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GOALS OF TERRORIST ATTACKS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE INDIRECT STRATEGY OF TERRORISM

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**Abstract:**

The aim of the publication is diagnosing the nature and multidimensional character of the goals of terrorist attacks from the perspective of the indirect strategy of terrorism. The structure of this article is based on the identification of the essence of a terrorist attack and the analysis of the nature of the goals of terrorist activity. The underlying assumption made by the author was the claim that the goals of terrorist attacks can be divided into instrumental and main goals. This division emphasises the multidimensional character of the phenomenon of terrorism and justifies the validity of using the notion of indirect strategy when referring to the activity of contemporary terrorists. The knowledge of mutual relations between the stages of terrorist activity in the framework of the assumed terrorist strategy can increase the efficiency of antiterrorist actions, which means that the investigated issue acquires particular significance.

Keywords:

terrorist attack, goals of terrorist attacks, indirect strategy of terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this study is the issue of the goals of terrorist attacks. The research problem, initially formulated by the author is the question about the reason why nowadays terrorism is one of the leading, global threats. The number of the victims of terrorism in the European Union, which was four in 2014 [3] and nearly one hundred and fifty in the subsequent year, cannot be the reason for building antiterrorist coalitions, spending millions of euros on the development of security systems and developing legal and organisational solutions which restrict civic liberties so important for democratic entities. It seems obvious that the goals in the form of particular attacks and the

achieved results expressed in the number of casualties or injured are not the final effects of terrorist activity assumed by perpetrators. Terrorists know the nature of this phenomenon very well and learnt to give thriller performances not only to kill particular or random European citizens, but also to use them as a way of influencing millions of people and shape the security environment nearly all over the world. This is exactly the indirect strategy of terrorism thanks to which terrorists can achieve their main goals. The use of carefully selected methods, form of action and tools, the media and the nature of asymmetric conflict allows them to influence societies with full determination and ruthlessness on a so far unknown scale.

The article is an attempt to present a complex approach to the nature of the indirect strategy of terrorism in from the perspective of terrorism goals. The discussed material uses the available scientific achievement in this field of study and conclusions formulated by the author on the basis of his professional and scientific experience. The structure of the study serves the assumed goal and encompasses the identification of the character and nature of contemporary terrorist attacks in the context of the complexity of the goals of terrorist activity and their mutual relations.

1. NATURE OF CONTEMPORARY TERRORIST ATTACKS

Terrorist attacks can take various forms and result from the employment of particular forms and tools used in criminal activity by perpetrators. The attacks can be sudden, e.g. bombings, firearm attacks, attacks performed by a particular person or they can last longer generating additional consequences, e.g. holding hostages, hijacking aircrafts, attacks in which hijacked aircrafts are used).

According to Zenon Zamiar a terrorist attack is an extraordinary event conducted purposefully so as to cause panic, chaos and social threat used by perpetrators to force the fulfilment of their demands [11].

Contemporary terrorist attacks clearly show that in many cases the only direct goal of terrorists is evoking fear and causing a lasting feeling of insecurity in the society in both the general and personal dimension. In recent years there have been fewer particular demands made by terrorist organisations to particular governments or organisations. The examples of some terrorist incidents, e.g. Paris (2015) and Brussels (2016), painfully show the directions in terrorist activity. Striking soft targets and using time relations weakens the possibility of the reaction of services responsible for reactive actions. The simultaneity and sequentiality are the notions which became part of the nature of contemporary terrorist attacks. The additional use of the media, with the significant role of the ubiquitous Internet, means that terrorist attacks have the character of a carefully directed performance with the leading roles of panic, fear and violence.

Edwin Bakker, summarising the research conducted by international experts, scientists and government agencies trends in the activity of contemporary terrorist groups, emphasises that there are forecasts that they will use mass destruction weapons. Additional areas of intensified terrorist activity will be all dimensions of cyberspace – starting with posting messages on the Internet and finishing with using the net to attack

sensitive and critical state infrastructure. The areas which can face particular risk encompass petroleum industry, energy sector and agriculture. The structures of terrorist groups will also undergo evolution leading towards decentralisation, flattening the network of connections and building numerous, independent cells or even the activity of individual perpetrators acting on behalf of organisations without any formal ties with their structures [1].

