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COUNTERING THE THREAT OF THE GLOBALIZATION OF MIDDLE EASTERN TERRORISM

A PERSPECTIVE FROM RUSSIA AND ISRAELN

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Introduction

Terror began spreading internationally in the late 1960s and early 1970s through the actions of secular ideological and separatist terrorist organizations. Although terrorism was long perceived as an asymmetrical threat as Islamist, and primarily Sunni terrorist organizations gradually gained strength, it eventually evolved into a major global threat to international security. In the late 1980s, many radical Islamist organizations pledged their allegiance to a new force – al-Qaeda[1] (founded in 1988), one of the largest ultra-radical international terrorist organizations of the Wahhabi branch of Islam. Al-Qaeda has gained notoriety as a major and influential player capable of organizing attacks in different parts of the world. Salafi jihadist terrorism fully positioned itself in the international arena with the terrorist attacks of 2001 in the United States.

During the decade following those attacks, the world community mounted a unified struggle against al-Qaeda and its affiliates and came to believe that it was managing to prevent most of the terrorist attacks that the organization planned. The elimination of key al-Qaeda figures, including its leader, Osama bin Laden, led to the conviction that the organization was essentially liquidated and the Salafi jihadist camp effectively destroyed. However, the events of the "Arab Spring" – that inflamed the entire Middle East – proved that assumption wrong.

Many experts initially believed that the "Arab Spring" would deliver a fatal blow to global jihadist forces because its leaders espoused liberal slogans and the movement achieved its early successes through non-violent means that were clearly contrary to the ideology and practices of al-Qaeda. It later became evident, however, that the fall of authoritarian Arab regimes and the ensuing chaos in a number of Middle Eastern countries presented the followers of Salafi jihadism with an ideal opportunity to establish control over the territory of those crumbling countries, and for creating bridgeheads for further expansion. During the initial stages of the "Arab Spring," a network of criminal and terrorist organizations, radical armed groups, and extremist political structures took shape in the Middle East, then expanded aggressively and formed the backbone of a "global jihad."[2] The terrorist organizations based in the Middle East belong to both the Sunni and Shiite branches of Islam.

Global terrorism is now an acute challenge for countries beyond the Middle East as well. Terrorist organizations are armed with modern weapons and participate in all conflicts in the Middle East. Major regional conflict zones serve as breeding grounds for new outbreaks of terrorism, the evolution of its dominant ideological forms, and the metamorphosis of its organizational structures. These organizations have further developed their tactics as well as the means and methods for the technical, financial, and, most importantly, informational and communications-related aspects of carrying out terrorist attacks. They have also expanded the range of their targets, [3] and a constantly increasing number of people die at their hands every year. According to the Global Terrorism Index for 2015, the number of those killed by terrorist acts around the world rose by 80 percent from 2013 to 2014, reaching 14,574 dead.[4]

As terrorism spreads beyond the confines of the Middle East, it becomes more pronounced in some countries and regions than in others. However, Sunni terrorist organizations have

[1] *Banned in Russia.* – **Ed. note.**

[2] *Islamist Terrorism and Democracy in the Middle East. Cambridge University Press: Miller B. Warm Peace and Hot War: the "Arab Spring" and the Post-Cold War International Order//Annual Meeting of the American Political Sciences Association, Chicago, August29-September 1, 2013. P.5–6.*

[3] *Степанова Е.А. Долгосрочный прогноз тенденций в области терроризма (http://www.imemo.ru/files/File/magazines/puty_miru/2016/01/05_Stepanova.pdf)*

[4] *The Index was developed by an international group of experts under the auspices of the Institute for Economics and Peace at the University of Sydney, Australia. The computational portion is based on information from the Global Terrorism Database of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland. It is the world's largest statistical database on terrorist activity and contains information on more than 100,000 acts of terrorism committed in the last 10 years. Terrorism Index 2015 http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf*

proven to be the most active globally. Events in the Middle East have led to the formation of a new Sunni terrorist organization known as the "Islamic State" (ISIL).[5] The Islamic State is the most active in developing the infrastructure of jihadist organizations around the world. As of this writing, the two largest terrorist organizations – Boko Haram (Nigeria) and the Islamic State (Iraq) – are responsible for 51 percent of all terrorism-related deaths in the world. In the years since it was established, ISIL has been directly or indirectly responsible for 20,000 battlefield deaths in the Middle East, while all other state and non-governmental participants in those conflicts were responsible for a combined 6,000 deaths.[6]

The world community faces the task of developing the necessary measures to combat the threat of terrorism on a global scale. Every state, including Russia, attempts to analyze the nature of this phenomenon and to develop its own method for countering this evil. The authors believe that an analysis of terrorist activity and a system of counter-terrorism measures developed by the Israeli expert community hold particular promise. After all, Israel has had to repel the terrorist threat constantly throughout its history. The Israeli leadership closely monitors Islamists' ambitions for reshaping the entire structure of the Middle East region. This is one of the many reasons Israel is determined to oppose radical Islam in the Middle East, including its manifestation through ISIL.

An increasing number of books and articles have appeared in recent years describing the experience of Israeli intelligence agencies in eliminating and preventing the terrorist threat to that state. This report focuses on an analysis by Russian and Israeli experts of the phenomenon defined as "the internationalization of Middle Eastern terrorism" and on practical tasks for countering that threat. [. . .]