

## INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY – 16 YEARS AFTER 9/11 2001

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**Abstract:** After the end of the Cold War, the new European and global security environment has undergone profound changes. In the new security environment, international terrorism represents one of the main threats at a global level, the others being the proliferation of chemical, atomic, and bacteriological weapons of destruction and organized crime. Terrorism is difficult to define. Although it is an important issue today, there is no unanimously accepted scientific definition. There have been numerous attempts to define terrorism that complement each other. The paper focuses on Islamic terrorism which has undergone a certain evolution over time and has proliferated in recent years. Nowadays, it has some particularities which will be presented in the paper; they reflect the specificity of this phenomenon with a view to understanding its origin, the purposes, and its consequences. Samuel P. Huntington's theory of the Clash of Civilization and Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper's theory of the Strategic Logic of International Terrorism provide useful explanations. The aim of the paper is to examine the evolution of this phenomenon after 9/11 2001, which represents a turning point in the evolution of international terrorism.

**UDC Classification:** 327.5; **DOI:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.12955/cbup.v5.1108>

**Keywords:** security environment, international terrorism, fight against terrorism

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### Introduction

During the Cold War, which lasted around half a century, at the international level, a Third World War was about to start, with devastating effects on all the States, both the victorious and the defeated ones, for the entire human civilization. After 1991, the possibility of confrontation between the two opposing blocks disappeared. Nevertheless, a new threat, with old origins, became an increasingly worrying problem for the European and global security and stability: the international terrorism.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the terrorist attacks on the Western world escalated, and their number has increased especially in recent years. The attacks of 9/11 2001 were particularly powerful, and they marked the beginning of a period of intensification of this social phenomenon. Consequently, the U.S.A. and its allies in the Western Europe created the international coalition against terrorism, which seeks to defeat terrorism anywhere on the globe. To this purpose, the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were carried out.

16 years after 9/11, this paper aims to point out the main aspects in the evolution of the Islamic terrorism from 2001 until now and to analyze the reasons why terrorism is the main threat to global security and stability.

### Attempts to Define Terrorism

From an etymological point of view, the concept of terrorism comes from the Latin "terror" ("terroris") which means to "frighten" or to "tremble." In the Greek mythology, the terror (phobos) and the fear (deimos) were the names of the two horses which drew the chariot of Ares, the God of the war (McInnell, 1970, p.25). During the French revolution, an intensification of the "terreur" was noticed. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the suffix "-ism" was added to the word "terror"; thus, "terrorism" refers "to practice the trembling" or "causing the frightening."

It is difficult to establish with precision when and where terrorism appeared. The idea of terror is probably as old as the human society. The first who attempted to define terrorism and to regulate it from a legal point of view were the Romans who, in 103 B.C., in Lex Apuleia, called Crimen Majestatis any internal or external action directed against the integrity of the state.

Terrorism is a contested concept and, by its very nature, difficult to define. Throughout time, various interpretations were given. The experts do not agree on one definition. The scholars have not yet reached a commonly accepted definition of this phenomenon. Andrew Silke (2014, p. 5) attempted to explain the difficulty of defining terrorism in the sense of finding a commonly accepted operational definition. There are many national and regional definitions, but there is no universal legal definition approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The UN Security Council Resolution 1566,

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which was adopted unanimously on 8 October 2004, stipulated that “terrorism is a serious threat to peace,” but it lacks legal authority in international law (UN Security Council Resolution 1566, 2004).

Since the United States faced this phenomenon on 11 September 2001, several definitions have been elaborated by its state institutions. In accordance with the definition given by the United States Department of Defense: terrorism is “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological” (International Terrorism and Security Research). The FBI considers that “terrorism is the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (Ibidem). In the opinion of the Department of State, terrorism is “premeditated, politically-motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents usually intended to influence an audience” (Pattern of global terrorism 2002, 2003, April). All these definitions complement each other, and they refer especially to the Islamic terrorism which represents the most flagrant form of terrorism nowadays.

### **The Islamic terrorism**

Islamism is not a theological doctrine, but a concept which has the political use of Islam at its core. Islamism must be differentiated from fundamentalism, which is the desire to return to the basic texts of Islam. It is seen as a crusade against the unfaithful ones. It is meant to carry a religious message. The concept underlying the actions of this type of terrorism is “jihad” or “djihâd.” The Arab word means effort, fight, and punishment (Marcu & Georgescu, 2003, p. 205). It is used in order to express the effort with the aim of acquiring an objective. It also indicates the fight to defend Islam. The translation of “holy war,” which is often given to it, is highly disputed by the Islam representatives. In Arabic, this concept means to make greater efforts in order to reach the reign of God. As a Universalistic religion, Islam must be propagated by the Muslim community on any non-Muslim ground, until it extends to the whole world. According to traditional doctrine, to fight for the djihad is an act of pure devotion (ikhlas) and those who are sacrificed, those who die in this fight become martyrs (shuhada) and they benefit from an immediate place in the Paradise. This obligation is considered the sixth pillar of Islam. The objective is the restoration of the caliphate (symbiosis of the policy and the religious) and the reunification of the Muslim community (oumma).

