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Global Terrorism

It is disputable whether the world has become or will ever become a global village. The ongoing globalization process, however, is a fact. It has involved or will soon involve nearly all realms of our existence. One can speak not only about global trade, services, education or politics, but also about global media, sports, ecology, or even terrorism.¹

At present global terrorism is identified mainly with the terror of Muslim fundamentalists manifested on various continents. This trend parallels local terrorism, represented by such organizations as the IRA, ETA or the Tamil Tigers.² As time goes by, however, it is global terrorism that is assuming the leading position. This results from the fact that on the one hand we are still at the 'rising' stage of the wave of global terrorism, which is primarily inspired by Muslim fundamentalists, whereas on the other we can observe the decline of local terrorism (whether only temporary or not). This has recently been clearly illustrated by the IRA, which declared its abandonment of terrorism.

It may then be concluded that this is another stage in the evolution of terrorism, when one form is partly substituted by another one. The importance of ideological reasons for terrorism is also fading while religious and cultural reasons are gaining in importance. The substitution of local terrorism by the global trend does not have to be a permanent process. It will obviously not be an ultimate process either, that is, it will not eliminate local terrorism completely. The future may witness the opposite phenomenon.

Globalization of Terrorist Space

A continent or region that would be free of terrorism does not exist. Frequently, within a single week terrorist attacks occur in very different loca-

¹ See for example: P. Clark, *Globalization and International Relations Theory*, Oxford 2000.

² L. Pettiford, D. Harding, *Terrorism, The New World War*, London 2003; *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, CRS Report for Congress, "Congressional Research Service", The Library of Congress, 2004; H. Kushner, *Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, Thousand Oaks-London-New Delhi 2003.

tions that are both distant and very different from one another, for example Great Britain, Egypt, Chechnya or Turkey.

Globalization of terrorist space is also about the ideas, plans or scenarios of terrorist operations, as well as their preparation, which may, and frequently are, carried out in geographical locations that are considerably remote from the actual targets. Terrorists take advantage of swift modern forms of communication and transportation.

Another strategy terrorists apply consists in blending into a local community they either originate from, or resemble. Again, they take advantage of space, yet this time it is restricted and precisely defined. It may be a university they study at, or a family they are members of. This is well illustrated by the profiles of the terrorists who struck in London lately.

The above phenomenon also involves a careful and conscious selection of targets for attacks, frequently chosen on the basis of their geostrategic, economic or tourist significance. This may be evidenced by the September 11 attacks, Bali, Madrid, London, Sharm el-Sheikh and many other events.³ By means of spectacular targets and locations, as well as particularly bloody methods, terrorists intend to achieve the most common objectives of retaliation or apprehension, accompanied by a media 'success' that frequently is even more significant. This success involves immediate, long-term and global publicity of their actions and related issues. The principle applied by many terrorist organizations is 'the more blood, the greater the success' and it frequently works. That is why the attacks are carried out in public places, at rush hours and why explosives are additionally equipped with nails, screws, pieces of metal, etc. The final impact is frequently frightening, e.g. 2749 victims in New York, 202 in Bali, 191 in Madrid and 56 in London.⁴

Globalization of Terrorist Ideas

Globalization of terrorism in this respect involves the spreading of fundamentalist principles, including the idea of jihad that rejects and condemns the principles of the West and wages a permanent 'holy war' against it. It also promotes 'holy violence' in order to win new fighters all over the

³ See for example: *Beyond September 11. An Anthology of Dissent*, P. Scraton (ed.), London 2002.

⁴ *Attacking Terrorism, Elements of a Grand Strategy*, A. K. Cronin, J. M. Ludes (ed.), Washington 2004.

world, including suicide attackers. Another issue involves the attempt to answer the question of the motives that persuade a 12, or 14-year-old to join a suicide troop. What makes an instance of death and bloodshed a joyful holiday for the attacker's family?⁵

Globalization of terrorist ideas also involves efficient and tested methods of drafting, training or finance. Terrorists frequently use the same, or similar, strategies adapted to local conditions. They constantly perfect their methods, carefully analyzing both their own mistakes and those of antiterrorist structures struggling with them. In this way they surprise us with new, spectacular attacks and break successive 'limits' of cruelty capturing children as hostages or showing scenes of hostages having their throats cut on the Internet. Will the use of an atomic bomb be the ultimate limit terrorists will not pass?

Global Fear and Stereotypes

The fear of terrorism is becoming global as well. The time when there were places that were completely free from terror is long gone. A modern tourist who solves the dilemma of which holiday destination to choose, and evaluates and compares exotic offers has to, or at least should, take into consideration the potential risk of a terrorist attack. The list of holiday idylls of luxury and safety has recently shrunk considerably concerning a stay in Bali, as well as in Egypt, Tunisia or Turkey.

