

powered miniature nuclear warheads supposedly to prevent the escalation of nuclear war has already been launched. A return to ideology and practice of acute confrontation, fraught with real conflict will be inevitable. The United States ABM Policy Review contains the concept of preemptive strikes on nuclear deterrents in the interests of missile defense. Sergey Ryabkov qualifies it as an extremely destabilizing and harmful idea, an attempt to find a verbal frame for the transition to a direct and aggressive form of escalating a military threat.

Russia, the diplomat concludes, offers everyone a constructive alternative to that trend of scrapping the existing arms control system of existing international institutions, which in 2018 – early 2019 can be dangerously seen in the politics of Washington and the states that are the closest allies of the United States.

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KAMIL AZIMOV. REPATRIATION OF EX-JIHADISTS: POSSIBLE RISKS // *The article was written for the bulletin "Russia and the Moslem World."*

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Abstract. The article considers the situation around the fate of foreign ISIL fighters and other terrorist organizations, as well as members of their families, who have to leave the country due to the early end of hostilities in Syria and Iraq.

At the beginning of 2019, there were still about 18,000 jihadists in Syria and Iraq. In the South-East of Syria, there were conducted operations to destroy the remnants of ISIL - formations, which included many foreigners, including Europeans, as well as people from Central Asian countries, who are traditionally called Russian-speaking. There were also those who were "unlucky": they were captured in Iraq, where they were executed. Those who are still alive are looking for opportunities to save their lives... There are two options. The first one - you can return to your homeland and, repent and endure punishment. The second option is to move to Afghanistan together with the most militaristic fighters. There is still an opportunity to settle in one of Syria's neighboring Muslim countries, but it requires facilities and ties.

The return of ex-jihadists to their homeland can have catastrophic effects, as these people are used to solving problems with weapons. This situation is relevant to the governments of European states, Russia and neighboring countries. It must not be forgotten that, for the Syrian leadership, the return of its citizens, who fought in the ranks of ISIL against their own fellow citizens, who abided the legitimate Government, issues a challenge of their re-adaptation and reconciliation of the society in all.

To execute or grant a pardon?

In Europe, there is a debate about what to do: to deny citizenship or allow return, assuming that these people are not involved in the crimes. But how can we prove their innocence?

In Germany it was decided to deprive them of passports, who voluntarily joined the Islamic States. And the British

authorities decided to deprive even wives of jihadists of their citizenship. Denmark is also opposed the return of its fellow citizens home, who fought in Syria, applying to ex-article provided for treason. However, not all Danes advocate this view. It is typical that, among the Arab countries, Morocco, Algeria and even Saudi Arabia denied citizenship to their fellow citizens who had joined ISIL.

The Government of Syria is also in a difficult situation. Some of the former members of terrorist organizations are their own citizens. It is obvious that the most "active" radicals have already chosen to leave the country, having moved to Afghanistan or Europe, others hang about, staying in neighboring countries. It is interesting to note that there is the "jihadist international," of the most "utter" fighters from among foreigners in Idlib. There are not many Syrians among them. The Government of Syria adopted a number of amnesty decrees and established various reconciliation committees. Provincial, urban and tribal authorities were involved. About 60,000 people have already received pardon in Syria. Basically, these are those who deferred from service. The amnesty was also carried out by local authorities. Thus, on 5.08.2018, 500 former fighters were granted amnesty in the province of Djraa. However, it is obvious that the final reconciliation of Syrians among themselves will take many years.

In Russia, also, it was difficult to come up with the status for this category of persons for a long time - either they are potential terrorists or victims of recruitment. It was decided to pursue a full-dress investigation for each ex-jihadist. According to lawyer Eugene Korchago, "the very fact of participation of a citizen in an extremist organization, regardless of the commitment of other illegal actions, already constitutes a crime... And for the commission of other crimes by this person (illegal crossing of the state border, murders, arms trafficking, etc.) responsibility will be taken together." Thus, recruited Russians who fought on the side of terrorists but returned back to their

homeland in all cases will be subject to criminal liability. The punishment will be determined by the court taking into account the totality of all the crimes (except for the participation in a terrorist or extremist organization) that they committed.

A. Yanger, Head of Military Counterintelligence (Director of British Foreign Intelligence) is confident that returning fighters will continue their terrorist activities in Europe. President Trump believes that those who fought until the last day must be brought to court, but they must be allowed into European countries first. Moreover, the President of the United States demanded that the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and a number of other European states commit for trial their citizens who joined ISIL. However, the German authorities are not sure that this is possible, as although all German citizens have the right to return to their homeland, it is extremely difficult to carry out an investigation of their activities in ISIL, as witnesses to crimes will remain in the Middle East and without a bill of indictment it will not be possible to impose sentence.

