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**DICHOTOMOUS APPROACH TO POVERTY AS A SOURCE OF MODERN TERRORISM**

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**Abstract**

The main purpose of the work is to analyze the dichotomous approach to assessing the impact of the poverty level in society on the growth of the number of terrorists in the 21st century and, on the basis of the results obtained, to justify the place of poverty in the rating of sources of modern terrorist activity. The theoretical basis of the research is a set of scientific papers that examine the relationship between socio-economic trends and terrorist activities, the results of sociological surveys and statistical data.

**Keywords**

Poverty – Source of terrorism – International security – Terrorist threat - Society

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## Introduction

Information analysis of the scientific literature allows concluding that for a long time, there have been two distinct opposing views regarding the socio-economic trends of the sources of modern terrorism. For example, one group of studies suggests that poverty is a positive trend of terrorism. Its median results show us that countries with high or medium income per capita, as a rule, do not act as the basic suppliers of recruits for terrorist organizations (A. Camindo, E. Usuegbu-Wilson, G. Baker, E. Bueno-de-Mesquita, G. Becker, J. Nye, L. Tyson, D. Egorchenkov, and others.) We can note the opposite vector of the results in another group of studies: countries with a high or medium level of social development are more susceptible to the influence of the ideology of terrorism, therefore, poverty and serious existential problems of society are not its sources (A. Abadi, E. Benmelech, E. Klor, A. Kruger, J. Maleckova, D. Gambetta, S. Hertog, C. Russell, B. Miller, K. Berrebi, O. Engel, A. Yager, D. Ryazanov, etc.).

In our opinion, the presence of two different approaches is due to the fact that the results obtained in the course of scientific and expert activities very often direct researchers along a false logical path, because they distinguish individuals and society and do not pay attention to the nuances of how people perceive injustice or deprivation, regardless of their material circumstances. The problem here is that most of the work is based on sociological and statistical results, rather than a comparative and systematic approach to the problem of the relationship between poverty and terrorism. In addition, we believe that the recognition of poverty as a basic source of terrorism is not profitable for experts from the economic sphere and representatives of the media business.

## Literature Review

It is believed that a person who is in a relatively unfavorable socio-economic situation tends to be socially distant from the bulk of society. In this regard, socio-economic deprivation becomes closely interacted with the search for human opportunities to meet one's existential needs. Most speakers at an international conference in Cairo (2007) linked the causes of the spread of terrorism in the Middle East with the internal factors of the region and its states: *lack of freedom and poverty, uneven distribution of wealth, significant differences in social levels between rich and poor, state tyranny, repressive and monopolistic practices of wealth, fragility of social and national integration*. In particular, *Dr Al-Menoufi* highlighted the phenomenon of terrorism as a material factor that allows the lower strata of society to fight poverty. He said, "I am convinced and see, based on field research, that acts of terrorism are partially related to poverty. The poorest regions of Egypt were most represented among terrorists, and slums became their incubators". However, he added, "This, of course, does not apply to all cases. We cannot say that the terrorists from Saudi Arabia are poor"<sup>1</sup>. The SCO heads of states put the fight against poverty as their top priority, considering it the foundation for countering international terrorism, since poverty is a base for recruiting young people who are not satisfied with their situation<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The absence of democracy contributed to the return of terrorism. Available at: <https://www.swissinfo.ch/ara/>

<sup>2</sup> B. Panfilova, *Bednost kak osnova terrorizma*. *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (February 7, 2005).

