

## PREVENTION OF TERRORISM AND EXTREMISM IN UNIVERSITIES

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The authors analyze the problems associated with the prevention of terrorism and extremism in universities. A survey of students, positional experts and teaching staff of universities has been conducted. It is established that the students' views of terrorism and extremism are superficial, making it difficult to prevent these negative phenomena. A significant number of students do not consider terrorism and extremism as a real daily danger to themselves, but recognize this problem as serious and global for society. Prevention of terrorism and extremism in higher education institutions is conducted quite formally, mainly by banning the extremism related websites, in rare cases, preventive conversations of law enforcement officials, installation of video cameras in the educational buildings and the presence of a receptionist (watchman) on duty. In addition, it was revealed that the universities are poorly protected from the terrorist threat. It is established that young men are perceived a terrorist threat more seriously than girls are, which is associated with their greater awareness of the political situation in Russia and the world. As part of the survey, an analysis of the existing system of the prevention of terrorism and extremism was made in three directions: the scientific-methodical, organizational and social-educational, based on which recommendations on the system improvement were proposed.

**Keywords:** terrorism, extremism, individual terrorism, organized terrorism, national terrorism, regional terrorism

### Relevance of the study

Positional experts note that there is an increase in extremist attitudes among young people, especially the growth of religious and national intolerance. [6, 8] Increasingly, during the public events (rallies, pickets, processions, demonstrations) appear the groups of people expressing a violent change of the existing state system. It is becoming more frequent in Russia when certain politicians actively involve minors in extremist actions. Usually, terrorists recruit schoolchildren into their criminal groups from social networks (facebook.com, vkontakte.ru.). The video clips containing information in which the actions of the authorities of any level are negatively described are posted in the Internet. These videos refer to problems in the state not as one-time objective phenomena, but as systematic mistakes of the authorities. All these actions are the part of the information war, and the situation will get worse as the presidential elections in Russia are approaching (March 2018). It is well-known that the time of elections in Russia is the most convenient period for a number of special services, hostile to Russia, to destabilize the society.

Taking into consideration the above, we attempted to study the views of students on the problems associated with the terrorist and extremist threat, as well as an analysis of the existing system of prevention of terrorism and extremism in universities.

### Empirical basis of the study

In 2016-2017, we carried out a survey of students of:

– Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushinsky (YSPU);

– Yaroslavl State University named after P.G. Demidov (YSU);

– Orel branch of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration under the President of the Russian Federation (RANEPA);

– Yaroslavl branch of the Emperor Nicholas II Moscow State University of Railway Engineering (After all merges the branch of the Russian University of Transport (MIIT)).

Quota sample. Sample frame  $n = 724$ . Quota variables: gender, age, university.

The survey of the teaching staff of universities to analyze the existing system of prevention of terrorism and extremism in universities  $n = 16$ .

In addition, the study of opinion of positional experts (police officers, the FSB officers)  $n = 8$ .

A secondary analysis of the data of:

– Russian Federal State Statistics Service;  
– results of sociological researches conducted by VTsIOM (Russian Public Opinion Research Center), employees of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences and scientists of the Academy of Management of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

### Methodological basis of the study

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is the Institutional Anomie Theory (Bjerregaard B., Cochran J.K., Burkatzki E., Messner S.F., Thome H. and Rosenfeld R.) [1, 2, 7] as well as the scientific works of such authors as Donohue L.K. and Chalk P. [3, 4].

Author's hypotheses:

1. Students' views of terrorism and extremism are superficial, making it difficult to prevent these negative phenomena.

2. Significant number of students do not consider terrorism and extremism as a real daily danger to themselves, but recognize this problem as serious and global for society.

3. Prevention of terrorism and extremism in higher education institutions is conducted quite formally, mainly by banning the extremism related websites, in rare cases, preventive conversations of law enforcement officials, installation of video cameras in the educational buildings and the presence of a receptionist (watchman) on duty.

4. Universities are poorly protected from the terrorist threat. The access system in the academic buildings and dormitories works formally. Usually receptionists (watchmen, guards, etc.) are not specially trained.

5. Young men perceive a terrorist threat more seriously than girls do, which is associated with their greater awareness of the political situation in Russia and the world.