Kurdish organizations make an appeal to all governments to take their radicals back as they do not want to spend money on the maintenance of prisoners (including their wives and children), courts, imprisonment, etc. Kurdish groups stated that Europe expresses solidarity only verbally, does not want to share the burden of maintaining thousands of imprisoned jihadists and their families.

French President E. Macron suggests that the countries in the territories of which the crimes were committed (i.e. Syria and Iraq) decide the fate of the fighters themselves. In response, human rights organizations say that in this case the militants are likely to be executed, as in Iraq, where the death penalty is already provided only for belonging to ISIL and other terrorist organizations. By the way, France sent information to the Iraqi authorities in 2017 about “its” jihadists in the hope that they would face the trial there.

The representatives of Syria note that it is extremely costly to investigate the commission of a crime by foreigners, as remand detainees, even knowing Arabic, will deny it. European states agree that it is near – impossible to build an evidence base outside the crime scene.

In fact, European politicians understand that any sentence to a returned ex-jihadist could elicit a response from “their” Muslims within the European continent. It’s worth reminding that 6 million Muslims live in France. In Germany, between 3,8 million and 4,3 million Muslims are approximately 5% of the total population. In the UK, Muslims include 4,8% or 2.7 million people. In Belgium – about 685 thousand, which was 6,23% in 2011.

Only recently in Paris the French citizen Mehdi Nemmushi of Algerian origin was finally convicted, he shot four people in May 2014 at the Jewish Museum of Brussels. Shortly before commission of the crime, he fought in Syria for more than a year, in one of the Islamic State units. It should be noted that the trial lasted almost 4 years.

The International Research Center for Radical Organizations at King’s College London suggests that 1,765 of the 6,000 European nationals (mostly from Belgium, France, Germany and Great Britain) who fought alongside the ISIL in Syria and Iraq have already returned at the beginning of 2019. Up to 1/3 of those who left, returned to Belgium and Germany. About 12% of the total number of French citizens who took part in jihad returned to France.

Commenting the process of returning jihadists to Europe, the American analytical group Soufan Center notes: “Some of them will remain dedicated to the form of violent jihad promoted by Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. And it’s not a secret that those who want to keep fighting will find a way to do it.”

Some ex-jihadists, citizens of European countries, managed to return to Europe on their own. In almost all countries, the authorities have to take measures to help them adapt. But until recently, no one thought about how a man from a Muslim environment would break with a radical environment. In Sweden,

which in Europe ranks high among the number of jihad tourists, a non-governmental organization, Ikos, was established to help people break free of the extremist environment. Geir Stakset, the founder of this organization, notes that few former jihadists seek help. However those who took risks find a whole bouquet of problems, “a mixture of crime and ideological blast.” G. Staxet also drew attention to the fact that being recruited young people are interested in the emerging sense of fellowship, which unites them, allows to assert of their kind, as well as secrets and the prospect of adventures. Ex-jihadists who have returned to Europe, who have escaped justice, are usually stuck, and thus forced to remain in their past society, which prevents them from changing their world view.

Much the same situation is in the Balkans, where volunteers were also sent to jihad from the States of the former Yugoslavia. According to the Montenegrin newspaper “Pobjeda,” more than 50 people who fought alongside the ISIL were undergone a criminal trial. 23 law suit took place in the courts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where 22 ex-jihadists were convicted, but the sentence was not large – about 2,5 years imprisonment. Only Zechia Chazimi, the famous preacher of radical Islamist ideas in Kosovo, got a long sentence of 10 years. However, observers doubt that his associates will not help him reduce his jail term.

Thus, it must be noted that there is neither consensus on the prospects for the return of Europeans who joined radical groups and fought in Iraq and Syria, nor a strategy for their re-adaptation. The European Union didn’t comment it, and the head of European diplomacy Federica Mogherini (in anticipation of the end of her mission), said that this issue is proposed to be solved by each national government individually.

Jihadists’ children fate

European politicians pay particular attention to the problem of jihadists’ children re-adaptation returning to

European countries. In particular, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution of Germany draws attention to the fact that so far no strategy has been developed, same for all the Lands of Germany, towards the children of jihadists. The Government has already amended the draft law on improving information sharing between various agencies within the framework of anti-terrorist struggle. It is considered that, sharing information will simplify the process of supervision of teenagers whose parents participated in jihad for the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. However, children under 14 are not mentioned in the law, although there are already cases of children participation in terrorist attacks and not only in Syria. In particular, in 2016, at a Christmas fair in Ludwigshafen (in the south-west), a 12-year-old teenager, a citizen of Germany of Iraqi origin, tried to detonate a bomb.

