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6. évfolyam 3. szám**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH OF SUICIDE BOMBING: ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MOTIVATION?****AZ ÖNGYILKOS TERRORIZMUS PSZICHOLÓGIAI MEGKÖZELÍTÉSE: AVAGY LÉTEZNEK-E SPECIFIKUS SZEMÉLYISÉGLÉLEKTANI JELLEGZETESSÉGEK A MOTIVÁCIÓ TEKINTETÉBEN?**

In this paper we would like to give a detailed summary of psychological explanations of suicide terrorism. Our aim is to help understanding this horrible phenomenon and thinking about the possibilities of prevention. In this review we define the conception of terrorism and suicide bombing. The main emphasis is on the analysis of the hungarian and international literature of personal psychological approaches of suicide terrorism, but there are a lot of other, for example political, religious, cultural, sociological factors in the background of motivation. It is important to mention the role of women in suicide attacks as well. At the end of this summary we try to answer the question: is there any kind of specific suicide terrorist profile?

Dolgozatunkban részletes összefoglalót szeretnénk nyújtani az öngyilkos terrorizmus aktuális pszichológiai magyarázatairól. Célunk, hogy segítjük e szörnyű jelenség megértését és ezzel együtt a megelőzés lehetőségeiről is gondolkodjunk. Az áttekintés során értelmezzük a terrorizmus fogalmát és az ezzel kapcsolatos elgondolásokat. A hangsúlyt elsősorban a személyiséglélektani megközelítésekre helyezzük a magyar és nemzetközi szakirodalom elemzésével, de nem hagyhatjuk figyelmen kívül a motiváció tekintetében a politikai, vallási, kulturális, szociológiai tényezőket sem. Lényeges említést tennünk egy rövid fejezet erejéig a női (öngyilkos) terrorizmus jelenségéről is. Tanulmányunk végén szeretnénk válaszolni arra a kérdésre, hogy vajon beszélhetünk-e specifikus öngyilkos terrorista "profilról"?

## INTRODUCTION

Terrorism has become the major security threat in the world nowadays. It is not easy to define, out of the different definitions in the world the most accepted four main elements are the following (Bolgar, Szternak, 2007):

- it is performed by non- state level persons;
- the target is unarmed civilians;
- used for political aims;
- an act of aggression.

Terrorism is the use of aggression by individuals or groups to achieve their aims, this way to enforce the reaction of the antagonistic group according to the interests of the aggressor group. (Tutto, 2008.).

According to the definition of the International Anti – Terrorism Political Institute in Israel, suicide terrorism is "an operational method where the essence of the attack is death. The terrorists are aware that if they do not kill themselves, there will be no attack " (Beres, 2007.).

(Male) suicide terrorism is not a new phenomenon. In the special literature the opinions differ about the "first ones", but the truth is not far if we consider nizarits or assassins to be the first ones and the most well- known. The assassin Muslim warriors of the 11<sup>th</sup> century were well – organized for their political aims, using methods of suicide not mainly for tactical reasons, but more as strategy. Their modern- time successors differ from them mainly because while the

assassins attacked only certain political groups, governors, ministers, generals, the main characteristics of the modern terrorists is that they attack the so – called “soft targets”, an attack against randomly chosen innocent civilian persons. (Beres, 2007.). The nizarits, as they originally called themselves, were later renamed assassins, in other words, or killers. Their services were widely used by close and far rival rulers. To use modern terms, they were suicide terrorists, who by sacrificing their lives, followed their rulers orders, hoping that their deeds will take them to the Islam paradise. Their methods were very similar to those of the modern- time suicide terrorists, they can be considered the spiritual predecessors of siita religion. With the end of the crusade wars the assassins disappeared from the stage of history, but the legacy of these Middle Age kamikaze has still been present in the Islam world. The brutality of the European Middle Age was ceased by the age of reforms, the renaissance, and by the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Jewish-Christian culture was radically transformed. It cannot be said about Islam, since this religion was not shaken by a movement that can be compared to that of the age of reforms.

Despite of the fact that there are several definitions of the terrorism, the psychological state induced by terrorist acts does not differ from mental consequences of other traumatic actions. From many viewpoints the strongest psychological influence of all terrorist acts is that of suicide murderous attempts. From the point of view of intervention, the main emphasis should be on prevention and this is the territory where psychology and psychiatry get involved by trying to establish the motivational factors in the personality of the murderers. It is natural that on the other levels of prevention these two areas have a great role, especially in the treatment of psychological effects of terrorist actions.

