

Central Asian Jihadists in the Front Line

by Ely Karmon

Abstract

Since the beginning of 2017, a string of jihadist terrorist attacks involved Central Asian citizens, mainly of Uzbek and Kirgiz origin, notably in Turkey, Russia and Sweden. Another element, which should not be underestimated, are the Uighur jihadists, original from the Xinjiang Region in China. The final demise of the Islamic State, the disappearance of its territorial base and the pressure of the various coalition forces in Iraq and Syria on the surviving foreign fighters, will compel them to flee to ungoverned states, like Yemen and Libya, but for the various Central Asian jihadists, Afghanistan and the Pakistan tribal areas seem the most suitable refuge. From there they can swarm in case of need for attacks into Europe, Central Asia, China, India and beyond.

Keywords: Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Russia, China, Europe, Central Asian jihadists

Introduction

Since the beginning of 2017, a string of jihadist terrorist attacks involved Central Asian citizens, mainly of Uzbek and Kirgiz origin. The latest noticeable attacks were the April 2017 bombing of St. Petersburg's Metro and the ramming of a stolen truck into a crowd in central Stockholm, Sweden. Interestingly, in three major cases there is a Turkish connection to the terrorists involved.

The St. Petersburg Metro Attack

On 3 April 2017, an explosive device contained in a briefcase detonated in the Saint Petersburg Metro, killing 15 people and injuring at least 45 others. A second explosive device was found and defused. Authorities in Kyrgyzstan informed that the suspected perpetrator, Akbarzhon Jalilov, was an ethnic Uzbek born in the southern city of Osh (Fergana Valley, Kyrgyzstan) but was a citizen of Russian Federation and had lived there since the age of 16.

Chinara Esengul, an expert on radical Islam based in Kyrgyzstan, said that according to official figures, about 850 people from Kyrgyzstan have joined the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. There are hundreds of thousands of Central Asian emigres living and working in the Russian Federation.[1]

A search of the apartment rented by Jalilov uncovered double-sided tape, metallic foil, and "other objects" similar to those comprising the unexploded device, which indicates that Jalilov assembled both explosive devices in the apartment.

The Fontanka.ru agency said Jalilov had traveled to Syria in 2014 and trained with Islamic State militants. The report said that Russian investigators had ascertained that the device used in the subway attack bore the hallmarks of "Syrian know-how," specifically traces of burned sugar.[2]

One theory, investigated in conjunction with the Kyrgyz National Security Committee, is that Jalilov might have committed the attack under the influence of the *Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* terror group, which operates in Syria. The group includes hundreds of Uzbeks, including those who used to live in Kyrgyzstan's Osh Region. In 2016 Kyrgyz security services had carried out a large-scale operation in the region against militants who had returned from Syria and were actively recruiting new members and preparing terrorist attacks. The Osh court banned the group as a terrorist organization. The militants then went underground and set up online recruiting operations.

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) detained near Moscow Abror Azimov from former Soviet Central Asia, born in 1990. He was accused as one of the organizers of the attack, and the one who had trained Jalilov. [3] However, Azimov refused to admit his guilt in court during the hearing.

By the end of April, the FSB arrested 12 people of Central Asian descent in the Kaliningrad region suspected of involvement with the Jihad-Jamaat Mujahedin extremist group. The alleged leader of the cell was placed by Uzbekistan on a Wanted List for extremist crimes.

Two suspected supporters of the ISIS, who were planning a "high-profile" terror attack in Russia's Far East, were arrested on April 26 in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, a city on the Pacific island of Sakhalin. One of the two suspects is from a Central Asian state while the other is a citizen of Russia.[4]

Stockholm, Sweden

On April 7, 2017, Rakhmat Akilov, a 39-year-old Uzbek man, rammed a stolen truck into a crowd in central Stockholm, killing five people and wounding 15. Bomb disposal experts found an improvised explosive device packed into a suitcase inside the hijacked beer truck. It is not known why the IED failed to detonate.