Peter Neuman, an expert on terrorism research at King's College London, notes that "ISIL is no longer trying to justify its brutality with political or religious necessity. Islamic State is behind a "pop culture of horror" that has become particularly attractive to young people, those who experienced trauma or are in search of consonant ideas." The Swedish newspaper "Skånska Dagbladet" in the article "Jihadism as a youth culture" writes: "Young people turned terror into pop culture. Sounds like a bad joke, but they did. With the help of hip hop, fashion, skillful use of social media and subcultural entourage, confused young people are convinced that being a jihadist is "cool." There are a number of denominators with other forms of youth cultures, such as the violent street gang culture in the United States. "According to the European Union Police Service "Europol," most young jihadists find themselves recruited through group pressure and emulation among close friends." Considering the above observations, it is necessary to agree with the head of German counterintelligence Hans-George Maassen that jihadists' children pose a particular risk to social security.

The examination of video – and photographic materials reflecting weekdays of ISIL and other terrorist organizations shows that the organizers pay great attention to the appearance of jihadists: all where black hoodies, but sneakers are white; on mass executions, the victims are dressed in red robe. Slender rows of white open-top cars moving endless procession on Syrian ground and streaming black flags, should impress the invincibility of ISIL. For young people, much less children, it is more than a convincing factor in the power of the jihadist movement.

Fate of ex-jihadists from CIS countries

The analysis of the situation in the Central Asian republics of the former USSR also did not reveal a common standard towards its citizens who fought on the side of ISIL in the Middle East. Former jihadists, as well as members of their families, began to undertake attempts to return as early as 2015. In 2018, letters were sent to Central Asian governments from Syria requesting measures to remove their compatriots from Syria. Only Kazakhstan responded immediately and organized the export of its citizens.

Precise data on the number of Kazakh nationals fighting in ISIL and other radical Islamist organizations cannot be determined. According to official information, at the end of 2014 the number of Kazakhs who left, reached 300 people. Practice shows that men often went for “seasonal work” to different countries and it was difficult to trace their further destination. However, the study of the ISIL media demonstrated significant presence of Kazakhs in the ranks of fighters, and even children, who in Kazakh called for the killing of “infidels.” The fact that Muslims from the Central Asian republics left as families indicates that Islamist propagandists took into account the importance of family and family ties for recruitment of fighters. It was known that 300 fighters created their “Kazakhstan jamagat,” which had many women.

In summer 2018 it became known that 390 Kazakh children, mainly orphans, were in the conflict zone in Syria. Their relatives asked the Government of Kazakhstan to return them to their homeland. In spring 2019, on behalf of the Government of Kazakhstan, there was carried out a large-scale humanitarian action Zhusan on citizens of Kazakhstan return from Syria. As a result of the second operation (Zhusan-2), 231 persons (including 156 children) were returned to their homeland. 16 men and four women of this group were detained under suspicion of involvement in terrorist activities on the side of Islamic radicals. The representative of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan stated that "the authorities are obliged to ensure the principle of inevitability of punishment... And those who are innocent must undergo a rehabilitation procedure." The returning wives and widows of the militants were housed within specially created adaptation centre near the town of Aktau. One of the fighters brought to Kazakhstan in May 2019 was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment.

Ever since ex-jihadists from Kyrgyzstan, from 2014, began to return home, the authorities decide what to do with them. Then the government promised to punish all those who joined jihad. However, the promise of severe punishment without exceptions poses other challenges. In summer 2016, the number of those who return began to increase rapidly. As media reports, the reason is banal: ISIL stopped paying salaries to its adherents...

Analysts of the security services of Kyrgyzstan claim that the majority of the natives of the republic were recruited to jihad in Russia, as well as in other countries where they came as guest workers. In this regard, there is an opinion of the Russian military expert L. Korolkov, who draws attention to the factor of labor migration: wage reductions in Russia led to a significant outflow of Central Asian migrants, and "it is mainly a young and excessive labor resource with which IS recruits actively work." Tellingly that the majority of those recruited are natives of Osh region, which at the turn of the 20th and the beginning of 21st centuries has

repeatedly been a center of anti-government speeches and where Islamist propaganda has so far been extremely active.