The notion of a terrorist attack functions in the literature as an equivalent of such terms as a terror raid or incident. None of them has any basis in Polish legal acts. The notion, which is defined in legal acts, and refers to the external form of terrorist activity is the event of terrorist nature. It means “a situation resulting from an act specified in Art. 115 § 20 of the Act of 6 June 1997 – Criminal Code (Journal of Laws No. 88, item 533, as amended) or a threat of such an act which could lead to a crisis situation” [13]. The structure of the above definition is based on two conditions which have to be met by a given situation. First of all the act committed by perpetrators should meet the statutory criteria defined in Art. 115 § 20 of the Criminal Code (CC), i.e. crime of terrorist nature. Apart from this, the act, due to its momentum, threat or predicted negative consequences, has to meet the condition of potentially leading to a crisis situation within the meaning of the Crisis Management Act [13]. Taking into account the fact that not every crime of terrorism will meet the requirements of the definition of a crisis situation in the statutory meaning of this term, e.g. it is possible that a situation will meet the statutory definition of terrorist crime, however, due its quick neutralisation, it will not be possible to call it an event of terrorist nature. Apart from this, in the definition of the event of terrorist nature there is a reference to the notion of codex crime of terrorist nature which is very risky. It means that there is the need to prove to a potential perpetrator that he/she acted to threaten a large number people or to force an organ of public authority of the Republic of Poland, another state or an organ of an international organisation to undertake or abandon actions or operations for the purpose of causing serious economic or political disturbance in the Republic of Poland, another state or organ of an international organisation. During emergency actions or when tasks are performed under pressure of time, it will be extremely difficult to establish if there was any terrorist intent in the action of the perpetrators. One should also remember that the criminal code clearly indicates that the purpose condition must be met, i.e. the intention of the perpetrator. In the case when it is missing, a given act cannot be qualified as crime of terrorism and, hence, it cannot be considered an event of this nature either. In the Crisis Management Act there is also the notion of an attack of terrorist nature, however, the document does not provide any definition of this term and so it is not possible to precisely interpret its meaning [13].

The notion of the attack of terrorist nature was defined for the needs of undertaking actions pursuant to the provisions of the State Border Protection Act of 12 October 1990. Within the meaning of this act, a terrorist attack is an act conducted to:

- cause a serious threat to a large number of people;
- force the public authority of the Republic of Poland, another state or an international organisation to act or fail to act;

- cause serious disruption in the political and social system of the Republic of Poland, another state or an international organisation or a threat to commit such acts [14].

In the definition of a terrorist attacks in the act, the crime of terrorist nature is no longer a reference term, the act directly defines the criteria characterising this kind of crime. In consequence, any act can fulfil these criteria as long as the condition of the terrorist intent is met, i.e. it is the goal of the perpetrator. Taking into account the specificity of reaction under time pressure in aviation terrorism, establishing the motivation of the perpetrator during action when there is the deficit of time and information, seems extremely difficult.

To sum up the above considerations on the notion of a terrorist act and similar terms, one can clearly see that there is no unambiguous explanation. This results from the very nature of a terrorist act which is not only a criminal offence against particular interests protected by law. It is a multidimensional structure which is inseparably connected with the notion of the indirect strategy of terrorism and every time requires individual investigation of its nature in the context of the goals of perpetrators.

2. MULTIDIMENSIONAL NATURE OF GOALS IN TERRORIST ATTACKS

According to Krzysztof Liedel and Paulina Piasecka “the goal of terrorists is causing fear and using it to dominate and control the observers of a terrorist act” [10]. The analysis of the definition of terrorism and the criteria of terrorist crime shows that it is exactly this feature to be one of the most important characteristics allowing to distinguish terrorism from other forms of criminal activity. This implies a certain structure of a terrorist act which becomes a complex event divided into specific stages with goals related to this event.

Shopping centre bombings or chemical attacks are only indirect goals of the perpetrators. These carefully selected methods, forms and tools used in attacks certainly serve the purpose of inflicting physical damage to an enemy, however, they are not the final goals of particular terrorist acts. This use of force is only an indirect goal or an instrument used by the perpetrators, it is supposed to lead to the achievement of the main (primary) goal, i.e. putting pressure on others to conduct actions required by terrorists. This final goal can be achieved with a great role the media which can maximise the final outcome by reaching the largest possible target group of viewers with transmitted global messages and images. In view of the complexity of the terrorist act, one can observe a certain dependence between these two types of goals. The proper planning and selection of the indirect goal guarantees that it will be attractive from the perspective of media coverage and so it will ensure the maximum achievement of the direct or primary goal [10]. The relations between the goals in the perspective of the indirect strategy of terrorism are presented in the figure below:

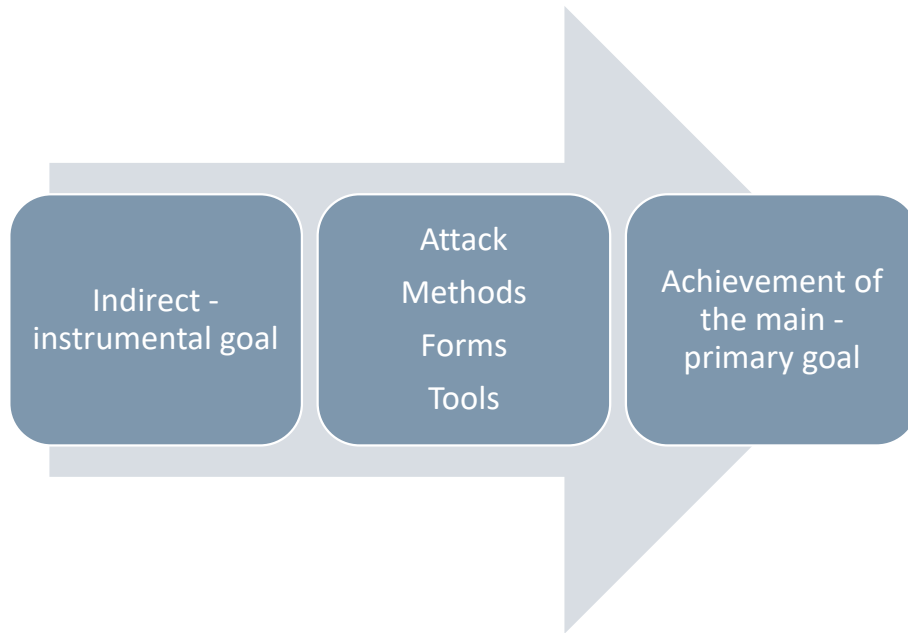


Fig 1. Indirect strategy of terrorism from the perspective of goals.

Source: Author's own study

For most terrorist organisations civilians, who are victims of bombings or other criminal activity, are not their enemy. These people are not only accidental victims taking the physical consequences of the perpetrators' activity, but also the victims of the conflict between the perpetrators and their enemies, i.e. governments, political, economic and social elites. Their suffering is supposed to provoke the real addressees of the terrorist act to take action. Civilians are a kind of tool in the hands of perpetrators thanks to which they can continue their policy of terrorising strong decision makers [5].

Such a use of the indirect goal is called the indirect strategy which can be based on:

- activity exceeding binding standards in particular societies, including the provisions of national and international law, which can be seen in rejecting any moral, ethical and legal restrictions in their activity;
- use of psychology in influencing recipients so as to cause threat and manifest dramaturgy among the people experiencing a terrorist act;
- use of civilians — unarmed and defenceless people, in turn with the selected goals of individual terrorism;
- right selection of the methods, forms and tools to be used in the act;
- selection of cities as the basic theatre of their activity [10].

Images of acts of violence caused by terrorists are of no strategic significance from the military point of view. They become the weapon of the conducted asymmetric activity only when they become public and their message is multiplied thanks to media coverage. The indirect goals cannot be accidental because the publicised scenes from the theatre of terrorist actions have to meet appropriate criteria established by the demanding recipients of today's media. These are the casualties, frequently women and

children, as well as the destroyed symbols of democracy and the western civilisation combined with images of blown up factories, railway stations, means of transport or even residential houses, that can terrify millions. This message is reinforced by the clearly visible contrast between the perfect economic, military or technical power of western countries and small groups of fighters ready for death in the name of their ideas [8].

The primary goal of terrorists, the reason why civilians are killed and public utility facilities are destroyed, can take the form of winning concessions or gaining benefits by using force, advertising the ideas of a terrorist organisation, spreading fear and terror, provoking governments to start repressions or retaliation, forced loyalty and obedience [6].

Nowadays more and more often it is possible to observe that the primary goal of terrorist activity is limited to inflicting maximum losses to the enemy – a selected community, in the form of the largest possible number of casualties or spreading permanent fear. Many hours of reports of negotiations with the perpetrators of hostage situations are disappearing from the media. This notion is becoming inadequate in the description of the nature of contemporary terrorist acts. For instance, can the attack in the Bataclan in Paris in 2015 be classified as a hostage situation? Definitely, no. A hostage situation is defined as an event in which perpetrators hold people depriving them of freedom against their will, so as to achieve one of two goals – obtaining particular personal, material or political benefits or also ensuring security for themselves. Both of these conditions were met during the events which took place in Paris on the 13th of November 2015. The perpetrators occupied the club only to kill there the maximum number of people and also to make their performance last as long as possible. As a result one cannot use the term hostage situation to describe these events. It is possible to show the nature of these events by describing the situation of the victims, because from the very beginning the perpetrators assumed that all the victims would lose their lives.

In contemporary events involving victims media coverage plays a very special role. Viewers can watch nearly live the situations of self-evacuation of wounded victims from a place of danger, rendering first aid by the wounded to one another and the ineptitude of security services in the first minutes after the act. All these images show the weaknesses of the state. Chaos caused by simultaneous and sequential attacks cannot be controlled by security institutions and so from the very beginning those who control the state security systems are doomed to fail. Terrorists show the weaknesses of response forces and images recorded by accidental witnesses are available for large numbers of viewers and remain in the memory of the international community.