Speaking in a mixture of Russian and Swedish, the suspect confessed to the crime as soon as he was apprehended. Akilov's Swedish residency application had been rejected in 2016 but police said there was nothing to indicate he might be planning an attack. Akilov was known to the police and posted ISIS jihadist propaganda on social media.

An Uzbek man, living at the same address as Akilov, ran a cleaning company that was part of a 2015 police investigation into an Uzbek crime ring in the Stockholm area which was alleged to have generated significant sums of money for ISIS. Five people were charged and three were convicted on grounds of financial impropriety.[5]

Swedish Radio News has discovered links on the Russian social media website *Odnoklassniki* between the suspected Stockholm terrorist and a network around a jihadist leader, Abu Saloh, who was wanted by Interpol for terror financing and a suicide attack in 2016 in Kyrgyzstan. Extremists use *Odnoklassniki* accounts as go-betweens to connect violent jihadists and possible recruits – especially focusing on Central Asian migrant workers like Rakhmat Akilov. According to a source within the Russian police, the suspected organizer of the attack is none other than Abu Saloh.[6]

In November 2015, a group of Uzbek citizens arrested in Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent, were allegedly planning to go to Syria to join the *Jannat Oshiqqlari* (Loving Paradise) group in Syria. *Jannat Oshiqqlari* is also known as *Tawhid wal-Jihad* (TWJ), an Uzbek-led group based in Syria's Aleppo province. TWJ had pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda and runs a propaganda operation that broadcasts its activities in Syria. The group has two websites, a Facebook page, and a YouTube channel on which it posts professionally made videos with footage of battles in which TWJ militants are fighting, as well as speeches by the group's leader, Abu Saloh.[7]

The Turkish Connection

According to a senior Turkish official, Akbarzhon Jalilov, the man who blew up the St. Petersburg metro wagon, had entered Turkey in late 2015 and was deported to Russia in December 2016 because of immigration violations. While in Turkey, Jalilov "was deemed suspicious due to some connections he had, but no action was taken as he had not done anything illegal and there was no evidence of wrongdoing." [8]

Turkish authorities detained Rakhmat Akilov, the Uzbek national suspected of mowing down pedestrians with a truck in Stockholm on April 7, while he tried to join the ranks of ISIS in Syria in 2015. Given his

refugee status, he was deported back to Sweden. Uzbek authorities had added Akilov to an international Wanted List in late February, after a criminal case based on “religious extremism” was opened against him.

However, the Turkish roots of Central Asian jihadists are deeper and broader than the cases in St. Petersburg and Stockholm attest.

Attack on Istanbul’s Main Airport

On June 28, 2016, three assailants, armed with AK-47 rifles, became involved in a firefight with security and police near Istanbul Atatürk Airport’s x-ray security checkpoint, after which at least two of the gunmen detonated suicide bombs, leaving 43 people dead and some 200 injured.

A senior Turkish official identified the three suicide attackers as nationals of Russia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Two suicide bombers were identified as Vadim Osmanov and Rakhim Bulgarov, while the third was never named.

U.S. Rep. Michael McCaul, Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security, claimed that Akhmed Chatayev, commander of the Chechen battalion in Syria, directed this attack at Istanbul’s airport. The CIA and White House declined to comment on McCaul’s assertion. Turkish officials were also not able to confirm Chatayev’s role. The *Sabah* newspaper, which is close to the Turkish government, said police had launched a manhunt for him. The 35-year-old militant had fought in Chechnya against Russian forces in the early 2000s before fleeing to the West. He was placed on the U.S. list of suspected terrorists in 2015. Although no one has claimed responsibility for the airport attack, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that ISIS was “most probably” behind it.[9]

After the airport attack, authorities arrested 42 suspects, with four more still on the run. Those held, including suspects from Russia, Algeria and Turkey, are due to go on trial in November 2017. The authorities have said a large number of those linked to the attack are from ex-Soviet Central Asia or from Russia’s mainly Muslim northern Caucasus region.[10]