The positive trend of the relationship between poverty and terrorism, which is assumed and expressed by scholars, is based on the results of studies of a country's citizens well-being, using the value of the state's per capita income or the average income of its citizens, which is the total GDP divided by the number of the state's population. Low per capita income is equated to poverty because a person of this stratum of society has nothing to live on. Poor economic conditions contribute to the lack of opportunities to improve the standard of living, which, in turn, generates cognitive disorders, in turn, giving rise to a positive relationship between unemployment and the individual level of readiness to participate in violence (not necessarily terrorist) and thus earn a living. However, note that these relations are complex enough to make such far-reaching conclusions based on one indicator. The residence region of the people of the social bottom plays an important role in this issue. For example, the study by A. *Camindo* found that "the social causes of terrorism in Kenya (147 places in the HDI in 2019) are the result of a complex network of interconnected issues that arise in four main thematic areas: *socio-economic conditions of Kenya; resource allocation and access policy; sociocultural factors; poverty and a country in need of security*"<sup>3</sup>. E. *Usuegbu-Wilson* in his article "The Impact of Poverty on Terrorism in Northeastern Nigeria" (158th place in the HDI in 2019) writes that poverty has a positive effect on the growth of terrorism in the northeastern region of Nigeria since it is known that a prolonged conflict in this zone is "caused by poverty and contributes to its development". Therefore, poverty remains the main socio-economic factor causing terrorism<sup>4</sup>. According to studies by the German Federal Criminal Police Agency, social factors are more important than political beliefs for young people who turn to radicalism. The stronger the social contrasts in society, the greater the gap between rich and poor, the faster the opinion is formed in society about the inability of the government to perform its functions and the need to replace it by any (legal and illegal) way<sup>5</sup>. As we can see, representatives of poor Africa, developed Europe, and developing Asia share one view on the place of poverty in the structure of sources that generate terrorism. It should be emphasized that this assumption along with the law enforcement bodies and scholars of these regions is also put forward by world political figures (*V.V. Putin, J. Bush Jr., B. Clinton, J. Kerry, C. Powell*, and others). Thus, the President of Tunisia, *Kais Saied*, at a meeting with youth in November 2019, emphasized that the cause of the spread of terrorism is poverty, which people are forced to compensate by exchanging consent to join the terrorists<sup>6</sup>. Politicians are echoed by representatives of the Church and the public. Founder of the non-profit organization that helps Somali women, *F. Veli*, in an interview with Voice of America, noted: "Children are recruited. Yes, it is a fact. What will we do with this? We need to talk about the root causes that make Somali children vulnerable, we need to make sure that our community has the opportunity to get out of poverty". South African archbishop *Desmond Tutu* held the same view in 2007: "You can never win a war against terror as long as there are conditions in the world that make people desperate: poverty, disease, and ignorance"<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> A. Kamindo, Social and economic causes of terrorism in Kenya: a case study of Eastleigh estate, Nairobi county. University of Nairobi (2016): 1-72. Available at: <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/100019>

<sup>4</sup> E. Uzuegbu-Wilson, The Impact of Poverty on Terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria. SSRN Alert (2019): 1-14. Available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3456186](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3456186)

<sup>5</sup> Social factors, not political ideology, lead to extremism. Available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/social-factors-not-political-ideology-lead-to-extremism/a-6043769>

<sup>6</sup> In his meeting with the youth of Kasserine. Available at: <http://halketwassl.com>

<sup>7</sup> S. D. Rodionova; N. I. Skok; V. L. Molozhvenko; E. O. Akvazba y T. E. Uhabina, "Social Phenomenon of Poverty and Mechanisms to Overcome It in a Northern Town", *Espacios* Vol: 38 num 33 (2017): 19.

Apparently, the above examples clearly confirm the trend that *poverty causes terrorism in the modern world*. Not only theory and public policy prove their deep relationship, but also practice. For example, the Egyptian study "Poverty and its impact on the industry of extremism" (2019) states that the terrorist organization ISIS sent recruiters to poor countries in Africa to compensate for their losses among militants in Syria and Iraq. The study states: "Poverty can be a catalyst that leads a person to extremism, depending on the state of the society in which they live, and this poverty makes it easier for extremist groups to attract new people. Today, the study notes, terrorist groups are looking for recruits through unemployment portals"<sup>8</sup>. The study's findings are also confirmed by the fact that according to statistics, there has been an increase in the recruitment of children and young people by terrorist organizations in Africa in recent months. A certain part of the academic literature on conflicts contains opinions that poverty increases the likelihood of political upheavals and civil war in the country. It is also logical to compare terrorism as a form of eliminating contradictions between conflicting parties with poor socio-economic conditions. Just a few weeks after September 11, 2001, US trade representative *R. Zoellick* spoke about the need to liberalize international trade and, consequently, reduce poverty – as a means of fighting terrorism.

