

# The Essence of Terrorism

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**Abstract.** *The area of content to which the term 'terrorism' refers is very broad and is also the subject of numerous studies. However, the results indicate significant discrepancies in the understanding of the term, resulting not only in an ambiguous perception, but above all in the lack of a generally accepted definition of the phenomenon. Researchers see it as an ideology, as well as a strategy, tactics or method of fighting, and finally as a tool for achieving the goals set. The validity of the meaning assigned to them has been verified by analysing the definitions of individual concepts, and in the search for the scope of meaning of the word terrorism, the terms that are indicated as its synonyms have also been used. The research conducted indicated political motivation as a feature distinguishing a terrorist from an ordinary criminal. Terrorists try to influence the power of a given country, also aiming at causing disturbances in its decision-making processes and, as a result, paralysing the state apparatus. The main characteristic of terrorism is the use of violence, which can take the form of any behaviour that results in the creation of a state of fear and danger in the human psyche. The purpose of terrorism is, therefore, to deliberately arouse and exploit fear, and its far-reaching psychological consequences go well beyond the immediate victims. Arousing fear in a society of the likelihood of a terrorist attack aims to force a government, organisation or social group to take or abandon certain actions. The adoption of such a tactic of action is an effect of disproportions, concerning both quantitative parameters of military potentials and factors determining the level of civilisation, and the differences lie in both the way of thinking and views, as well as the method of conducting a fight. In such a context, the power of terrorism comes from surprise, brutality and a task of the greatest possible loss in the shortest possible time, using unconventional methods. Unfortunately, the use of terrorist methods has become widespread and the threat of terrorism has become global.*

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## Introduction

The phenomenon of terrorism is constantly being explored and described, but unfortunately, it is still understood ambiguously, and for many years, its very definition has been a serious problem. The concept of terrorism is interpreted differently in different parts of the world, depending on the political, military, social or economic situation of a country. Moreover, in some Arab, African or Asian countries, terrorism can be a method of the national liberation struggle, or it serves to defend religious beliefs, where terrorist attacks are an accepted way of fighting. The lack of a clear perception of terrorism, therefore, allows freedom of interpretation of the concept and the possibility of its misuse for various purposes. The meaningful function of the concept of terrorism does not provide precise knowledge of its substance, and while the content of the term can be quite easily filled by classifying its essential features, its scope of meaning is no longer so obvious. This article presents the results of research aimed at investigating and organising

the views on the meaning of the concept of terrorism. In the course of the research, the answer to the following question was sought: what is the essence of terrorism? The solution to the research problem formulated in this way was to analyse dictionary definitions, and various views contained in the thematic literature and reliable Internet sources, and to elaborate the obtained results, general methods were used: synthesis, comparison, inference and generalisation. This allowed the assumed goal of the research to be achieved and its results to be presented in the form of a compact, synthetic study.

## The meaning of terrorism

Looking for the meaning range of the word *terrorism*, it is worth reaching for the terms that are indicated as its synonyms. The Internet dictionary of synonyms divides them into three groups of meanings:

1. Terrorism — e.g. in the context of activities: barbarity, barbarism, bestiality, heartlessness, lack of mercy, brutalism, brutality, predation, ferocity, blood-thirsty, insensitiveness, inhumanity, cruelty, sharpness, monstrosity, sadism, sternness, severity, crime, savagery, depravity;
2. Terrorism as a kind of coercion: aggression, argument of force, banditry, lawlessness, darkness, rape, injustice, violation of the law, the law of the jungle, the law of the fist, the law of the stronger, violence, crime, coercion, robbery, terror, tyranny, oppression;
3. Terrorism — in the context of the use of force: barbarism, lawlessness, rape, kidnapping, genocide, air piracy, violence, blackmail, terror<sup>1</sup>.

Concerning the phenomenon of *terrorism*, all of them can be used interchangeably, but only in an environment that provides context. Without such a background, none, however, as should be stressed, fully reflects its nature.