The investigation into the Istanbul airport attack has revealed the Islamic State ran a training center in Turkey, which the airport attacker Vadim Osmanov had attended. This center was used for the initial training of foreign fighters coming to Turkey to join the Islamic State and also to arrange their transfers to Syria.[11]

The Istanbul Reina Nightclub Attack

Contrary to the investigation in the Istanbul airport bombings, the attack on the Reina nightclub in Istanbul, on December 31, 2016, has provided important information about the wide network and deep implantation of Central Asian jihadists on Turkish territory. The attack was carried out eight weeks after Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had called for all-out war against Turkey in an audio released on November 2, 2016.

On January 16, 2017, after a massive manhunt, the Reina attacker, identified as Uzbek national Abdulkadir Masharipov (alias Muhammed Horasani) from a small town in Kyrgyzstan with a predominantly Uzbek population, was finally captured alive in Istanbul. Investigations revealed that he had been directed to launch the attack by a senior Islamic State operative in Raqqa, Syria, and had been provided logistical and financial support in Istanbul by a large Islamic State network operating clandestinely in the city.[12]

Born in 1983, Masharipov had graduated from Fergana State University in Uzbekistan with a major in physics and a minor in computer science. He has been involved with jihadi terrorist organizations since 2011, according to information provided to Interpol by Uzbekistan, where he was a known terrorist and subject to

a national arrest warrant. He speaks Uzbek, Arabic, Chinese, and Russian. Masharipov told investigators that he had received military training at an al-Qaida camp in Afghanistan after traveling there in 2010. At some later point, while he was in Pakistan, Masharipov became a member of the Islamic State, pledging allegiance to Abu-Bakar al-Baghdadi.[13]

About a year before the Reina attack, he had been given orders by an Islamic State emir in Raqqa to travel to Turkey to establish himself, along with his wife and two children, in Konya - a city in the middle of Turkey - and await further orders. It appears that at some point, while he was in Pakistan, he had established remote contact with the group's leadership in Syria. According to his statement to the police, after traveling from Pakistan, Masharipov was arrested inside Iran and detained there for over a month before Iranian authorities deported him in January 2016 across the Iranian-Turkish border, without informing the Turkish police or customs agents.

Masharipov arrived in Konya, central Turkey, with his family at the beginning of 2016, assuming the name Ebu Muhammed Horasani. Police reportedly found Masharipov along with his four-year-old son at the home of a Kyrgyz friend in the city. His friend was also detained, along with three women. In the apartment, police found two aerial drones, two handguns, several cell phone SIM cards, and \$197,000 in cash.[14] Masharipov is believed to be part of a sleeper cell to which several Uighurs, Syrians and Daghestanis also belonged.[15]

According to Masharipov's testimony, on December 25, 2016, he was directed, via the messaging app *Telegram*, by Islamic State emir in Raqqa Abu Shuhada, responsible for Islamic State operations in Turkey, to launch an attack on New Year's Eve in Istanbul. Masharipov claimed he was provided before the attack with an AK-47 assault rifle, six loaded magazines and three stun grenades by an Islamic State member, whose name was never made known to him.

Masharipov's wife was detained in an operation that captured 11 suspects on January 12, 2017. Nurullayeva stated that her husband left their Istanbul lodgings three days before the attack and that she and their daughter were then transferred to an Islamic State safe house by Islamic State members. It was later revealed that Russian authorities had arrested Nurullayeva in 2011 on charges of being a member of a terrorist organization.[16]

Hurriyet reported that an ISIS cell of Uzbeks, operating in the central region of Konya, provided Masharipov with support. Uzbek fighters have become deeply embedded in ISIS and have fought alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan. They are also said to have secret outposts in some major Russian cities as well as having ties to Muslim extremists in China.[17]