## Methods

The methodological basis of the study was the comparative and systematic approaches that allowed identifying and comparing the dichotomy of modern scientific research on this problem. The epistemological potential of statistical and sociological methods of quantitative and qualitative research made it possible to adequately interpret the multi-vector results of scientific research on a single subject of analysis for them.

## Results: Poverty as an incentive to join a terrorist organization

The scientific results and opinions that we presented, clearly prove the high rank of poverty in the scalar chain of terrorism sources. Indeed, terrorism and other manifestations of radicalism in the context of the financial and economic crisis, the constant rise in prices, inflation and unemployment are sometimes the only way for a person living in low socio-economic conditions to earn money for a decent life. According to K-press, at the dawn of its existence, the ISIS terrorist organization, banned in Russia and many other countries of the world, paid monthly wages and various social compensations to each militant (Tables 1 and 2).

Compensation	Amount in US dollars
Wages	50
Food	2.5
Personal expenses	40
Gas in the presence of a car	35
Support of wife, if any	50
Support of minor, if any	35

Table 1  
Monthly social compensation paid to ISIS fighters<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> An Egyptian study confirms ISIS tendency for poor countries to compensate for its losses. Available at: <https://aawsat.com/home/article/1808726/>

<sup>9</sup> How much does ISIS pay to terrorists? Available at: <https://sm-news.ru/news/world/skolko-platyat-terroristam-igil/>

Compensation	Amount in US dollars
Marriage, if the bride is getting married for the first time	800
Marriage, if the bride is the widow of a murdered militant	1,300
On home improvement in marriage	500
In the event of the death of a militant husband	200
For the burial of a militant husband	800

Table 2  
One-time social compensation paid to ISIS fighters<sup>10</sup>

The Palestinian authority also pays convicted terrorists a monthly allowance based on the principle of the more serious the crime, the more money they get. Families of terrorists killed by Israeli security forces during a terrorist attack receive monthly pensions<sup>11</sup>.

Terrorist organizations have enough resources to make such so-called "social payments". Experts, politicians, and scholars are now openly saying that terrorism is a *business* that can bring both its participants and organizers considerable income, which can be compared with the income from the drug and oil business. Here is a list of the world's richest terrorist organizations compiled by Forbes in 2017 (Table 3):

Terrorist organization	Total annual revenue in billion US dollars
Hezbollah	1.1
Taliban	0.8
Hamas	0.7
Al-Qaeda	0.3
The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS)	0.2

Table 3  
Annual income of the richest terror organizations in 2017<sup>12</sup>

The argument for the above is quite simple: any person can join a terrorist organization when they have nothing to lose: families, relatives, apartments, money, etc., but they really want to satisfy their existential needs. However, it is necessary to make some digression here and point out that the members of a terrorist organization do not represent a single horizontal section. Each terrorist group has a strictly defined hierarchy: leaders – planners – executors of terrorist acts, which also have their own vertical – "infantry". Thus, in most cases, when it comes to recruiting to a terrorist organization from the poor, we are referring to recruits for the "infantry" and not highly qualified terrorists who can commit a terrorist attack, about which all world media make a potter.

Another of the most obvious ways in which terrorist groups benefit from poverty is the use of the low level of social protection that is typical of third world countries (GDP per capita is less than 750 US dollars). In many cases, terrorist organizations, managing a

<sup>10</sup> How much does ISIS pay to terrorists? Available at: <https://sm-news.ru/news/world/skolko-platyat-terroristam-igil/>

<sup>11</sup> Wave of terror 2015-2019. Available at: <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Wave-of-terror-October-2015.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> I. Zehorai, The Richest Terror Organizations in the World. Forbes International. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesinternational/2018/01/24/the-richest-terror-organizations-in-the-world/#711187727fd1>

wide range of social services, were able to significantly expand their attractiveness and significantly increase their influence in the areas of their activities. For example, Hezbollah creates schools, medical facilities, and agricultural organizations while Hamas invests in the infrastructure of education, healthcare, and the social and cultural sphere. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda fund madrassa and raise youth from the poor. Filling this gap in the field of social services, terrorist groups undermine the rule of law and power of the state in which they operate. This, in turn, creates a political landscape where the image of government agencies is weakening, which ultimately leads to an increase in the image of terrorist organizations. Unable to provide the most basic services to their citizens, some countries are now entangled in the spiral of delegitimization used by terrorist organizations, such as Al-Shabab in Somalia or the Taliban in Afghanistan. The unavailability of social services for society is one of the many aspects of poverty that, being exploited by terrorist organizations, significantly contributes to their spread and significantly increases their support from the population belonging to the lower stratum of society, therefore, increasing the influx of recruits to their camp.