The area of content to which the term terrorism refers is very broad. Krzysztof Indecko describes terrorism as a certain generally indicated type of criminal act, using violence to achieve certain strategic objectives<sup>2</sup>. Terrorism is also presented as a specific communication strategy<sup>3</sup>, a message sent by terrorists to the public and governments. According to Kuba Jałoszyński, terrorism is an ideology that uses terrorism as a tool. Its followers achieve their goals through terror, however, for this to happen, two conditions must be met: first, the use of terrorism should be the main and often the only tool for achieving political goals; second, it must be used by the weaker side in an asymmetrical conflict<sup>4</sup>. According to Tomasz Aleksandrowicz, this is a method of political struggle in which violence is used to intimidate

<sup>1</sup> *Electronic source*: <http://synonim.net/synonim/terroryzm>, accessed: 06.01.2020.

<sup>2</sup> Indecko K, *Prawo karne wobec terroryzmu i aktu terrorystycznego*. Łódź, 1998, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> See: Wolska-Liśkiewicz E, *Strategie komunikowania Państwa Islamskiego*. *Electronic source*: [http://www.rocznikbezpieczenstwa.dsw.edu.pl/fileadmin/user\\_upload/wydawnictwo/RBM/RBM\\_artykuly/2016\\_2\\_22.pdf](http://www.rocznikbezpieczenstwa.dsw.edu.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/wydawnictwo/RBM/RBM_artykuly/2016_2_22.pdf), accessed: 06.01.2020.

<sup>4</sup> Jałoszyński K, *Typologia terroryzmu*, [in:] Jałoszyński K, Wiśniewski B (Eds), *Terroryzm. Diagnoza, zadania administracji publicznej w przeciwdziałaniu zjawisku*. Bielsko-Biała, 2007, p. 62.

public opinion, governments, and social groups, in order to achieve certain goals<sup>5</sup>. Walter Laqueur describes terrorism as a tool through which people can change political situations, manipulate the power of a country, change people who hold important state positions, as well as resort to manipulation, and sabotage, promoting their ideology<sup>6</sup>.

These few examples clearly show how different the opinions on the meaning of the word *terrorism* are. They are often even contradictory when the indicated forms of terrorism completely exclude others, formulated by other researchers. The authors see it as an ideology, as well as a strategy, tactic or method of fighting, and finally as a tool for achieving the goals. However, the validity of the meaning assigned to them can be verified by analysing the definitions of individual concepts.

According to the Dictionary of the Polish Language<sup>7</sup>, *ideology* is a collection of ideas, views and beliefs, as the *Encyclopedia PWN* adds<sup>8</sup>, used for a comprehensive interpretation and transformation of the world. According to the author, terrorism (or strictly speaking, terrorists) uses a specific set of ideas and beliefs, but the way of thinking itself is not so much terrorism as it can lead to it, even at its base. Terrorism is, therefore, an effect of a professed ideology, as one of the ways of transforming reality, using it but not constituting it. The ideology of Islam presupposes the domination of this religion over the others, but not every follower of it uses terrorist methods<sup>9</sup>.

The *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN* defines *strategy* as a well-thought-out action plan in some field<sup>10</sup>. The broad programme of setting and achieving the goals of terrorists is based on methodical terrorisation of the population, the aim of which is to destroy society and its ties, and one of the methods, though not the only one, is randomly murdering innocent people. Terrorism is not a thoughtless act, and by referring its specificity to the above-mentioned definition of a *strategy*, clear associations can be made. It should be noted, however, that the message of the concept of *strategy* does not exhaust the main idea behind the term *terrorism*, although it is undoubtedly one of its components.

The dictionary describes *a fight* as, among other things, a clash of armed groups in order to defeat the enemy, although in the case of terrorism, it should be understood rather as an action aimed at removing something; an action aimed at conquering, reclaiming someone or something; or the clash of conflicting interests and views<sup>11</sup>. Undoubtedly, therefore, *the fight* is the word for terrorism, but it is not a complete equivalent.