In March 2017, Turkish Police detained in Istanbul's Kağıthane district two ISIS suspects who held Uzbekistani citizenship. They were planning a "major attack similar to the Reina nightclub." Police seized in their apartment two Kalashnikov rifles with two full chargers with 500 bullets, and also found numerous digital and written documents containing information about the terrorist group.[18]

The Central Asian Jihadists in Syria and Iraq

Already by the end of 2014, it was estimated that there were between one and three thousand Caucasians fighting alongside armed groups within Syria and Iraq (whether affiliated to IS or the al-Nusra Front). The Caucasians are divided between those who have arrived from Chechnya, Georgia, Daghestan or Azerbaijan, and those who migrated from countries of asylum like Europe and Turkey. Most of the Chechen fighters living in Europe went to the Arab world during 2012 and 2013. Some proceeded from Grozny to Turkey, while others used Bosnia and Kosovo as their transit routes. Chechens have become an important element of ISIS, despite their small numbers in comparison with other ethnic groups. In Syria and Iraq there are four

active groups, some under the banner of the ISIS and others belonging to the al-Nusra Front (the al-Qaeda faction in Syria), while still others operate independently.[19]

According to recent reports, 6,000 militants from Central Asia and the Caucasus have already been enlisted in ISIS ranks. The largest radical group in Uzbekistan, *Imam Bukhari Jamaat*, has joined ISIS in Syria. Experts say there are over one thousand Uzbek and Tajik militants still fighting under the banner of ISIS.[20]

The Chechens in Syria represent a domestic security problem in Europe and Turkey, because many originate from the diaspora. Considerable numbers come from Georgia and Turkey, but there are also dozens from Austria and France and fewer from Belgium, Scandinavia and Germany.

In October 2016, police in Germany had conducted raids in five regions as part of a probe into alleged extremism by asylum-seekers from Chechnya. It was part of an investigation which began against a 28-year-old Russian of Chechen origin who was suspected of “preparing an act of violence against the state.” The Chechen jihadist scene in Berlin is substantial and high-profile. Chechen groups in Syria trained foreigners, including Germans of different ethnic origins, following a long tradition of sympathy for Chechnya among German jihadists.[21]

The fighters coming from Central Asia to Syria, especially the Uzbeks, possess extensive practical expertise of warfare due to their participation in various theatres of war, such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many of them have undertaken numerous operations at the local and regional levels in the past. The *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* was the most prominent Central Asian group active in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It has been decimated after the US coalition occupied Afghanistan. Most of the Uzbek fighters taking part in Syria’s jihad have come from their countries of exile, particularly Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.[22]

Another element, which should not be underestimated, are the Uighur jihadists, originating from the Xinjiang region in China.

Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said there are about 5,000 Chinese fighters in Syria, who, together with their families, add up to 20,000 people. Li Wei, a terrorism expert at China’s Institute of Contemporary International Relations, believes the real numbers are much lower, about 300 Chinese fighters who brought with them about 700 family members. Some have joined al-Qaida’s branch in the country previously known as al-Nusra Front, others paid allegiance to ISIS and a smaller number joined factions such as the *Islamist Ahrar al-Sham*. The majority of Chinese jihadis are with the *Turkistan Islamic Party* (TIP), a very secretive organization. They are organized, battled-hardened and have been instrumental in ground offensives against regime forces. They are active in parts of Idlib and in the strategic town of Jisr al-Shughour, as well as the Kurdish Mountains in the western province of Latakia. [23]

Christina Lin, an expert in China-Mideast relations at SAIS-Johns Hopkins University, sustains that while from the 1990s to the late 2000s, China’s terrorist threats were largely localized in Xinjiang and bordering countries, especially Afghanistan and Pakistan, after Uighur militants based in AfPak began to migrate to Syria in 2012, the Middle East became the “forward front for China’s War on Terror.” There was an increase of terrorist attacks in China (e.g. in Beijing 2013, and in Kunming and Urumqi in 2014) directed from abroad.