At the moment, the phenomenon of radical Islam in its fighting form is the most important of all political movements inspired by religion. The terrorist threat represents a new type of threat, which differs from the traditional threat coming from a state or an alliance of states. The enemy was clearly named, “international terrorism,” but, at the same time, it is “not an identified enemy” because it is more difficult to establish it with precision, to detect it, and to envisage its actions.

### **Theoretical framework**

Terrorism is an old, but a very topical phenomenon. There is no theory to explain it in its entirety. The theory of the Clash of Civilizations offers a starting point in the analysis of this phenomenon. Samuel P. Huntington analyzed the international situation after the end of the Cold War and he identified the explicative power of the cultural element in international relations. He estimated that “the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural” (Huntington, 1996, p. 27). In his approach, “state” is replaced by “civilization.” He defines civilization as “the highest cultural grouping of people, and the broadest level of cultural identity people have,” being “differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition, and, most important, religion” (Idem, 1993, p. 24).

The ideological differences disappeared, but confrontations between civilizations have emerged in the new international context. “In this new world the most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts” (...) are “between peoples belonging to different cultural entities” (Idem, 1996, p. 27). Between Islam and Christianity there was “continuing and deeply conflictual relation (...) more often the relation has been one of intense rivalry and of varying degrees of hot war” (Ibidem, p. 209) depending on “demographic growth and decline, economic developments, technological change, and intensity of religious commitment” (Ibidem, p. 211). John Esposito comments, “often found the two communities in competition, and locked at times in deadly combat, for power, land, and souls” (as cited in Huntington, 1996, p. 209).

Huntington considers that the clash between Islam and the West in the contemporaneity began with the 1979 Iranian Revolution. After the Gulf War of 1990-1991, this clash became a war.

The Western civilization is usually dated as emerging around 700 or 800 A.D. It is generally viewed by scholars as having three major components: in Europe, North America, and Latin America. At present, the West is the most powerful civilization, but a declining power, according to Huntington.

Islam is an ancient civilization which appeared in the Arabian Peninsula in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It includes many distinct cultures: Arabian, Turkic, Persian, and Malaysian.

Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper complete Huntington's theoretical framework and offer a theoretical approach to terrorism, the theory of the Strategic Logic of International Terrorism. According to the authors, the “theory builds on the rational approach to identifying and explaining the causes of international terrorism in conflict over political influence” (Neumayer & Plümper, 2009, p.8). A distinction is made between “terror group leaders” and the “followers” which are “the soldiers of the leaders.” The leaders have “a crucial, decisive position in the terror organization. They are the leaders and therefore behave predominantly strategically” (Ibidem). The soldiers “follow specified or unspecified commands, which may include the command of self-sacrifice in a suicide terror mission” (Ibidem, p. 10). Neumayer and Plümper point out that terrorism is not only a conflict between civilizations, but there are also other motivations: “the high strategic value of attacking Westerners” (Ibidem, p. 1) because the “terror leaders aim for political influence in their country or wider region” (Ibidem, p. 12). Thus, the connection between the internal and external policy presented by Bueno de Mesquita (2006, p. 637) in his new theory of international relations is realized.

### **11 September 2001 - a turning point in the history of terrorism**

On September 11, 2001, four coordinated terrorist attacks, led by Osama bin Laden, were made by the Islamic terrorist group Al-Qaeda on the United States. The attacks were particularly destructive: the high cost in human lives (around 6,000 persons died and 9,000 were wounded) and the most significant material loss compared to the previous attacks. The U.S.A. considered that these attacks were directed against the American states because their essential components were concerned: the World Trade Center, a symbol of the economic power, the Pentagon, a symbol of the military force, and the White House, the symbol of the political power. In the case of the previous terrorist attacks the target was the civilian population, not the state.

Consequently, article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty was invoked for the first time. Until that moment, it had referred to a traditional attack. After September, 11, it was extended to terrorist attacks. This is the first and only time that this article has been invoked until now. The international anti-terrorism coalition was created. The military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq took place. These campaigns did not have the expected success because terrorism could not be completely eradicated and democracy established. Instead, Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was captured in Pakistan.

Due to the European Union countries' participation in the military campaigns mentioned above, the result was a series of terrorist attacks on the European states, the U.S.A. allies in the fight against international terrorism. They targeted the peaceful civilian population. For example, the 11 March 2004 Madrid train bombings killing 192 people and injuring around 2,000; the 7 July 2005 London bombings on underground rail lines and bus when 56 people died and more than 700 were injured; the 21 July 2005 London bombings, with no victims. Other terrorist attacks that took place between 2005 and 2015: the 22 July 2011 Oslo attacks with 77 victims; Charlie Hebdo, the French satirical paper, attacks in Paris on 2 November 2011 and 7-9 January 2015, 14 people were killed, out of which 2 police officers; Toulouse and Montauban shootings on March 11 to 19 2012, London attacks on 22 May 2013, Brussels attacks on 24 May 2014, and Copenhagen attacks on 14 February 2015. (What major terrorist attacks have occurred in Europe in recent years, 2017). The frequency of the attacks has increased especially over the past three years due to the involvement of the Western states in the bombing of ISIS (the self-proclaimed Islamic State) targets in Iraq and Syria. In 2016, there were several attacks: in Brussels (22 March), Nice (14 July), and Berlin (19 December). In 2017, the most severe terrorist attacks in Europe were in Great Britain (March 22, May 22, June 3), Sweden-Stockholm (April 7), France (April 20), Catalonia attacks: Barcelona (16 August), and Cambrils (18 August). Some attacks involved vehicles plowing into crowds (Armed attacks and terrorist attempts committed in Europe in 2017, 2017). Italy has repeatedly been threatened by the ISIS.