Thus, poverty itself is fertile ground for the emergence of terrorism, since it often breeds ignorance and illiteracy due to the lack of educational opportunities. It is this relationship that allows scholars, politicians, and members of the public to argue that terrorism and poverty directly, rather than indirectly, affect each other. Terrorist organizations provide a quick solution to the existential problems of human life for disadvantaged people from countries with undeveloped or transitional economies. Depressed people are not inclined to verify the facts when substantial relief is easily and cheaply obtained, though sometimes at the cost of their own lives (suicide bomber). In particular, the relief in question refers to the human desire for identity, certainty, meaningful life, social connections, and the optimal amount of freedom and glory.

### **Trends that deny the relationship between poverty and terrorism**

As shown above, poverty and terrorism are strongly connected. However, turning to other scientific works, it is possible to see that this fact is not recognized by all. According to Harvard University scholar *A. Abadie* in the article "Poverty, Political Freedom, and the Roots of Terrorism", the terrorist risk is not significantly higher for poorer countries than the effects of other country-specific characteristics. He believes that the first violin in the orchestra of sources of terrorism is played by a low level of political rights. However, this relationship is not just linear. Countries with an intermediate range of political rights are at greater risk of terrorism than countries with a very high degree of political rights or countries with extremely authoritarian regimes with a very low level of political rights<sup>13</sup>. *A. Krueger*, a former employee of the US Presidential Administration of B. Obama, in his work "What Makes a Terrorist? Economics and the Roots of Terrorism" (2007) also showed that leading politicians and scholars argue that poverty and lack of education breed terrorism, despite the wealth of evidence showing that most terrorists come from middle-class and often college-educated, backgrounds<sup>14</sup>. The economic interpretation he gives suggests that terrorism is a "market" with offers of future terrorists and demand for them among terrorist organizations. At the same time, the demand for clients with a high level of education increases, because the expected benefits are higher

<sup>13</sup> A. Abadie, "Poverty, Political Freedom, and the Roots of Terrorism", *The economics of national security* Vol: 96 num 2 (2006): 50-56.

<sup>14</sup> A. Krueger, *What makes a terrorist. Economics and the roots of terrorism*. Available at: <http://assets.press.princeton.edu/chapters/i8465.pdf>

and the costs of their training are lower. Refusals to potential terrorists are significant in an environment of high demand since terrorist organizations select the most successful and qualified recruits.

In 2007, *E. Benmelech* and *C. Berrebi* concluded that older, more experienced, and highly educated terrorists or those with a higher social hierarchy tend to kill more people, do more damage, and are more likely to escape prosecution by law enforcement agencies. Having examined the relationship between economic conditions and the characteristics of terrorists, they argued that worsening economic conditions in one segment of society (for example, rising unemployment) increases the likelihood that a future suicide bomber will be better educated, older, and more experienced. Consequently, the deterioration of economic conditions does not increase the number of attacks; it potentially correlates with an increase in the effectiveness and sophistication of suicide-bombers<sup>15</sup>. This postulate coincides with the opinion of *A. Krueger* that modern terrorist organizations no longer bring everyone into their folds, but carry out the so-called casting in the interests of finding candidates with a high level of training<sup>16</sup>.