Lin mentions the August 14, 2016 deal by China to provide humanitarian aid, military training, and intelligence sharing with the Syrian government, as a possible trigger to the August 30 suicide bomb attack on the Chinese embassy in Kyrgyzstan. According to Bishkek authorities, the terrorist attack was ordered by Uighur jihadists in Syria, financed by the rebranded a *Jabhat Fatah al-Sham* (JFS, former *Jabhat al-Nusra*), coordinated from Turkey, and carried out by a member of the *Turkistan Islamic Party* (TIP/ETIM).[24]

Afghanistan as new/old Base

After the demise of ISIS and the destruction of the Caliphate as a territorial entity, many foreign fighters, especially those from Caucasus, Central and Southeast Asia will either return home or more probably will flow to the “liberated” territories in Afghanistan and the Pakistan tribal areas - a revival of the 1990s situation. They will try to build an ISIS territorial basis there but many will probably strengthen the ranks of al-Qaeda in the region as its ally, the Taliban, has successfully weakened the pro-ISIS groups that tried to challenge it in the region.[25]

On January 26, 2015, Abu Muhammed al-Adnani, Islamic State’s chief spokesperson, declared the establishment of Wilayat Khorasan, a IS province “encompassing Afghanistan, Pakistan and other nearby lands.” Wilayat Khorasan has pursued a campaign of expansion and consolidation in the region, mostly in eastern and southeastern Afghanistan. The group, however, has experienced several setbacks on the battlefield.

The most crushing defeat suffered by Wilayat Khorasan was the annihilation of the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU), which had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in August 2015. In October 2015, the Taliban established a special unit, comprised of highly skilled and experienced militants, to combat ISIS and by December 2015 had killed hundreds of IMU fighters in Zabul, including its emir, Uthman Ghazi. Taliban militants, Afghan security forces, and local militias have also chipped away at Wilayat Khorasan-held territory in Nangarhar province along the Pakistani border.[26]

General John Nicholson, the most senior US commander in Afghanistan, has claimed American efforts have killed about one-third of ISIS fighters, including its leader, Hafiz Saeed Khan, in a drone strike in August 2016, and shrunk its territory in Afghanistan by two-thirds.[27]

However, ISIS has not given up its attempt to implant itself in Afghanistan and has recently carried out a series of deadly operations. It claimed responsibility for an attack (with over 80 killed) on a peaceful demonstration by Hazara protesters in the Afghan capital Kabul in July 2016, and also on a Shiite mosque in Kabul in June 2016, with the intention to inflame sectarian tensions. In March 2017, ISIS gunmen dressed as medics fought security forces for hours in an assault on a military hospital in the Afghan capital, killing 38. By the end of May 2017, in one of Afghanistan’s worst terrorist attacks ever, at least 150 people were killed and 300 others, including women and children, were injured in the huge suicide explosion in the Kabul diplomatic quarter, near the Germany Embassy and the Afghan presidential palace.

The rise of ISIS in Afghanistan poses serious security concerns for Russia, according to a September 2016 statement by Zamir Kabulov, the Russian Foreign Ministry’s director of the Second Asian Department in Afghanistan. Kabulov claimed that about 2,500 ISIS combatants are in Afghanistan and the organization is preparing to expand from Afghanistan into other Central Asian countries and Russia, giving Moscow reasons to worry.[28]

IS’ Khorasan Province consists mainly of disgruntled former Taliban and insurgents from South and Central Asia, who represent a key pillar of support for the ISIS’s affiliate. Among them, the Uzbek militants show growing assertiveness. The son of Tahir Yuldashev, the powerful Uzbek leader of the outlawed *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*, who was killed in a US missile strike in Pakistan in 2009, is leading efforts to help expand ISIS influence in Afghanistan. According to Anatol Lieven, a regional expert at Georgetown University’s Qatar campus, the number of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen and other fighters from the former USSR living in Afghanistan range from 6,000 to 25,000, many of them are intermarried with Afghans of a similar ethnic background.[29]