#### WHAT MAY MOTIVATE THE SUICIDE MURDERER?

Suicide terrorism is a terrorist action that can be applied to reach both short- term and long- term aims (Tutto, 2008.):

- this is the most aggressive of all terrorist tactics;
- the aim is to enforce the rival group to yield;
- it is applied when other terrorist tactics is of no result;
- on the one hand, it causes immediate panic, on the other hand, it causes long- time fear in the civilian population;
- the perpetrators are often motivated by vengeance, they identify themselves with the aim, because of the resulting death they are not afraid of counter actions;
- the costs are low compared to the severe physical and psychological damage caused;
- its preparation is easier than that of the classic terrorist acts, from the point of damage and the number of casualties is very effective;
- Terrorist groups mistify the assailants;
- its publicity is considerable, the fight against it is costly and difficult.

There is a common perception that nobody is born a terrorist. The person follows a certain road that can be identified by the society and the person's psychological development until he/she becomes a terrorist. During this process the following three basic conditions built on each other can be noticed:

- a severe psychological childhood trauma that influences further personal development and which impedes further personality development (in case of many terrorists it is the case of their parents' violent murder which is especially traumatic if the child witnessed it);
- in teenage years the person who can be easily influenced and seeks acceptance, by external pressure, joins an idea that represents enlightenment and provides sense for his/her life;
- the person who develops this way grows up in a society full of serious conflicts where the devices used to mirror the interests of the society include aggression (Tutto, 2008).

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Contrary to the classic terrorists the suicide fanatics are capable for the ultimate self- sacrifice only for an ideology, they possess narcissistic traits, they lack empathy towards other people and they are devoid of feelings. They are characterized by inner emptiness, depression and loss of hope in contrary with the traditional terrorists who are basically of positive disposition. For the suicide terrorist the openness of feelings is the synonym of vulnerability. Love is perceived as a serious threat for them that means self- sacrifice, giving, adaptability, and especially, emotional dependency. One of the characteristic features of fanaticism is the absolute incapability to dependence, behind the unconditional self- sacrifice there is a simplified way of thinking in connection with ideology, in other words, they only see two categories, the “good” and the “bad”. A fanatic person is ready for the ultimate sacrifice but in many cases it came to light that perception modifying drugs had been used. The permanent “brainwash” and the proper drugs modify the perception of the perpetrator in a way that the consequences of his/her actions are not being realized either by sense or emotionally. So the person becomes perfect for performing the act.

From sociological point of view we can establish the following:

- suicide terrorists do not come from the Western world;
- male terrorists prevail;
- they are usually older than classic terrorists;
- they are usually single;
- religious fundamental groups attract more suicide terrorists;
- they usually come from the lower layers of society.

The question is whether the of terrorists’ attitude showing infinity can be considered, as a result of long-term negative influences, a personality disorder or a sick mind. (Tutto, 2008)

In the article Post and his colleagues (2009) give a detailed analysis of the actual psychological questions of suicide terrorism for psychiatrists and other specialists of mental hygiene. Their aim is to help to understand this horrific phenomenon and to think about prevention. They specify the notion of terrorism and suicide terrorism and the connected issues. The suicide terrorism according to the perception of Islam, in spite of the fact that the Koran has even three prohibitions of that, is not considered a crime but a sacrifice. There is a specific understanding of the prohibition in Koran which brings back the Jihad or the Holy war, the golden time of the caliphate and consequently, is defined by the doctrine of Salaphism. There are three approaches in the psychology of suicide terrorism: the group terrorism, the socio-psychology and other social processes as well as focusing on individual characteristics. The group model emphasizes the collective identity which puts young even muslim children on the road of terrorism and leads them to self- sacrifice. The authors make an interesting comparison between the Palestine groups and the Al- Kaida suicide terrorists from the point of motivation. They also introduce the Al-Kaida operational 2.0 version which is applied in recent times. As far as social processes are concerned, the mechanism of moral absolution, the relationship between different groups and the enemy picture, the influence of a charismatic leader and in connection with this the fade of the personality, all these factors exist in the background of suicide terrorism. The approach based on individual specifics emphasizes the traumatic and depressive background, the losses, low self- esteem and the feeling of uselessness. The authors depict the psychological explanation of the suicide terrorism by melting these three models. They also propose an interdisciplinary approach for understanding in which anthropological, political and psychological factors are taken into consideration. The aim of prevention which is also the task of psychiatrists and psychologists is that during de-radicalization processes that are found even within institutional framework the movement of children and the young towards terrorist groups is hindered.