An earlier sensational article by *A. Krueger* and *J. Maletskova*<sup>17</sup> also reported similar results. According to the authors, the history of terrorists in different parts of the world teaches that many of them are representatives from rich economically and educated circles. Thus, in particular, scholars used data on 129 dead Hezbollah fighters to compare their socioeconomic status with the average Lebanese population and found that living standards and secondary or higher education increase the chances of participation in Hezbollah's activities. For example, the poverty rate was 28% among Hezbollah fighters and 33% among the entire Lebanese population. These results are consistent with the findings of a study by Israeli militants of the Israeli Jewish underground terrorist group, which carried out terrorist attacks on Palestinians living on the West Bank in the 1970s and early 1980s. Those responsible for these attacks were also usually highly educated and wealthy<sup>18</sup>. Studies by al-Qaeda members by *M. Sageman* have shown correlation results: almost 35% had higher education and 45% had a qualified profession<sup>19</sup>. The conclusions of the European sociological research of *D. Gambetta* and *S. Hertog* are in the same vein. Their study of 400 violent radical Islamists from more than 30 countries in the Middle East and Africa revealed an excessive saturation of engineers and graduates of scientific and technical higher education institutions<sup>20</sup>. Professor of the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University (USA) *B. Hoffman* believes that it is people from wealthier families who have the education and skills that terrorist group recruiters are concerned about<sup>21</sup>. This is due to the fact that they are best suited for the recognition of the goals and

<sup>15</sup> C. Berrebi y O. Engel, Ending the Myth of the Poor Terrorist. *Tabletmag* (April 30, 2019). Available at: <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/283963/myth-of-the-poor-terrorist>

<sup>16</sup> A. Krueger, What makes a terrorist. *Economics and the roots of terrorism*. Available at: <http://assets.press.princeton.edu/chapters/i8465.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> A. Krueger y J. Maleckova, Education, poverty, political violence, and terrorism: is there a causal connection? Available at: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w9074.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> A. Krueger y J. Maleckova, Education, poverty, political violence...

<sup>19</sup> M. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> D. Gambetta y S. Hertog, "Why are there so many Engineers among Islamic Radicals?", *European Journal of Sociology* Vol: 50 num 2 (2009): 201-230.

<sup>21</sup> D. Davis, Affluent Terrorists Challenge Narrative that Poverty Drives Extremism. Available at: [https://www.washdiplomat.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19808:affluent-terrorists-challenge-narrative-that-poverty-drives-extremism&catid=1584&Itemid=428](https://www.washdiplomat.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19808:affluent-terrorists-challenge-narrative-that-poverty-drives-extremism&catid=1584&Itemid=428)

ideology of the group. Ironically, the very economic freedom that they possess gives them the "luxury" to devote their time and energy to the cause of terrorism. *B. Hoffman* notes, when one is faced with the daily reality of survival, simply figuring out where to get food for the family, one does not have time or opportunity to do things that could potentially lead to violence<sup>22</sup>.

Thus, the results of published empirical studies show that it is terrorists from the middle social class, and not irrational, poor, and uneducated people who seek to use their skills through murder and sometimes suicide (the most educated are the most "productive") in order to maximize the political and media influence of their actions. *A. Krueger* notes that they seek recognition and a sense of self-realization instead of receiving material benefits, since the higher these "benefits", the more important their purpose and the maximum damage done, as well as the fact that the terrorist is involved in protecting their interests<sup>23</sup>. This conclusion is identical to the results of the World Bank study "The Economic and Social Inclusion to Prevent Violent Extremism" (2016), which states that terrorism is not connected with poverty and low level of education. The report is based on an analysis of data from 3,800 foreign ISIS recruits. Thus, 69% of them had secondary education and the illiteracy rate was only 2%, while most of them worked before joining ISIS<sup>24</sup>. The main exporters of recruits for ISIS at that time were Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, and Turkey.

If we turn to the destructive attacks of Islamists in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday 2019, we will also pay attention to one feature – the social status of the attackers. As *R. Ehsan* notes, they were not destitute people languishing at the lower levels of the economy of this state. The overall socio-demographic profile of the terrorists behind this well-planned, coordinated series of attacks is associated with affluence and high social status. They were highly educated men who came from middle-class families, if not higher. For example, two of the terrorists were the sons of Mohammed Ibrahim, a wealthy spice merchant and pillar of the community<sup>25</sup>. The study by *W. Enders, G. Hoover, and T. Sandler*<sup>26</sup> shows that the poor and rich countries have experienced the smallest manifestation of terrorism. In their global sample, it was *middle-income countries* that were involved in most domestic and transnational terrorist attacks. The main reason for this, in their opinion, is that people in truly poor countries are more concerned about their existence and survival (congruence with the conclusions of *B. Hoffman*). Thus, they have little or no interest in participating in risky and time-consuming terrorist companies. Unlike citizens in rich countries, where, as a rule, few problems can lead to terrorism.