In addition to the above mentioned attacks, smaller ones took place permanently in the European Union countries. The organization ISIS claimed responsibility for these attacks. They were directed against the civilian population to intimidate them by terror, and not against the state institutions. There were no motivations declared. The exception is the attack that took place at the editorial office of Paris. Some attacks were carried out on important days for the European civilization: public and religious holidays.

### **Discussion**

Referring to the traditional attack, Carl von Clausewitz considered that the “war is a mere continuation of policy by other means” (von Clausewitz, 1873, chapter 1, para. 24). Terrorism is different from the traditional war where confrontation occurred between two or more visible enemies. Terrorism is an atypical, asymmetric kind of war, with its own specific characteristics. The enemy cannot be identified. It targets the national security of the aggressed states, and it causes material damage and human loss. It has reached an unprecedented peak. Terrorism is a war characterized by the lack of a defined operation theater, by the lack of a delineated battlefield, of some identification means (uniforms), of an ideology, institutions, by the usage of man as a weapon, by the usage of classical or artisanal weapons, the usage of the surprise factor, rapid, complex and diverse actions, carried out anywhere and anytime, meant to bring terror, the lack of strategic coordination and the maintenance of strategic initiative, and especially, cyber spatiality.

Terrorism is a very complex phenomenon, with violent actions against some precise targets, which, in most cases, cannot defend themselves. It is the weapon of the religious extremist, of the one who intends to kill, to frighten, to dominate by means of terror. Essentially, the terrorism takes the form of a violent act, which often targets civilians, its purpose is political, it aims at publicity, the organization is clandestine, and the acts are likely to have psychological effects.

Terrorism proved to be a new type of enemy, which is very difficult to fight since Western states do not have efficient means to deal with it.

After September 11, the U.S.A. took a number of firm internal measures, and consequently there has been no terrorist attack on its territory since 2001, and those that have been initiated have been detected and annihilated in the early stages. This was possible due to the development of some new, effective anti-terrorist legislation. These measures concerned the internal policy. Regarding the external policy, the U.S.A. launched military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq in order to capture Osama Bin Laden and destroy the Al-Qaeda training camps. The immigrants from countries that host terrorist organizations from Asian and African states (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) were denied access to the United States by the order of President Donald Trump. The disposition was considered undemocratic.

Unlike the U.S.A., the European countries did not take similar measures and, consequently, there was a host of terrorist attacks. Grégoire Laliou (2016) considers that to avoid repeating attacks “it was necessary to situate the attacks in their political, social and historical context” (to analyze this phenomenon). He estimates “our governments have not done” this. Certain politics elaborated by states led to a series of secondary phenomena which made it easy for terrorists to enter European countries (Among the refugees who entered the EU, terrorists of the Islamic State slipped, 2016).

The instruments which can be used in the fight against international terrorism are diplomacy, criminal law, financial control, military force, and information. All these must act in synergy because, on its own, each of them has severe legislative limitations.

Huntington's theory of the Clash of Civilizations has been confirmed by the events after 1990. The conflicts have arisen between the Islam and the West. According to Neumayer and Plümper's theory, the terrorist leaders choose their targets for maximum efficiency. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, the target of the attacks was the U.S.A., the only superpower at that time and the symbol of the Western civilization and then its allies, the countries that participated in the anti-terrorist coalition in Syria and Iraq by aerial bombardments.

## Conclusion

After 9/11 terrorism is no longer a usual form of terrorism, it is deterritorialized, internationalized, it is fought between an individual or more, and the rest of the world. Terrorism acts by non-military means and unprecedented forms.

Terrorism is a new type of war, therefore one needs to act accordingly by modifying current standards of classic warfare. Some important elements of combating terrorism are: an adequate legislative framework and firm organizational measures. In order to fight this scourge, countries need to change the military strategy and tactics in order to render the fight efficient. In addition, the means which will be used must have antiterrorist specific particularities, as the ones used until now turned out to be inefficient. Apart from technical means, Western countries need to change the ideological approach of this phenomenon. The problem of the fight against terrorism calls for solutions which differ from those used until now, another concept, another strategy. This war against terrorism can take many years, with an uncertain ending.

Unless appropriate action is taken, many innocent people will become victims. Terrorism creates panic among the population, and it disrupts their social and economic life, leading to chaos.

Throughout history, the Western world has faced many unfavorable circumstances but has managed to defeat them. We hope the same thing will happen in the current context through appropriate measures. One solution can be to avoid conflict because it does not lead to anything good and the preference for peaceful cooperation between cultures.

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