### Results of the study

First we as researchers were interested in what problems in the society are the most serious from the point of view of our respondents (respondents could list several answers). It was found out that, first of all, they are concerned about the level and quality of life of the population, as well as unemployment (74%). The second place was given to corruption, drunkenness and the crime rate (69%). The problems related to terrorism and extremism are on the third place only (57%). Then the students pointed out the problems that are less acute in their opinion: ethnic conflicts (54%), domestic violence (46%), pollution of the environment (45%) etc.

We also found out that young men perceive a terrorist threat more seriously than girls do, which is related to their greater awareness of the political situation in Russia and the world. So all the interviewed male students noted that they monitor the news of their city, region and the whole country each day. Particular attention is paid to political news. Only 26% of female students noted that they watch news covering the events in the city of Yaroslavl, the region and the whole country on the periodic basis. The girls explained that the political news worries them least, but if the news is informing them about the terrorist acts or extremism, they closely monitor the development of this situation.

Then, we analyzed what the students put into the concept of terrorism? As a result, the following answers were received (respondents could list several answers):

– 92% – terrorism refers only to hostage-taking and terrorist attacks;

– 56% – of respondents believe that terrorism includes any actions and inactions, somehow violating human rights;

– 12% – of students believe that terrorism is a form of political struggle with the authorities;

– 8% – of respondents believe that terrorism is violence and intimidation of people and authorities in order to disorganize the daily life of society and the state.

Then, we analyzed what the students put into the concept of extremism? As a result, the following answers were received (respondents could list several answers):

– 87% – extremism is a terrorist action;

– 65% – riot provocation;

– 32% – guerilla warfare.

– 17% – seizure of power;

– 13% – assassination of a politician;

– 10% – performances (demonstrations, pickets, marches etc.) against the existing order;

– 9% – incitement of social, racial and religious hatred;

– 8% – use of Nazi attributes;

– 7% – terrorism and extremism mean the same.

As can be seen from the survey, students' views of terrorism and extremism are superficial, which complicates the prevention of these negative phenomena.

Next, we attempted to find out what is contributing to the growth of extremism in society, according to university students (respondents could list several answers). As a result, the following answers were received:

– 76% – socio-economic and political crises;

– 45% – external intervention;

– 32% – totalitarian or authoritarian political regimes;

– 18% – low level of education and culture of a significant part of the population;

– 7% – low level and quality of life of the population.

Next, we tried to find out if the students know why certain individuals commit terrorist acts and extremist actions.

As a result, the following answers were received (respondents could list several answers):

– 45% – attempt to change people's lives for the better;

– 37% – desire to overthrow the existing regime;

– 29% – earn a lot of money out of threats (in particular by means of hostage taking);

– 21% – revenge for something;

– 16% – attempt to draw attention to any problems;

– 7% – desire to achieve independence for one's people or region.

Unfortunately, as can be seen from the survey, most students think about the individuals committing terrorist acts and extremist actions as avengers and fighters for a justice, which certainly does not contribute to the effective prevention of terrorism and extremism.

Accordingly, it is necessary to issue leaflets, thematic videos on the periodic basis in which it is necessary to disclose the true goals of terrorists and extremists.

Next, we studied how secure our correspondents feel themselves.

Only 23% of students believe that they and their relatives are safe, considering that the activities of law enforcement agencies and metal detectors (at railway stations and in crowded places, at the entrance to all premises) protect them from terrorist attacks. 57% of respondents consider themselves and their relatives to be insufficiently protected from the ideas and actions of extremists. 20% of respondents consider themselves and their relatives to be partially protected only.

Next, we figured out how our respondents had come across extremist information within the past year. As a result, the following answers were received (respondents could list several answers):

– 60% – did not encounter information of extremist content;

– 37% – never encountered such information before, but several times within the last year;

– 8% – pointed out that it was very rare, but they encountered information of an extremist nature;

– 5% – noted that they encountered such information from time to time mainly on the Internet portals.

Given that in our sociological research, we have previously established the fragmentary knowledge of our students about terrorism and extremism, we can conclude that the situation is much worse. Students are likely to encounter information of extremist content, but cannot determine one that is destructive one in a large flow of information simply because of their low experience and knowledge in their daily practice. In any case, the positional experts explained that they increasingly have to interact with the Roskomnadzor (Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media) Office in the Yaroslavl region in order to block access to Internet sites of extremist orientation.

We established that students of non-Slavic peoples, that is Tatars, Bashkirs, Kazakhs,

Azeris, Yezids, Udmurts, Ingush, Chechens, etc., are more likely than Russian, Ukrainians and Belarusians to encounter information of extremist content. It can be assumed that terrorist and extremist organizations purposefully choose an audience of non-Slavic peoples.