Media reporters also explicitly reject the proactive role of poverty in terrorism. Following the 2015 terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo's office, *C. Matthews*, a well-known

<sup>22</sup> D. Davis, Affluent Terrorists Challenge Narrative that Poverty Drives Extremism. Available at: [https://www.washdiplomat.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19808:affluent-terrorists-challenge-narrative-that-poverty-drives-extremism&catid=1584&Itemid=428](https://www.washdiplomat.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19808:affluent-terrorists-challenge-narrative-that-poverty-drives-extremism&catid=1584&Itemid=428)

<sup>23</sup> A. Krueger, What makes a terrorist. Economics and the roots of terrorism. Available at: <http://assets.press.princeton.edu/chapters/i8465.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Economic and Social Inclusion to Prevent Violent Extremism. Available at: <http://documents.albankaldawli.org/curated/ar/409591474983005625/pdf/108525-REVISED-PUBLIC.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> R. Ehsan, Does poverty cause terrorism? It's complicated. Capx (May 2, 2019). Available at: <https://capx.co/does-poverty-cause-terrorism-its-complicated/>

<sup>26</sup> W. Enders y G. Hoover, T. Sandler, The Changing Nonlinear Relationship between Income and Terrorism. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/>

political observer for NBS and MSNBS, said: "The world is filled with hundreds and hundreds of millions of poor people who have no prospects at all, but they don't go around killing people. India is packed with poor people and they don't go around killing people". The *Wall Street Journal* expressed a similar opinion: "Wednesday's attack also demonstrates again that violent Islam isn't a reaction to poverty or Western policy in the Middle East. It is an ideological challenge to Western civilization and principles, including a free press and religious pluralism"<sup>27</sup>. Note that some of the most famous terrorists of the modern era were among the most privileged people on the planet. Osama bin Laden was the son of a Saudi construction magnate. His successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is a surgeon from a prominent Egyptian family. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried to blow up an American passenger plane over Detroit on Christmas day 2009, is the son of a wealthy Nigerian banker. This list can be continued.

## Discussion

Thus, the results of empirical and, in some cases, in-depth theoretical works are disseminated by both parties of the discussion about the role of the poverty factor in modern terrorism. The reason for this long-term lack of consensus, from our point of view, is that the results of theoretical and empirical research are cognitively mixed, which is observed in most of the works we have listed, based on empirical data obtained from militants without taking into account their place in the terrorist hierarchy. In sociological terms, "the sample is not relevant". It is also worth noting the violation of the causal link between poverty and terrorism. Based on data from social surveys or statistics, many authors delve into microeconomics and individuality, rather than considering this problem at the intersection of macroeconomics and the living conditions of a person, society, and the state. The most appropriate logical sequence may be the following: poor country – low level of economy – high unemployment – poverty of the population – high criminalization of society – growth of the terrorist threat. This is the chain of events that we have seen in the countries of the "Arab spring": Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Yemen, Morocco, Oman, etc.

When establishing a causal link between poverty and terrorism and drawing certain conclusions, it is necessary to analyze not the increase or decrease in the number of terrorist attacks in poor or rich countries, but the increase in the number of low-level militants in terrorist organizations from poor countries. Not far to seek, most of the destroyed, convicted, and still active terrorists in the world come from the countries of the Middle East and North and Central Africa. Thus, in 2015, in addition to the 5,000 Europeans we have already mentioned, ISIS included more than 4,500 representatives of the former union republics of Central Asia, more than 8,000 from the Maghreb, more than 8,500 from the Middle East, and 1,000 each from South-East Asia and the Balkans. By the way, those whom we call Europeans are not always such by birth. Many of them are former migrants in different generations from countries in the same North Africa or the Middle East. Turning to the Human Development Index (HDI), we see that these countries are usually in the second hundred of the list – the lower part of the rating. For example, in the period 2012-2017, the decrease in HDI and the drop in ratings occurred in Yemen, Libya, and Syria, which was a direct result of violent conflicts and there is only one step from conflict to terrorism<sup>28</sup>. In 2012, Syria ranked 128th in the HDI ranking and was in the