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<sup>5</sup> Aleksandrowicz T, Wstęp: co to jest terroryzm i co warto o nim wiedzieć?, [in:] Jałoszyński K, Letkiewicz A (Eds), Edukacja antyterrorystyczna. Konieczność i obowiązek naszych czasów. Szczytno, 2010, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Laqueur W, No End to War — Terrorism in the 21st century. Bloomsbury, New York, 2003, p. 120.

<sup>7</sup> *Electronic source:* <http://sjp.pl/ideologia>, accessed: 06.01.2020.

<sup>8</sup> *Electronic source:* <http://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/ideologia;3913853.html>, accessed: 07.01.2020.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Wilczyńska A, Zróznicowanie wewnętrzne islamu. *Przegląd Geopolityczny*, 13/2015. *Electronic source:* [http://przeglad.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Przegląd\\_Geopolityczny\\_tom\\_13.pdf](http://przeglad.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Przegląd_Geopolityczny_tom_13.pdf), accessed: 07.01.2020.

<sup>10</sup> *Electronic source:* <http://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/strategia;2576315>, accessed: 07.01.2020.

<sup>11</sup> *Electronic source:* <https://sjp.pwn.pl/szukaj/walka.html>, accessed: 06.01.2020.

*Tactics* are the way to go about achieving a goal. It is also a field of the art of war, including the theory and practice of fighting by units of different kinds of troops<sup>12</sup>. In the latter context, it indicates how to use your forces. In contrast to a strategy that defines what to do and when to do it, the tactic says how to do it. A tactic is both the preparation and execution of specific actions, clearly visible in terrorist activities.

A method is a deliberately applied procedure designed to achieve the intended purpose<sup>13</sup>. A method is a way of doing something, a selection of the type of action (selection and sequence of actions of components of a complex action), which is used not only intentionally, but also with the possibility of repeating it in all cases of a given type<sup>14</sup>. Considering its repetitive nature, and confronting it with the variety of manifestations of terrorism, it must be said that this one uses a whole range of different methods, but is not as such itself.

A tool is a device that allows you to perform an activity or work by hand, it may also be a person who is a passive performer of someone else's will or anything that is used for some purpose<sup>15</sup>. In the case of terrorism, the tool — in a broader sense — is, therefore, violence or the threat of its use, and in a narrower sense — the perpetrator, uncritically resorting to it. The perpetrator, in turn, also uses tools such as explosive devices, firearms or other — often improvised — accessories. Terrorism, therefore, uses tools but must be understood much more broadly.

## The aims of terrorists

The world of people is ruled by emotions, which are the basis of all human decisions and the main driving force behind all aspirations and all actions. Even to purely logical content, a person always has an emotional attitude, and at the source of every desire, there is an emotion. The successful realisation of emotionally conditioned desires is a source of satisfaction. The inability to achieve what you want births frustration. This applies not only to individuals, but also to certain communities connected by the same desires inspired by certain social theories, ideologies or worldviews<sup>16</sup>. Where their aspirations are contrary to those of the country or group of countries concerned, and it is not possible to achieve the objectives pursued or to make announcements to obtain the widest possible political support, the leaders of the group concerned shall use means to make their views public or to draw the attention of ruling groups to the problem. Enabling them to realise their desires results in positive feelings, but when they cannot peacefully realise their aspirations and the emotional basis of these aspirations is very strong, then they reach for violence, which in extreme cases, are terrorist acts. Terrorism is therefore usually a reaction of certain social groups, relatively small but strongly united by some ideas, to the frustration caused by their inability to achieve the goals contained in their programmes. The blockade of these goals is usually guarded by governments, so terrorism turns primarily against the authorities. This is how

<sup>12</sup> *Electronic source:* <http://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/taktyka;2577493.html>, accessed: 07.01.2020.

