



The attack thwarted by the british authorities and issues of european counterterrorism policy

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On Thursday, August 10, the British police announced that it deterred a terrorist blow that would astonish international community with its intensity. The information speaks of a plan, that- if realised- it would exceed in deadly result the attack of September 11. The terrorists - passengers on board flights from London with destination cities of USA - would use simple daily electronic appliances in order to detonate explosive materials hidden inside bottles for example of sports drinks and blow up at least 10 airplanes above American territory in almost one simultaneous blow. The British authorities have arrested up to now 24 suspects and prosecuted 11, mainly British citizens of Muslim religion, some of Pakistani origin and aged from 17 up to 35 years.

A year after the deadly London underground bombings, this recent revelation brings into surface serious questions on that concern apart from Great Britain, the rest of European countries too, who all face the danger of international terrorism.

The subject of the role of Muslim immigrants and converts living in European countries arises as central. In the plot under investigation, once more members of the Islamic community of Great Britain – like in the attacks in the London Metro- are involved. It is explicit that part of the Moslem youth (first or even second generation of immigrants) feels culturally isolated in the West, cannot or even denies to incorporate in the European social reality and consequently it is coiled in hard Islamist fundamentalist cores. The ongoing conflicts and the clashes in the Middle East, with intense connotations and rhetorics of Holy War and Jihad by the Arab parts, enlarge the hostile sentiments against the “Christian Europe”, the “descendants of Crusaders” and “unfaithful” that fight eternally Islam. This entire sensitive and flammable situation is been exploited by the network of Islamist extremists through a continuous religious propaganda, based on hate doctrines. It is very important to note, that apart from the traditional methods of indoctrination (mainly the teaching in Islamic places), now Internet has become a valuable tool for the recruitment, catechism of candidate “martyrs” and the planning of operations. Terrorists in cyber-space manage to defy frontiers, unite their followers and spread their message everywhere. Moreover, “terrorism education camps” are known to be functioning for time now, once in Afghanistan and today in various Moslem countries. There, Muslim young people are been initiated not only in the ideology, but also in the know-how of “martyrdom” attacks, returning afterwards to western countries to put in practice what they learned. In any case, the successful operation of the authorities in Great Britain- carried out in close collaboration with local Moslem communities- proved that the later can isolate any extremist elements. What remains is to show that they are also in position to promote a moderate and peaceful version of Islam, through teaching and sermons in Islamic schools and mosques.

On technological level the deadly plot avoided, makes obvious that the substances used by the terrorists to conduct their strikes can be very difficult for the authorities to locate and require regular and thorough controls. The terrorists can and they do have access in explosives both easily to supply and to hide. Indeed once more time the “innovative” minds of the “other side”, are one step ahead of what common people would think, inexhaustible and exploiting very simple and common substances, raw material and mechanisms. The financial cost needed for the hits can be almost zero in comparison particularly with the desirable homicide result. Of course suicide attacks are anyway generally low-cost operations, where more central is the human factor, willing to give up his own life, so that he kills innocents. Also, as it seems, airports and planes will continue being a prominent

“terror- arena» choice for the organisations, since if the attack takes place, both high casualties and big coverage by the Media are ensured.

The success of the British intelligence and police to arrest on time those involved in the planned tragedy has also another aspect that concerns the life and the rights of all citizens. In order to solve the case and prevent the horrible attack, the Bank of England froze the accounts of 19 persons, while the daily movements and even the telephone communications of the suspect were been watched and intercepted. Measures and laws voted and adopted in various European countries, though they rose serious legal questions about their compliance to human rights and free economy, unfortunately have turned out to be absolutely necessary in the fighting of terrorism. It is expected thus for more legislative measures to be taken, giving more powers to the authorities to intervene in the private life of citizens. However this may create a danger of compromising basic freedoms within a pretext of counterterrorism policy. This is why the European states and their citizens should intensify their attention not only in the fighting of terrorism, but also in the safeguarding of democratic principles and liberal society

From that leaked to the Press, during the police research a videotape of “last will” was found, a sign referring to “martyrdom” attacks of the Al-Qaida Islamist network. The blowing up of planes would take place after all just before the fifth anniversary of 11 September. Osama Bin Laden and his commander Al-Zawahri, repeatedly have threatened with new, bloody attacks. Plus, all this comes just one week after the Islamist organisation threatened once again the West, connecting this time its activity to the war between Hezbollah and Israel and declaring that it will strike the forces that support the “Zionists”. Obviously the murderous actions of Al-Qaida will continue to pose a threat and it requires a coordinated international effort for its dismantlement in a big length of time. It has been proved that terrorist organisations of apocalyptic and religious character act with patience and a timetable (it is known how many years of planning preceded the blows of 11 September), therefore the same methodical and patient tactic should be followed by the counterterrorism services too in their strategy.

Without reactions dictated by panic, it should be realised that Islamic extremism- different from the Islam as a religion- is a real threat for Europe. At present, another thwarted plot for a terrorist attack- this time in Germany- (where Muslim Lebanese are believe to be implicated) is been under investigation, heightening again the alert. The Old Continent has to wake up and face this danger with responsibility and cooperation with the rest of the world. Terrorism affects our societies, our ways of life, and our fundamental structures. Its danger is much bigger than what can result from an individual hit – regardless of its intensity- and it concerns all of us. Not only because no country can ever be safe when the logic of the enemy is replaced by metaphysical theories of holy violence and world dominance, but mainly because the consequences of counterterrorism war and the price of safety, are paid mainly by the innocent citizens with fear but with the restriction of their freedoms.