considers that Al Qaeda's members are currently around 3,000, and its antennas are almost all over the world, branches or alliances are set up in 36-60 countries, such as the Iraqi network, the Afghanistan-Pakistan network, the Russia and North Caucasus network, Southeast Asia Network, Central Asia Network, European Network. [1] It is very compelling that the international terrorist organizations represented by Al-Qaeda have successfully escaped the military and police strikes launched by different countries using means of information transmission including the primitive manual delivery. It is by relying on these networks that international terrorist organizations transform from the past pyramid centralized command to the loose mode in which each organization fights separately, individual terrorism is becoming a common practice. UN CTED officials have indicated that so far, international terrorism has gradually formed a multi-center activity network with South Asia as the "cradle of spirit", Iraq as a practical training base, Africa as a springboard, and Europe and the United States as the frontier of penetration, tends to expand to the Muslim society of Europe and the United States and Latin America, has created a "honeycomb" style organizational mode, regional and small-scale terrorist organizations with "identity" and "sense of belongingness" deploy powers globally with "Al Qaeda" as the origin point, international terrorism has thus been supplemented by personnel, funds and equipment without interruption. [13] As evidence to this, the US anti-terrorism agency found that the business and financial empire created by Al Qaeda covers Europe, Africa and Asia, from Dubai to Amman, from Geneva to Paris and Madrid, Al Qaeda has mapped a huge operating agency, established business connection with over 80 partners around the world, the disguised financial and commercial offices located in European Arab countries and the United States administer these funds. [14] We can say that networking terrorism has become an important feature of the recent development of international terrorist organizations. Networking organizations show that terrorist organizations have successfully paved channels in more areas, and the organizational structure has also been stable, which makes international terrorist activities more disguised, their actions more unconstrained and destructive.

7. Seek the Counter-Terrorism Loopholes, Revive From Ashes

Although the international terrorism represented by Al Qaeda has been recently hit hard and the counter-terrorism campaign has made significant progress, some consider that the United States and other western countries follow double standards for counter-terrorism and hold "cold war mentality", which has stimulated the revival of terrorist organizations such as "Al Qaeda" and "Taliban", aroused antipathy among Muslim countries and civilians, and provided breeding soil for spreading and expansion of terrorism. [1] There are signs that Bin Laden has strong emotional appeal even after he was shot to death, Al Qaeda's ideological construction has led to systematic and organized terrorist activities which are more difficult to guard than rampant, loosely structured and separate terrorist acts in the Islamic region. Studies have shown that this is mainly reflected in reconstructing the organizational system, strengthening the cooperation with Islamic extremist organizations including Taliban and Uzbekistan Islamic Movement, and expanding its influence sphere from Central, West Asia to East Africa, West Africa, and Southeast Asia. [15] Some analysts consider that "International Jihad" as a representative of Al-Qaeda has now become a stable system which comprises its headquarter, branches, local base and network [3], indicating the more established development of this organization. The US DNI Office published a declassified "National Intelligence Assessment

Report", asserting that Al-Qaeda protects or rebuilds an important force to attack the United States, continues the placement of its members in the United States, strengthens its power to attack the United States, continues to plot the attack scheme that brings about a major impact. Its targets may be concentrated on important politics, economics, and infrastructure, in order to cause many casualties, significantly impact the US economy, and cause a panic among the US civilians; Hezbollah and other non-Islamic terrorist organizations may also consider launching attacks on the United States in the next three years; international terrorists are seeking new and more destructive means of committing crimes. [16] The US counter-terrorism agency assesses and believes that Al-Qaeda leaders have not only followed Bin Laden's theory of terror, but also issued their own "revolutionary slogans". In recent years, "al-Qaeda" has gradually evolved into an ideological name, and its major forces are from the affiliated organizations it supports. These signs indicate that there is still a long way to go with international counter-terrorism campaign.

8. Hysterical Brutality, Explosive Means

In recent years, despite the occurrence of terrorist incidents by resorting to kidnapping and gunshot, terrorists have further strengthened the explosive means in order to put more people on terror. First, massive use of body bombs. In recent years, suicide attacks have been increasing due to its features like ease of committing, low cost and difficult guarding, but more importantly, high flexibility and maneuverability, greater terror can be caused according to the needs of terrorists. Second, use chemical bombs, including liquid bombs. Third, preferences in serial explosions. Such attacks often target at transportation tools, cultural and recreational venues, malls, downtowns, tourist resorts, and mosques and other civil facilities. In addition, car explosion is still used by terrorists. This indicates that international terrorists are completely out of mind and become more hysterical.