<sup>13</sup> *Electronic source:* <http://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/metoda;2482575.html>, accessed: 07.01.2020.

<sup>14</sup> *Electronic source:* <http://sjp.pwn.pl/slowniki/metoda.html>, accessed: 07.01.2020.

<sup>15</sup> *Electronic source:* <http://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/narz%C4%99dzie;2487101>, accessed: 07.01.2020.

<sup>16</sup> Białek T, *Terroryzm. Manipulacja strachem*. Warsaw, 2005, p. 144.

anarchists understood terrorism, whose aim was the tsar, king, emperor, president or prime minister. However, as societies became democratic, such a goal became insufficient. In systems based on parliamentary democracy, it is, after all, the electoral society that decides who is to be in power. That is why terrorists turned against the whole society by organising assassinations or kidnappings, the victims of which were initially prominent people and then completely random people. The terrorists wanted to draw the attention of the whole society to themselves by saying to its members through a terrorist act: *as long as you do not meet our demands, you will not be safe*<sup>17</sup>. Their belief in the validity of their ideas influences the modification of moral principles, according to the principle that *the goal sanctifies the means*. Although this method is strongly condemned, it is widely used, especially when the objective to be achieved is particularly important. Moral principles then become less meaningful and there is always an excuse for breaking them<sup>18</sup>.

Terrorists want to change or preserve an existing situation; their actions may be revolutionary or limited to specific issues. A terrorist can be a religious fanatic, an anarchist, an opponent of abortion and an animal rights defender. What they have in common is the nature of the act. However, this does not mean that every act of violence against the state and society deserves to be called as such. Researchers of the issue are inclined to consider political motivation as a feature distinguishing a terrorist from a common criminal, so the political aspect seems to be the basic element of the phenomenon. It can even be noted that — mainly through the media and high-profile terrorist attacks — terrorism tends to narrow its scope of meaning to political terrorism alone. However, it must be remembered that the political aspect is also not unambiguous<sup>19</sup>, and the concept of politics itself is broad enough to accommodate human attitudes, which may be completely different<sup>20</sup>. Ultimately, however, the terrorists try to influence the power of a country, also trying to cause a disturbance in the decision-making process. This weakens the state, which not only makes decision-making more difficult, but also paralyses the apparatus of the state, allowing terrorists to act more freely, while the state is less able to fight, and respond to their actions, and the terrorists gradually gain an advantage<sup>21</sup>, leading the terrorists to influence their opponents' actions and structures so that they can adapt them to their own needs<sup>22</sup>. Terrorism also involves the pursuit of power, its acquisition and use for political change<sup>23</sup>. It strives for solutions with an authoritarian or even totalitarian profile. Terrorists prefer the rule of a strong hand because it can give them full power when they succeed in achieving it. Terrorism also means actions that arouse hostility towards *strangers*, in this case, political opponents<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Piotrowska A, Ukochani mordercy. *Wiedza i życie*, No. 11, 2005, p. 31.

<sup>19</sup> Held V, Terroryzm, uprawnienia i cele polityczne, [in:] Żuradzki T, Kuniński T (Eds), *Etyka wojny*. Antologia tekstów. Warsaw, 2009, p. 321.

<sup>20</sup> Hoffman B, , p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> Białek T, p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> Dietl W, Hirschmann K, Tophoven R, *Terroryzm*. Warsaw, 2011, pp. 27–28.

<sup>23</sup> Hoffman B, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Białek T, p. 56.

## Violence and fear in terrorism

Violence is the main characteristic of terrorism, and even, according to some researchers, the basic and necessary condition for it to be spoken of<sup>25</sup>. Terrorists glorify the use of force as an effective method of fighting. They are devoid of moral scruples, and their determination to establish their own order causes them to have total disrespect for universally accepted values, including, above all, human life, both for others and themselves. Terrorism is based on the erroneous conviction that blind force can solve all of the iniquities of this world, i.e. to eliminate the developmental asymmetry, eliminate misery, hunger and social injustice, restore the right of self-determination to nations, and replace the existing system with a better one. Terrorism is, therefore, a self-inflicted spiral of violence that is difficult to stop or to reduce<sup>26</sup>.