The Uighurs' Growing Footprint

Since 2010, Uighurs were involved in several international terrorist plots. In July 2010, three men were arrested in Norway for plotting terror attacks in Europe, an Iraqi Kurd named Shawan Sadek Saeed Bujak, Bujak, an Uzbek national named David Jakobsen, and a Norwegian citizen of Uighur origins named Mikael Davud, arrived in Norway in 1999. A European intelligence official said the three men were members of TIP. [30]

Bahrin Naim, a major Indonesian jihadist, plotted several terrorist attacks against the police and other targets in Indonesia since 2015. He created in September 2015 a terrorist cell in Bekasi, in West Java, which included Arif Hidayatullah, and Faris Abdullah Cuma (alias Ali), a Uighur. Naim also ran a cell in Batam, dedicated to smuggle Uighur terrorists into Indonesia for training in Poso and bombing operations in Java. It also arranged outbound trips for Indonesians who wanted to join ISIS in Syria.[31]

In Bangkok, on August 17, 2015, 20 people were killed in a pipe-bomb attack at the Erawan Shrine, a popular destination for Chinese tourists, and most of the bombing's victims were ethnically Chinese. However, even after two suspects had been caught - both of them ethnic Uighurs - the Thai authorities initially refused to confirm their Chinese nationality, and insisted they were merely part of a people-smuggling gang frustrated over police operations constricting their business. This official story has remained unchanged to this day, notwithstanding the discovery of large quantities of bomb-making materials in the same apartment where Bilal Mohammed, the first suspect, had been apprehended. Earlier in 2015, Thailand had deported around 100 Uighurs back to China after they had escaped to Thailand with hopes of reaching refuge in Turkey.[32]. The attack on the Erawan Shrine is likely to have been in revenge for this deportation.

In December 2016, five people were killed in the remote county of Karakax, in Xinjiang, after attackers drove a vehicle into the Communist Party compound and set off an explosive device. The five fatalities include the four attackers, who were shot in the incident.[33]

In mid-February 2017, eight people were killed in Pishan county in southern Xinjiang, including three knife-wielding assailants, in one of the latest outbreak of violence in the region. Local security forces have put Pishan under lockdown. At least two Uighurs have been detained for sharing videos of the scene. The official statement about the incident did not say whether the assailants were linked to ETIM.[34]

Two weeks later, Uighur jihadists posted a video in western Iraq in which they vow to return home and “shed blood like rivers” - the first ISIS threat against Chinese targets. The video showed fighters, including heavily armed children, giving speeches, praying, and killing “informants.”[35]

Michael Clarke, a specialist on Xinjiang at the Australian National University, asserted that it is the first time Uighur militants have claimed allegiance to ISIS. He suggested that the video could indicate a possible split among Uighur fighters, as it included a warning to those fighting with the al-Qaeda-aligned Turkestan Islamic Party in Syria.

In April, a suspected terrorist accused by the authorities of organizing terrorist operations overseas, was arrested in an armed raid in China's Hainan province. The suspect was said to have led a major group in Turkey. “When he was in Turkey, he had a team of more than 100 people under his command,” Wu Tengfei, a member of the anti-terror squad which carried out the arrest, told state television. China is concerned that a growing number of Uighurs have gone to Syria and Iraq to receive terrorist training through Southeast Asia and Turkey after leaving the country illegally through its southern borders.[36]

Conclusion

It is possible that the involvement of Central Asian foreign fighters in attacks in Europe and Russia is the result of the great reservoir of these jihadists with fighting experience in Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Afghanistan; the relative ease of receiving asylum refugee status in Europe; and the difficulty of law enforcement agencies to monitor this big mass of jihadists speaking “strange” languages.