9. Fall into the Abyss of Sin, Intertwined Crimes

In recent years, there are evident signs that terrorist organizations are working with drug trafficking and gun-running groups. [17] Some scholars thought that international terrorism shows two trends: transition from the vertical integration to the informal horizontal integration, the symbiotic relationship between international terrorism and transnational organized crime is increasingly obvious, economic flows such as crime and smuggling provide resources for international terrorism. [18] In fact, international terrorism has recently shown that terrorist activities are increasingly intertwined with other crimes, different terrorist organizations and different types of crimes have been intertwined. For example, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in Central Asia has associated with other religious extremist groups, thereby forming an interested, intertwined symbiotic relationship. A few terrorist investigation cases in Europe have shown that terrorists often get the funds they need by means of common criminal activities such as drug trafficking and stealing credit cards. [19] In the southern provinces of Thailand, terrorist activities are surprisingly intertwined with ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts, poverty concerns and other transnational criminal activities. It should be noted that under the tight control of the international community, it is very difficult for terrorist organizations represented by Al-Qaeda in access and flow of funds, personnel, and materials, have recently colluded more closely with international crimes such as drug trafficking, illegal immigration, and pirating, actively participated in criminal activities such as drug dealing, human organs trafficking, diamond trading, money laundering, car and human smuggling. In addition, some international terrorists have also recently participated in the sales of weapons, committed robbery, forged credit cards and cheques, made investment in legitimate businesses, penetrated into charity organizations, and involved in organized criminal activities. The

intertwining of terrorist activities would definitely make the counter-terrorism front more expanded, the field more extensive, and the counter-terrorism campaign more complicated.

The appearance of the new trends forces all countries around the world to seriously look over the past experience and lessons learned in counter-terrorism campaign, and reassess the new threats as a result of international terrorism in order to rise to the new challenges of counter-terrorism campaign. As a country realistically under the threat of terrorism, China should focus on the study of negative impact of international terrorism on national security from the perspective of counter-terrorism campaign, learn the anti-terrorism experience from the countries around the world, lay down more effective strategies, strengthen a complete set of measures, firmly grasp the initiative in the counter-terrorism campaign, take powerful instruments and secure measures to effectively prevent and deal with possible terrorist attacks, safeguard national security, and maintain social stability.

References

[1] Wenhu Yan. Current limitations and problems of international counter-terrorism campaign, International Information, 2012(4).

[2] Junyu Shi. Why international counter-terrorism campaign doesn't work to restrain terrorism, Ta Kung Pao, 2013-7-29.

[3] Shuming Wang. Revitalization and reconstruction of Al Qaeda, International Studies, 2012(2).

[4] Jiajia Meng. Analysis of the new characteristics of terrorism after the combat against terrorism, Cultural and Educational Information, 2012-1 Late Publication.

[5] Yang Yi. Geopolitics in the context of globalization and prospects of the international counter-terrorism campaign, World Economics and Politics, 2013(1).

[6] Changwei Xu. Suicide terrorist attacks are threating the world, Global Military, 2008(1).

[7] Wei Li. Characteristics and trends of current international terror and counter-terrorism campaign, Contemporary International Relations, 2012(2).

[8] Leaders' Digest, 2005.

[9] Qingguang Lu. Group characteristics and social origin of modern terrorism, Academic Forum, 2012(4).

[10] Jiadong Zhang. Review of the state of world terrorist activities in 2006, Teaching and Research, 2012(5).

[11] Yong Fang, Guocai Lou, & Ying Li. Analysis of characteristics and development trends of international terrorism in 2005, Armed Police Academics, 2012(7).

[12] Shu Yang, &Yiqiang Jiao. On urban counter-terrorism safety zones and levels, Journal of Lanzhou University, 2013(2).

[13] Gang Shi. International counter-terrorism campaign will be a long-term work, People's Daily Online, 2012-4-10.

[14] Ming Bei, &Mu Jiang. International counter-terrorism: The world is blocking terrorist organizations' black money channel, China National Defense News, 2010-10-23.

[15] Haibo Yu. Review of international counter-terrorism situation in 2007, Peace and Development, 2012(1).

[16] Yunzhao Pan, & Qingchuan Yang. US intelligence asserted that the United States will face a consistent threat of terrorism. Xinhuanet, 2011-7-18.

[17] Yufeng Zhang, et al. Individual terrorism has been more and more common, the means of attacks tend to be obviously hi-tech, and city public security faces new challenges, Wen Wei Po, 2012-8-4.

[18] Craig Whitlock. "Al Qaeda" participates in cheap terrorism, Washington Post, 2012-8-24, cited from Reference News, 2013-8-26.

[19] Craig Whitlock. "Al Qaeda" participates in cheap terrorism, Washington Post, 2012-8-24, cited from Reference News, 2013-8-26.