According to an interesting approach some researchers have been searching the answers to the correlation between some characteristics of suicide terrorists and the success of their actions. (Benmelech, Berrebi, 2007). They try to prove

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that the human factor is a very important factor in the success of terrorist actions. The more important and valuable is the target, the stronger are the terrorist's capabilities and effectiveness, together with the destructiveness of the action. Their theories connect to the approach where the relationship between education, poverty and terrorism is examined. In their view terrorism is a better business for those who are better educated and the terrorist groups are more likely to choose them. The researchers got their information from the database of the Israeli Security Agency where detailed biographical data can be found about the Palestine suicide terrorists and the assassinated between 2000 and 2005. In their statistical analysis they established that there is a strong correlation between the education level of the terrorists and the importance of the target. The older and more educated attacker killed more people during the fight for an important objective and he had less chance to be seized. They supported with data that the Palestinian terror groups are more likely to choose older and more experienced suicide terrorists for targets in big cities while for military targets they choose less educated ones. Better educated attackers are more destructive, it means they killed 4-6 times more victims during their attacks. According to the assumptions of the authors the explanation of these results is that a suicide action is a complex task because they need to reach the targets, they need to plan the exact time and place where the action takes place and they have to remain undercover. For all these they need to be educated/ in my opinion, it is more a question of being intelligent / and they need to be mentally stable. The suicide terrorist also has his profits: being valued, the memory, the moral status. The more he/she hurts the enemy the bigger is the profit.

In the past two decades the number of suicide attacks not only grew but became more global, more harmful and mainly religiously motivated. (Alcorta, 2010.) Why are the main reasons of the globalization of terrorism? Why does somebody want to become a terrorist? Are we able to diagnose any genetic, biological, cultural, social pre-factors? What is the role of religion in the motivation of such kind of terrorism? How can we effectively prevent and fight against religiously motivated terrorism? Alcorta (2010) tries to explain the religiously motivated terrorism within the framework of development basis by the indirect effect of biological and cultural factors. The dramatic size of changes in technology, the urbanization sped up the industrial globalization of today. It has a tremendous influence on traditional cultural values, it strengthens isolation and causes fitting in problems, especially for the young. Culture in general sense but religion plays a special role in the formation of the inner mental model. In the time of a personality development there are especially sensitive periods when the brain is very adaptable for the outside stimuli and they can form our perception of the world, our way of thinking, in other words the formation of the mental model. A similar period is the teen years. Boys, compared to girls are more sensitive with their quest for taking risks, both from social and biological point of view. This predisposes that their socially double situation, the conflicts of their roles, the cultural dissonance which arise from cultural margins and the specifications of urban life, further strengthens their feelings of weakness and uselessness. These young teenager boys become especially sensitive to join terrorist groups since these groups provide them with the feeling of belonging, reduce social stress, the search for identity and isolation. Religion is the best institution to strengthen relations through belief, cooperation, the feeling of togetherness. The rituals, the emotionally strong symbols, the perfectly learned ideas have a strengthening force. Those young people who come to big cities from areas with strong cultural values bring with them their beliefs and values and they protect them from cultural shock. At the same time they are more susceptible for the call of fundamental radical groups. This way religion becomes a very effective means to have their political goals and actions performed by the young and religious terrorists.

The database of terrorism of the Australian Flinders University keeps a lot of information about the Iraki, Palestinian-Israeli, Afghani, Pakistani and Sri-Lanka terrorists who together are responsible for 90% of all suicide terrorist acts between 1981 and 2006. According to Riaz Hassan (2009) who processed the data established that in the background of terrorist actions there are more political than religious factors. Proven facts deny those ideas that the explanation of the terrorists' actions lies in their personalities or their religion. In conscription religion is a basic issue but the real motivation

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factors are the mixture of politics, shaming, vengeance and altruism. With the exception of one demographic fact that the majority of terrorists are young men, there is not one specific demographic, psychological, socio -economical or religious factor that would explain these horrific deeds. It can be even said that these attackers are normal from psychological point of view and they have a well- integrated social network and emotionally belong to their community. To understand the logic of terrorist groups we need to know about the individual motivation. Terrorist attacks often have strong symbolic meaning since the individual's mission is not only about death and killing other people but they are able to reach more complex tasks which can range from individual level up to social level, e.g., the approval of the community and political success. The judgment of the community is differs from the traditional one, here we can speak about altruistic suicide. It means that one person's life is worth less than the honour, religion and other collective values of a community. The configuration of these aims appears within a specific political conflict, within specific circumstances and the suicide attacks serve here as a tactical means, a weapon.

#### WOMEN IN SUICIDE ATTACKS

To use women in suicide attacks with different groups has become more and more widespread. From tactical point of view women can be used better (they are less suspicious and checked, they can reach the target unnoticed), from psychological point of view the result is more successful / more shocking, more noticeable and it wins the compassion of the public.