The final demise of the Islamic State, the disappearance of its territorial base and the pressure of the various coalition forces in Iraq and Syria on the surviving foreign fighters, will compel them to flee to ungoverned states, like Yemen and Libya. However, for the various Central Asian jihadists, Afghanistan and the Pakistan tribal areas would appear to be the most suitable places of refuge.

From there they can swarm (if ordered to attack) into Europe, mainly Scandinavia and Germany, Russia, the Central Asian Muslim republics, China and India, South-East Asia and beyond.

Russia will have to pay special attention to this new/old threat. One of the critical challenges faced by Russia and its affected European neighbors, however, is the problem of intelligence sharing and operational cooperation against a common enemy under current circumstances in light of the tensions created between Russia and the West as a result of Russia’s interventions in Ukraine and Syria and the sanctions against the Russian Federation.

About the Author: Ely Karmon is Senior Research Scholar at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) and the Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS) at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzliya, Israel. Dr. Karmon lectures on International Terrorism and CBRN terrorism at the M.A. Counterterrorism Studies at IDC. His fields of research include political violence, international terrorism, CBRN terrorism, and the strategic influence of terrorism and subversion in the Middle East and worldwide.

Notes

- [1] “St. Petersburg subway blast was suicide attack, officials say,” *The Associated Press*, April 4, 2017, URL: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/st-petersburg-russia-explosion-investigation-1.4054197>
- [2] Filipov, David and Roth, Andrew, “Russia arrests possible accomplices of presumed St. Petersburg bomber,” *The Washington Post*, April 6, 2017.
- [3] “St Petersburg attack: Russian police question new suspect,” *Reuters*, April 17, 2017. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/17/st-petersburg-attack-russian-police-question-new-suspect>
- [4] “Russia Arrests 12 Central Asians On Extremism Charges in Kaliningrad,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 27, 2017. URL: <http://www.rferl.org/a/russia-arrests-12-central-asians-extremism-charges-kaliningrad-sakhalin-islamic-state-/28454312.html>
- [5] “Police arrest SIX more suspects over the Stockholm truck attack as three are bundled out of a car linked to the atrocity and special forces raid a property 20 km from the scene where four were killed,” *MailOnline*, April 8, 2017. URL: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4392736/Homemade-BOMB-hijacked-beer-truck-Stockholm.html>
- [6] “Akilov linked to network around jihadist leader,” *Swedish Radio News*, May 12, 2017. URL: <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6694525>
- [7] “Uzbeks Arrested For Allegedly Trying To Join Al-Qaeda Group In Syria,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 6, 2015. URL: <https://www.rferl.org/a/uzbekistan-al-qaeda-group-syria-jannat-oshliqari/27349840.html>
- [8] “Terrorists who attacked in Stockholm and St. Petersburg deported by Turkey,” *Stockholm Center for Freedom*, April 13, 2017. URL: <http://stockholmcf.org/terrorists-who-attacked-in-stockholm-and-st-petersburg-deported-by-turkey>.
- [9] Dominique Soguel and Suzan Fraser, “Attention in Istanbul bombing focused on Chechen extremist,” *The Associated Press*, July 1, 2016. URL: <https://apnews.com/fad6ca6eda9142bead29b11b7b259981/turkish-official-mastermind-feb-terror-attack-killed>.
- [10] “Turkey remembers Istanbul airport attack blamed on ISIL,” *Agence France-Presse*, June 28, 2017. URL: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-remembers-istanbul-airport-attack-blamed-on-isil-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=114880&NewsCatID=341>.
- [11] Ahmet S. Yayla, “The Reina Nightclub Attack and The Islamic State Threat to Turkey,” *CTC Sentinel*, Combating Terrorism Center, Vol. 10, Issue 3, March 10, 2017.