Bishkek also evacuates its citizens, mostly women and children, from Syria. But, unlike Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, this country has no opportunities and means for systematic work with "returnees." The drama of the situation gains momentum because of religious component – there are officially about 3 thousand religious organizations. Conversations with former jihadists gives evidence of undereducation and a poorly formed outlook. As main reasons they called "the desire to do God's work to get to paradise," etc. However, psychologists drew attention to the fact that some young people, not well-grounded in religion, admitted that they wanted to lead an active life, fight against injustice, perform feats. ISIL immediately offered them a scenario where it was necessary to "free the people of Syria from the tyrant," about which few future jihadists had information. The third category of young people ran to adventure, looking for opportunities to see the world, to make a fortune through adventure. Many had negative life experience, consisting of economic problems, professional invalidity, disenchantment with the world around them and problems in private life. For such people, usually single and self-contained, the internet becomes a place where they assert themselves. This is the place where ISIL recruits find them.

The problem of former jihadists' repatriation is also relevant for Uzbekistan. In June 2018, a law on control of extremism was adopted. It provides for measures to raise the legal consciousness and culture of the population (art. 8). According to the law, members of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IDU) and other radical organizations are subject to severe punishment, including long terms of imprisonment: only for the fact of membership – 10–15 years, for acts threatening the social system there are also more severe penalties. The Government put in charge of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to prepare a list of criteria according to which a person convicted for

participating in the activities of radical organizations abroad has successfully undergone social and psychological rehabilitation. So far, it is prescribed that former Islamists will be transferred to serve their sentences in their home areas, to the colony-settlement regime.

In Tajikistan, work to improve legislative development on recruited jihadists has been under way since 2015. The Criminal Code of the Republic was amended, whereby those who voluntarily left the jihadist ranks and returned to their homeland are exempt from criminal liability. It is contemplated that, after his repatriation, a former fighter is put in pretrial custody while his activities in Syria are under investigation. Some people were discharge from liability by applying to them (art. 401 of the Criminal Code of Tajikistan), according to which "a person who voluntarily withdraws from illegal participation in military outfit, armed conflict or hostilities in the territory of other states until the cessation of the activities of military outfit, the end of armed conflict or hostilities, and unless his actions have indications of another components of crime, shall be exempted from criminal liability." For repentent fighters, there is a prison sentence of 12 to 20 years.

The Government of Tajikistan is extremely concerned about the possibility of transferring hostility to the territory of the Republic. In this regard, it was decided to withdraw Tajik students from Muslim countries. However, this measure is insufficient, as according to official data, more than one thousand Tajik theologians are illegally trained in religious educational institutions in the Muslim east.

The authorities of Turkmenistan are worried about penetration of the ISIL virus and Islamism into the country. According to some reports, between 300 and 500 citizens of young Turkmen, brainwashed by Islamist propaganda, fought on the side of ISIL. The newspaper Chronicle of Turkmenistan also reported that several hundred Turkmen lived with families in Syrian Homs. They usually represent themselves as Turks, as Turkmen and

Turkish languages are alike. By the end of the war, in the light of obvious defeat of ISIL, Turkmen fighters join the Syrian Free Army, an opposition to Syria's government.

The closer the end of hostilities in Syria, the less chances there are for people from the Central Asian republics who want to return to their homeland are to escape the law. Many will no longer be able to opt out of participation in jihad before the cessation of activities of the military outfit, as covered by law. Therefore, they think about the possibility of relocating to another country. This is especially true for those who are in Idlib. The bulk of Uighurs – Muslim and volunteers from China – are also concentrated here. For them, the issue of repatriation is closed, so they will have to move to Afghanistan, where many prominent figures of the jihadist movement have already moved.

Public fears of the republics of Central Asia that a new jihad is about to happen in neighboring Afghanistan are not groundless. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan shares a common border with three of the five republics of the Central Asian region – Tajikistan (1,344 km), Uzbekistan (140 km) and Turkmenistan (745 km). In case of destabilization in one of them, the conflict, supported by radicals from neighboring Afghanistan, could proliferate the entire region. This unfavourable scenario is also taken into account in Russia, which is the main member of the Collective Security Treaty.

Conclusion

To sum up it is to be noted that, repatriation of ex-fighters exposes to danger the civilian population of all countries. So far, the above-mentioned countries do not have experts, developed methodology and sometimes resources, to ensure the productive work of deradicalization of former jihadists and their families. Consequently, this work must be carried out jointly in order to prevent the virus of radicalization from subduing peaceful life of our countries.

Editorial note: The Russian Bureau of Interpol reported that 68 people were extradited from abroad to Russia under the International Counter-Terrorism Project in 2019, including members of armed gangs that fought as part of ISIL in the Middle East. According to the Defense Ministry, more than 5,000 fighters from the Russian Federation were annihilated in the course of hostilities in Syria.

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Abstract. The article considers Islamophobia, its historically determined origins, a complex historical path of development, the current state and possible vectors of leveling the challenges, risks and threats to the country's national security associated with this phenomenon as a type of xenophobia in Russia. The conclusion is that such a task is within the power of Russian society and the state.