The study finds that 29% of respondents have never met with leaflets or videos that condemn terrorism and extremism for the past year. 71% of the respondents explained that they periodically see the broadcasts on the central television channel in which some terrorist groups are condemned. The students also noted that over the past year, the number of broadcasts in which the condemnation of terrorism and extremism is passing by has increased several times. The most popular programs for students, mainly young men, are two – “To the Barrier” and “Special Article”.

The analyzed data show that the students who are the members of socio-political youth organizations (the All-Russian Public Organization “Russian Student Union”, the All-Russian Public Organization “Young Guard” of United Russia political party) are more active in analyzing the events in the world and everything related to the security of our country. In particular, they actively participate in demonstrations, marches, pickets, rallies dedicated to the struggle or condemnation of terrorism and extremism. Earlier, sociologists and political scientists from Yaroslavl found that students of Yaroslavl universities are indifferent to political practices associated with extremism and radicalism. [5]

67% of students indicate that the curators of their student groups periodically hold the talks on the prevention of terrorism and extremism.

Absolutely all the teaching staff believe that they need additional knowledge in the field of prevention of extremism and terrorism. Our analysis of the activities of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University has shown that there are all necessary opportunities for further training in the field of countering extremism and terrorism. Teachers and students explained that, in spite of the fact that at the entrance to the buildings of the universities there is a receptionist or watchman, as well as a turnstile and video camera, the reality is that any stranger can freely enter the building.

Positional experts explained that the most effective work on the prevention of extremism and terrorism is carried out when it is conducted in a complex. The main thing here is the work with residents and agents. This part

of the work, as a rule, is not visible to most of the citizens. The effectiveness of this part of activity of law enforcement bodies is mainly known from the media, when people are informed about the prevention of the terrorist act.

In addition, positional experts explained that recently extremists have intensified their activities in the territory of the Central Federal District, including the Yaroslavl region. So, in 2015, five students who came from Tajikistan to study at the Yaroslavl State Technical University, went to fight in Syria on the side of ISIS (The terrorist group banned in Russia). And these are only established facts. Experts explained that there are a lot of examples when they managed to dissuade students who came under the influence of extremist ideology, not to go to war on the side of ISIS (The terrorist group banned in Russia).

### Conclusion

Within the framework of the conducted research it is established that the students' views on terrorism and extremism are superficial, making it difficult to prevent these negative phenomena.

Moreover, a significant number of students do not consider terrorism and extremism as a real daily danger to themselves, but recognize this problem as serious and global for society.

Prevention of terrorism and extremism in higher education institutions is conducted quite formally, mainly by banning the extremism related websites, in rare cases, preventive conversations of law enforcement officials, installation of video cameras in the educational buildings and the presence of a receptionist (watchman) on duty.

Universities are poorly protected from the terrorist threat. The access system in the academic buildings and dormitories works formally. Usually receptionists (watchmen, guards, etc.) are not specially trained.

Young men perceive a terrorist threat more seriously than girls do, which is associated with their greater awareness of the political situation in Russia and the world.

In order to prevent extremism and terrorism in higher education institutions it is necessary to:

1. Carry out constant monitoring and timely diagnostics of extremist behavior; Carry out sociological research aimed at studying the values, interests, needs of students.

2. Conduct scientific and practical conferences, trainings, round tables with the participation of representatives of the clergy, law

enforcement agencies and a number of other structures, within the framework of which to conduct talks about the causes of extremism and terrorism.

3. Systematically improve the qualifications universities' teaching staff in the field of prevention of extremism and terrorism among students.

4. Include special courses which detail the material on religion and cultural characteristics of other countries to the educational process.

5. Administrations of universities, together with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the FSB, to monitor the use of Internet resources by students to exclude access to websites calling for extremism and terrorism.

6. Strengthen the control over the entrances and exits to the educational buildings and dormitories. Establish a video surveillance system on all the floors of university buildings. In addition, to tighten the requirements for candidates for the post of receptionist (watchman), for which purpose to provide more decent salaries for candidates for these positions

7. Issue brochures, thematic videos on the periodic basis which detail the rules of personal safety. Purposefully and systematically conduct trainings with students and faculty for actions in case of emergency

8. Hold scientific and creative contests to counter extremism and terrorism on the systematic basis.

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