The question of the character of terrorist activity goals is complex. First of all it results from the complicated construction of this phenomenon which is based on evoking terror by criminal actions. Because of this, the selection of goals for subsequent attacks is not a simple process and it requires contemporary perpetrators to conduct the complete analysis of available targets from the perspective of ensuring the interest of the media and own organisational and logistic capabilities. It can be clearly seen that the

perpetrators conduct such planning with utmost care. They do not attack reserved zones which are under the strict control of appropriate services. They do not provoke many hours of hostage situations because, due to the professionalism of special forces, each successful assault and releasing hostages would weaken the appeal of the event. Western states ate their humble pie after the events in Munich in 1972, but also did their homework and today they have professional structures of special forces at their disposal, the forces which can successfully conduct antiterrorist actions. However, nowadays time is the decisive factor. Police or even more so special military forces need time to reach the place of a terrorist event. This weakness is used by the perpetrators. More and more often their attacks have the form of an active shooter and within the first few dozens of minutes they can kill a large number of people. When special forces arrive the performance is about to be over and the shooter commits spectacular suicide using explosives or small arms.

An important element in the considerations on terrorist goals is their achievement. While the very conductance of a terrorist attack and achieving the indirect goal in the form of destruction of facilities killing people as a rule is a success, the achievement of the direct goal in the form of political concessions or meeting terrorists' demands, is much more complex. Most certainly it is easier for terrorists to cause fear make citizens scared of new attacks than make this psychological pressure bring fruit in the form of support for the organisation goals or meeting terrorist' demands.

An example of a successful terrorist attack from the perspective of both the main and instrumental goals was the bombing in Madrid. In March 2004, during the morning peak explosives hidden in backpacks were blown up to attack suburban trains between Alcala de Henares and Atocha. This event led to chaos and transport difficulties. Thanks to such a well-planned action, the terrorists managed to change the attitude of the Spanish society to the involvement of their country in the war with terrorism on the Iraqi front. Thanks to the perfectly chosen dates — three days before the elections, they managed also to achieve the main goal as, due to the change of social attitudes in the electorate, there was also a change in the government which was followed by the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq [8].

The Spanish example does not represent a typical approach of states reacting to terrorist attacks. Most nations are decisively against terrorism and build an even stronger antiterrorist legal system as well as assigning more military forces to fight with terrorism in their enemy territories and manifesting the strength of the society in fighting terrorism.

According to David Fromkin, this active response of states to terrorist attacks, taking the form of building antiterrorist structures or imposing repressions, including a military action, can also be a form of using the indirect strategy by terrorists. He explains that the main goal of the perpetrators is not always spreading fear, it can also be the intention to cause the response of the police, a military or legal action which will directly influence the change of life quality in selected states or regions. Tightening the provisions of antiterrorist law brings such consequences. The introduction of subsequent restrictions in the use of public utility buildings and allowing the state interfere

more with the rights and liberties of individuals means that citizens become the indirect victims of terrorist actions and events. Attacked communities lose the invaluable liberties of contemporary democracies to ensure security. This process seems to be especially painful in the context of the lack of possibility to completely eliminate the threat of another attack [4].

CONCLUSIONS

The presented information on the nature of terrorism from the perspective of the goals of terrorist attacks allow to conclude that the notion of indirect strategy perfectly reflects the multidimensional nature of this phenomenon. The asymmetrical nature of the terrorist conflict, when combined with the multidimensional nature of terrorist goals, means that fighting terrorism and minimising the consequences of terrorist attacks is a great challenge for contemporary communities on an international scale. Undertaking antiterrorist actions requires further research on terrorism and fighting this phenomenon, searching for effective and universal solutions which will not bring losses in other sectors of public life and will guarantee the minimisation of the consequences of such attacks in other areas of public life.

Thus it seems that the presented considerations are practical and at the same time can be developed further. They can be a source of knowledge and can also inspire a scientific discussion on the multidimensional nature of the goals of terrorist activity, the knowledge of which guarantees more effective fight with this phenomenon.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Jarosław STELMACH - Ph.D. Eng., is the head of the Department of Crisis Management at the Faculty of National Security, General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military Academy of Land Forces. He is a graduate of the Academy and also the Faculty of Law, Administration and Economics of the University of Wrocław. He obtained a doctoral degree with honours in the field of security science at the Higher Police School in Szczytno where he defended a dissertation titled "Limiting the Consequences of Terrorist Attacks in Public Utility Buildings". He also gained professional experience in the aeromobile forces of the Military Police. He completed a number of courses, including a specialist course for officers of air police forces in the USA and a course for commanders of police operations. He acted as a negotiator for the Military Police and managed preventive actions during various ceremonies and military undertakings. His research interests focus on antiterrorism, police negotiations, legal and institutional dimensions of the national security

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