Media can successfully depict the general picture of a terrorist woman. These women depict the ultimate hopelessness, they are more a victim than a cynical citizen, among them those who kill children. Women terrorists are considered more as victims than assailants. As contrary to the male terrorist a female who turns to aggression is the one whose man was taken away, who was raped, whose family was killed. At the same time, male terrorists of similar social background, who have problems in their private lives are of no mercy from the media. From the point of motivation three areas can be emphasized: nationalism in the first place, vengeance in the second, and the third is the desire for martyrdom. Media analysis shows that that depiction of female terrorists follows the scientific conclusions. They follow two basic approaches: explanations on sociological and theoretical level and in the majority of cases, theories of personal motivation and characteristics. According to the media women are mainly motivated by personal reasons and only secondarily by political reasons. The rival, directly involved parties explain the actions of female terrorists totally differently and this duality can be noticed in the interpretation of the Israeli/Arabic and the Russian/Chechen case. The media uses well-formulated generalizations in connection with female terrorists. (Tamasi, 2009)

Using female terrorists is a modern- time phenomenon. The first known terrorist act was committed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, 1986 by a 16-year-old Syrian girl, Sana Khyadali. As a retaliation of the Israeli war against Lebanon she drove a car with 200 kilograms of TNT in it into a convoy full of soldiers, killing two. Since Khyadali several terrorist women chose this method to support the political aims of their organizations, which shocked both the media and the public opinion. Since 1985 about 34% of the terrorist attacks were committed by women. (Beres, 2007)

In his study Beres (2007) depicts the main characteristics of female terrorists in the most common places of action.

Their appearance in Chechnya is traced back to the conflict between Chechnya and Russia which started about 200 years ago. This phenomenon started with the first Russian- Chechen war (1994-1996).

There are two known groups of Chechen female terrorists:

- Suppressed Muslim women with weak willpower (zombies) who are forced by men by blackmail to commit the act;

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- The “black widows” category. These women carry the legacy of the Russian intrusion conscientiously, they either lost somebody or they are nationalists. Behind their actions is the love of their land, on the other hand, they are motivated by vengeance.

Chechen leaders use female terrorists mainly as propaganda who are depicted in the media as victims.

Palestine nationalism turned into terrorism in the beginning of 1960. In reality they were reluctant to involve women into terrorism since according to Islam the role of women is defined in giving life. Female terrorists are used as a message to the world, on the other hand, the actions are used for tactical benefits and at the same time it brings shame on Palestinian men. The majority of Palestinian female terrorists are educated, there is nationalism behind their actions, their families are pure and raising the level of their well-being is also a motivating force.

The LTTE in Sri Lanka used female terrorists mainly for rational tactical reasons, for strategic aims. Women motivated by their nationalistic feelings and the desire to be valuable for the society as well as the influence of the cult of sacrifice, join the suicide terrorists.

As a conclusion the writer mentions that basically it is impossible to draw the final profile of a suicide terrorist. Female terrorists are influenced by different factors in their respective countries, their only similar feature is that they are young women.

The theory of using women as terrorists can be supplemented by the following factors:

- stereotypes connected with women (they are weak, unprotected) as well as other factors (pregnancy, clothes, cultural traditions);
- women are a stimulating force for men to join the organization voluntarily (they raise the number of fighters);
- women suicide bombers play a significantly important role in the media and in public eyes;
- they psychologically influence the society.

Using women as “human precision bombs” is not a result of individual decisions but that of an organization. The organization and its leaders decide about the method which is used in a specific situation or for tactical necessity. For the leadership of the organization the given necessity determines (the aim of propaganda, problems with the number of the staff, necessity of the action) the choice of the person. In spite of the motivational differences some general elements can still be shown: women who agree to commit a terrorist act the feeling of personal insult is mixed with strong nationalism, sometimes with a religious motivation. A higher level political aim makes the planned action sublime, idealistic, obviously moral and for all these reasons more acceptable for the individual. (Beres, 2007)

## CONCLUSION

Suicide terrorist actions is one of the least defensible area of terrorism. The methods with which the assailants become martyrs have become more diverse. It is difficult to understand the concept of martyrdom logically, that is why it is very difficult to predict, to imagine and to prevent terrorist acts. Research reached the final opinion that there is no specific suicide terrorist profile, actually, they are quite ordinary people. What makes them different is that they have a strong need to do something for their society and their community where they feel they belong, combined with their individual aims, in other words, to be a martyr. Group pressure, recruitment of the terrorist organizations and the online Jihad propaganda plays a prominent role. (Beraczkai, 2009). Terrorist acts are sources of danger against which it is worth fighting in organized way. The battle against terrorism needs serious materialistic and financial means. The first and the most important step of defense is prevention, so that these actions would not even appear. This gives serious challenges to reconnaissance and criminology. If prevention is the most critical issue in the fight against terrorism, consequently, secret services, police and other collaborating forces need to use their tactics, methods and devices for the identification of the future potential perpetrators.

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