Some home residences have also become less safe. A lowered level of security is additionally accompanied by a rapidly decreasing feeling of security. This may be observed in those states that have recently been the targets of attacks (the USA, Spain or Great Britain), and in those where it all ended only with fear, warnings and threats (as in the case of Poland).⁶

In many parts of the world an increased fear of terrorist attacks is accompanied by a rising number and intensity of various kinds of stereotypes. On the one hand they concern the image of a 'demoralized, expansive and dangerous West,' promoted by Muslim fundamentalists, and on the other the 'olive complexion' syndrome, which began to evoke negative associations, suspicions, or at least 'increased vigilance' in Europe and the USA.

⁵ See for example: H. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a vengeance*, 1997.

⁶ *Attacking*, op. cit.

Globalization of Terrorist Losses

Given the tight political, financial and trade relations of the modern world, a terrorist attack carried out in one place frequently brings greater or less serious consequences in many other locations. Choosing targets due to their tourist or business nature makes the representatives of different nationalities or religious denominations their victims. Muslim terrorists wage 'war' on new states, not necessarily those from the West. States, organizations and institutions under attack can expect sinister activity wherever they operate. In military terms it may be said that fundamentalists are trying to establish new 'frontlines' of struggle in new regions of the world in order to intensify their activity and bring the greatest losses.

In speaking about the globalization of the consequences of terrorism, the global nature of its reasons should also be considered. This concerns a list of conditions, drawn up and classified in various manners, with the most prominent religious and cultural, ethnic or economic and social aspects.⁷

Global Prevention

Terrorism is more than a global phenomenon, as it fulfills the three defining conditions of a global (civilizational) problem. It occurs in various parts of the world, it brings great human and material losses, and it may be opposed only by means of the joint operations of many states and organizations. Such collaboration (carried out in different realms and assessed in different ways) is not only undertaken by those involved in the prevention of terrorism but also by international terrorists.

On the one hand, the global struggle against terrorism has to involve preventive measures, such as curbing the reasons for terrorism. On the other one it needs to involve measures to penalize terrorists and eliminate the effects of their operations as quickly as possible. Prevention is not only about organizing complex national systems of responding to crises, coordinating the operations of various forces and institutions. It is also about supranational institutions and mechanisms, such as central databases, integrated training or sharing complete information (as opposed to selecting it as it has frequently been the case so far). This requires actual activities rather than merely declarations. It also requires that the superstitions, sus-

⁷ S. Wojciechowski, *The Triad of Terrorist Motivation – Introduction*, in: *Terrorism as a Timeless Actor on the International Stage*, S. Wojciechowski (ed.), Poznań 2005, pp. 5–12.

pitions and different interests still dividing some of the states endangered by terrorist attacks be overcome.

It is a distinct example of global 'prostration' with respect to terrorism that despite several decades of attempts and using several hundreds of highly differing definitions of terrorism, the international community has failed to develop a single, universal and commonly accepted and applied definition of terrorism. Initially ideological and theoretical obstacles prevented this. For a very long time (until 1999) the West rejected the possibility of developing an exhaustive convention of terrorism and they supported the idea of sectoral conventions devoted to different types or manifestations of terrorism. Currently, the dispute concerns a proposed separate Article 18, stipulating the cases that would be excluded from the convention. This issue generates conflicts of interests between states who are in favor or against the exclusion of activities related to national and liberation struggles from the convention.

In some cases it is actually most difficult to differentiate between terrorism and a national and liberation struggle. These phenomena may permeate one another to the point of forming an inseparable unity. Terrorism may be a consequence of a national and liberation struggle and the other way round. Shamil Basayev illustrated it stating in his ABC interview: 'I admit, I'm a bad guy. A bandit, a terrorist [...] but I am fighting for the independence of my country.' It should also be observed that what one side perceives to be terrorism may be perceived as a struggle for one's rights by the other side.

Another difficulty in a comprehensive and exhaustive presentation of the problem of terrorism is posed by the constantly increasing scope of research. With time, individual terrorist organizations come into being and cease to exist, their operations and their assessments evolve and new forms and kinds of terrorism emerge. Relatively new notions of ecoterrorism, bioterrorism or cyberterrorism may be examples here.⁸

Global Terrorism in Perspective

The terrorist attacks in the USA, the events in Dubrovka, Beslan, Bali, Madrid, London, Chechnya, Israel, Iraq and thousands of other terrorist acts illustrate what a difficult, complex, as well as dangerous and unpredictable problem we are facing. It manifests itself with varying intensity, force or dynamics practically every day. It takes place despite many states

⁸ B. Bolechów, *Terroryzm w świecie podwubiegunowym*, Toruń 2002.

and organizations being involved in the struggle with terrorism and employing a variety of measures (to counter it). An ideal method or system for preventing terrorism does not exist. It is unlikely that it will emerge in the near future, if at all. The struggle against terrorism is like fighting an enemy who is half a step, or a move ahead of us most of the time. To understand the essence and nature of terrorism and implement joint supranational operations will certainly contribute to facing this global challenge in a more efficient manner.