- [12] Ibid.
- [13] Ibid.
- [14] "Istanbul Reina attack suspect says nightclub was chosen at random," *BBC News*, January 19, 2017. URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-38673154>
- [15] Göktuğ Sönmez, "Reina Attack, Masharipov and Radicalization in Central Asia," *Orsam Review of Regional Affairs*, No.56, January 2017. URL: <http://www.orsam.org.tr/files/Degerlendirmeler/56/56eng.pdf>
- [16] Ahmet S. Yayla, op. cit.
- [17] Neal Baker and Mark Hodge, "Inside the Killer's Lair." *The Sun*, January 17, 2017.
- [18] "Two Daesh suspects planning Reina-style attack nabbed in Istanbul," *Daily Sabah*, March 16, 2017.
- [19] Tamer Badawi, "Daesh in Eurasia," *Al-Jazeera Centre for Studies*, December 4, 2014. URL: <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/dossiers/decipheringdaeshoriginsimpactandfuture/2014/12/201412311921865343.html> .
- [20] Martin Berger, "Radical Islamic Terrorism Spreading Across Central Asia Like Fire," *New Eastern Outlook*, July 9, 2016. URL: <http://journal-neo.org/2016/07/19/radical-terrorism-is-spreading-across-central-asia-as-fire/> .
- [21] "Germany Probing Possible Extremism Among Chechen Migrants," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 25, 2016. URL: <http://www.rferl.org/a/germany-extremism-chechen-migrants/28074011.html> .
- [22] Tamer Badawi, op. cit.
- [23] "Chinese Jihadis' Rise in Syria Raises Concerns at Home," *Dawn*, April 23, 2017. URL: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1328675> .
- [24] Christina Lin, "The Changing Nature of Terrorism in China," *The Cipher Brief*, September 27, 2016. URL: <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/asia/changing-nature-terrorism-china-1089> .
- [25] Ely Karmon, "The Demise of the Caliphate: Quo Vadis ISIS?" *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) website*, December 19, 2016. URL: <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1878/the-demise-of-the-caliphate-quo-vadis-isis> .
- [26] Nathaniel Barr, "Wilayat Khorasan Stumbles in Afghanistan," *Terrorism Monitor*, The Jamestown Foundation, Vol.15, Issue: 5, March 3, 2016. URL: <https://jamestown.org/program/wilayat-khorasan-stumbles-in-afghanistan/> .
- [27] Michael Safi, "Isis militants disguised as doctors kill 38 in Kabul hospital attack." *The Guardian*, March 8, 2017.
- [28] "10,000 ISIS fighters in Afghanistan 'trained to expand to Central Asia, Russia,'" *RT NEWS*, April 19, 2016. URL: <https://www.rt.com/news/340200-isis-afghanistan-threaten-russia/> .
- [29] "Isis letter reveals tribal rifts in Afghanistan faction amid war with Taliban and US," *Associated Press*, June 7, 2017. URL: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-letter-reveals-tribal-rifts-afghanistan-faction-amid-war-taliban-us-1625127> .
- [30] Scott Shane and Eric Schmitt, "Norway Announces Three Arrests in Terrorist Plot," *New York Times*, July 8, 2010.
- [31] Muh Taufiqurrohmah and Ardi Putra Prasetya, *Today*, December 15, 2016; URL: <http://m.todayonline.com/commentary/radical-terrorist-man-behind-five-terror-plots-indonesia> .
- [32] Jonathan Head, "The surreal investigations into Thailand's unresolved bombings," *BBC News*, August 17, 2016. URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37091825> .
- [33] Philip Wen, "Xinjiang attack: vehicle rams into government compound killing several," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 29, 2016.
- [34] "Eight dead after knife attack in China's western Xinjiang region," *Associated Press*, February 15, 2017. URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/15/eight-dead-knife-attack-chinas-western-xinjiang-region/> .
- [35] Bloody Islamic State video puts China in cross hairs, *South China Morning Post*, March 1, 2017.
- [36] Nectar Gan, "Details emerge of 'terrorism suspect' arrest during armed raid in China," *South China Morning Post*, April 17, 2017.