<sup>27</sup> D. Sterman, Don't Dismiss Poverty's Role in Terrorism Yet. *New America*. Time (February 4, 2015) Available at: <https://time.com/3694305/poverty-terrorism/>

<sup>28</sup> Indices and indicators of human development. Updated statistics 2018. Available at: [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018\\_human\\_development\\_statistical\\_update\\_ru.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update_ru.pdf)



group with an average level of human development. However, after several years of conflict, in 2019, it dropped to 154th place, in the group of countries with a low level of human development, where 47.5% of the adult population was illiterate. According to the Global Terrorism Index (2019), five African nations are among the top ten most affected by the growth of terrorism (Table 4). In the period from 2002 to 2018, 87% of homicides were concentrated in ten countries – these are countries of the Maghreb-Middle East zone. Almost 93,000 victims over the same period, compared to 45,000 in sub-Saharan Africa. If we compare the countries where most terrorist attacks occur with their HDI, we see a pronounced correlation (Table 4).

Country	Place in the Global Terrorism Index	Increment /Decrease in victims	Place in the HDI
Afghanistan	1	+ 2726	170
Iraq	2	-3217	120
Nigeria	3	+ 508	158
Yemen	8	No data	178
Mali	13	+ 286	184
Mozambique	25	+ 110	180
Burkina Faso	27	+ 40	182
Chad	38	+ 34	187

Table 4

Dependence of the growth in the number of deaths on terrorist attacks in 2018 and places in the HDI in 2019 (for 2018)

A report by the *Al-Azhar Center* (2018) "On Poverty, Terrorism, and the Sinful Relationship Between Them" says that there are 820 million people in the world who face poverty, food shortages, and the threat of hunger, who live in 39 countries. These countries are 31 African countries, 7 Asian countries, and one Caribbean country. As we can see, African countries bear the lion's share of poverty and, at the same time, they also have a large share of terrorist organizations and their manifestations, which undoubtedly confirms the existence of a close relationship between poverty and terrorism. In 2020, ISIS significantly lost its active deadly terrorist appeal due to the actions of Russia and Syria, Boko Haram came out on top in Africa, which has its place of deployment in such poor African countries as Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Kenya, and others. Boko Haram uses poor economic and social conditions in North-Eastern Nigeria and neighboring regions to effectively recruit conscripts. Recruits are attracted by its ability to provide economic prospects to its members.

Our findings are also confirmed by the World Bank President's report on housing and reconstruction (2018), which states that between 1966 and 1968, there were 164 violent incidents involving the use of force, most of which occurred in poor countries, with the exception of one in a rich country<sup>29</sup>. Earlier, at the international anti-terrorism conference held in Riyadh (2005), it was noted that the main causes of terrorism are extreme poverty, unfair social order and structure, corruption, foreign occupation, cruel exploitation, and religious extremism. Also, speakers noted that systematic violations of human rights, economic marginalization, and cultural exclusion as a result of globalization also have a significant impact on the strengthening of terrorism awareness.

<sup>29</sup> N. Medhat, Al-Azhar Observatory report on poverty and terrorism and their sinful relationship. 2019. Available at: <https://www.aman-dostor.org/22743>

Why are there more and more scientific and journalistic works that deny the deep connection between poverty and terrorism? Information and analytical trends show the presence of a dichotomy between conditions and terrorist violence and highlight a certain range of its causes, which are mainly economic, socio-political and, institutional. Indeed, in this spectrum, some are associated with poverty and some are not. When these data are aggregated, poverty tends to take a back seat, but this does not mean that its impact is absent. Where scholars, politicians, media representatives, and the public claim that poverty does not cause terrorism, they do not reveal all the elements of the chain of links but focus on the reason that is most beneficial to them in certain political or geographical conditions. However, terrorism and terrorist recruitment must be understood as context-specific data. What drives people in the Middle East or Latin America can be very different from what "rules the roost" of behaviorism in North Africa or Central Asia. However, regardless of geography, the system of factors of terrorism always includes limited economic opportunities for society, especially for young people, systematic discrimination, and corruption at the government or public level. In this regard, another of the conclusions of our study is that it is necessary to study not the history of individual terrorists (as most scholars do), but the system of factors at the level of the state and society – their social and biological origin and, most importantly, the links between them, especially those that lead to the deprivation of existential and civil rights of the population in a certain period of time.

In this context, the dichotomous approach of specialists from the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) *E. Benmelech* and *E. Klor* is interesting. In their report on the topic: "What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?" (2016), they dispute the conclusion that terrorists are mainly economically backward and poorly educated. Their results show that many foreign fighters for ISIS come from countries that do not have high levels of poverty and inequality<sup>30</sup>. This is worth agreeing with, especially when considering that the number of fighters in ISIS from Europe alone has exceeded 5,000. At the same time, in the article "Economic Conditions and the Quality of Suicide Terrorism", published earlier, in 2012, they wrote: "While the existing empirical literature shows that poverty and economic conditions are not correlated with the quantity of terror, theory predicts that poverty and poor economic conditions may affect the quality of terror. Poor economic conditions may drive more better-educated individuals to participate in terror attacks, allowing terror organizations to send better-qualified terrorists to more complex, higher-impact, terror missions"<sup>31</sup>. Evidently, over time, there is also a change in the vector of the point of view among scholars.

## Conclusions

Thus, the plethora of scientific evidence presented will certainly alert those who claim that poverty is the cause of terrorism and those who believe the opposite. Each of them will put forward their protest point of view. However, before dismissing poverty or seizing on it as "manna from heaven", scholars must exercise restraint and continue to update and re-analyze data in the context of the conditions and timing of the phenomenon of terrorism in a given territory. Despite these dichotomous statements, the sources of terrorism undoubtedly have certain socio-economic roots, but they are more related to the

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<sup>30</sup> E. Benmelech y E. Klor, What explains the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS? Available at: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w22190.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> E. Benmelech; C. Berrebi y E. Klor, "Economic Conditions and the Quality of Suicide Terrorism", *The Journal of Politics* num 1 Vol: 74 (2012): 113-128.

incentives and constraints faced by individuals and organizations than to any specific set of easily quantifiable factors that encourage people to participate in terrorism. Until poverty and exclusion are recognized as the main catalysts of terrorism, urban ghettos will continue to provide a constant supply to terrorist organizations of young people who want to kill at the cost of their own lives.

There is another assumption that recognizing poverty as the main source of terrorism inevitably leads us to the idea that it is impossible to defeat terrorism because it is also not possible to defeat poverty in Africa, the Middle East, or Asia in the long term. Now, the weirdest thing is that investing in the fight against poverty will bring much less income than investing in politics. Of course, the material damage caused by terrorism is significant and, even more, human losses are irreparable. The one who invests is waiting for a profit and it can only be given by investing in the replacement of unwanted governments of those countries that have rich resources (oil, gas, rare earth metals, gold, platinum, etc.). Indeed, if one invests in poverty, then according to the theory of, for example, A. Krueger, there will not be a decrease, but an increase in terrorists. Therefore, among the sources of terrorism, it is necessary to put in the first place the sources, proving that violation of citizens' political rights is the basis for terrorism, in order to justify their actions to interfere in the affairs of these states. Moreover, the majority of those who support this trend are either representatives of the economic bloc or the media, which need the "hot", which, in turn, brings dividends. Who will watch hungry children and women in the news when terrorist attacks get an average of 357% more coverage if the terrorist is a Muslim and this figure is even higher for major media – 758%. One additional fatality means an average 46% increase in audience coverage. That's the dividend.

Socio-economic difficulties combined with political problems have a detrimental effect on the average person's psyche. As a result, a person who has embarked on the path of finding a better life uses a dichotomous way of identifying their victims, black-and-white thoughts that "I am good" and "you are evil", without intermediate shades of gray. This thinking leaves no doubt in their mind and it is easier for them to destroy their opponents almost without feeling remorse or guilt. It is possible to do this with impunity in a terrorist organization. Thus, the hypothesis we put forward, in our opinion, was confirmed.

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