According to German journalists who have been working on terrorism for many years, the use of violence must be a process that is sustained and developed over time. Thoroughly planned and organised attacks serve to achieve long-term goals, with the use of pressure, bombs and firearms, combined with an element of surprise, which causes horror, fear and uncertainty in society<sup>27</sup>. Violence in terrorism can take the form of any behaviour which results in the creation of a state of fear and insecurity in the human psyche, called *terror*. To speak of a terrorist attack, it is not even necessary to carry out the threats that have been announced, but to cause the fear of their implementation, which boils down to intimidation and to provoking a defensive reaction, which is — above all — fear<sup>28</sup>. The purpose of terrorism is, therefore, to deliberately arouse and exploit fear, to cause widespread fear, tension and uncertainty on a large scale and thus to influence the political process and the way it works<sup>29</sup>. It is fear that makes people susceptible to the influence of others and makes them make the concessions that the attacker expects — terrorism is the manipulation of someone else's fear, which has the power to influence people's actions and models human actions<sup>30</sup>.

Terrorism is, therefore, a means of enslaving people<sup>31</sup>, which is a very important, if not the primary function<sup>32</sup>. Terrorist acts are, in a way, intended to make a person an instrument of the one who causes fear. For this reason, according to Bolesław Bolechow, terrorism can be considered a kind of brutal and immoral manipulation of people through fear. This intimidation should be associated with an activity of a social nature, aimed mainly at social and political institutions, as well as people associated with them<sup>33</sup>. As he writes, terrorism is a tactic by which victims are

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Jałoszyński K, *Współczesny wymiar antyterroryzmu*. Warsaw, 2008, p. 36.

<sup>26</sup> Tomaszewicz J, *Terroryzm na tle przemocy politycznej (zarys encyklopedyczny)*. Katowice, 2000, p. 89.

<sup>27</sup> Dietl W, Hirschmann K, Tophoven R, pp. 27–28.

<sup>28</sup> Kucharczyk B, *O niektórych aspektach walki z terroryzmem*. Częstochowa, 2009, pp. 225–226.

<sup>29</sup> Horgan J, *Psychologia terroryzmu*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw, 2008, pp. 21–22.

<sup>30</sup> Skrzydlewski P, *Terroryzm jako środek zniewolenia człowieka*, [in:] Jaroszyński P, k.p. Tarasiewicz P, Chłodna I, Smoleń-Wawrzusiszyn M (Eds), *Terroryzm — dawniej i dziś*. Lublin, 2001, p. 188.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>33</sup> Bolechów B, *Terroryzm w świecie podwubiegunowym, Przewartościowania i kontynuacje*. Toruń, 2002, p. 25.

subjected to violence in order to demonstrate the weakness of the authorities, the helplessness of citizens and the superiority of the attackers<sup>34</sup>. According to Brian Michael Jenkins, fear is a deliberate effect here, not just a by-product. A terrorist is anyone who tries to promote his or her views using forced intimidation; with the help of fear, the terrorists want to gain dominance and control<sup>35</sup>. The very process of terror acts on the human psyche — a terrorist attack, usually shocking and brutal, is designed to create a potential psychological barrier against a given behaviour. The individual who is to be impressed is afraid of repeating the attack, so he or she is willing to act in a certain way to avoid a repeated bloodshed<sup>36</sup>. To raise public fear of the likelihood of a terrorist attack is to force the government, organisation or social group to take or abandon certain actions. The purpose of terrorist attacks may, therefore, be to destabilise the state by intimidating its residents, assaults on authorities, administration, courts, etc., in order to induce the government of the state to take the desired action by criminals<sup>37</sup>. This means destabilisation both in the physical dimension, through physical threatening of the state and its citizens, and in the mental dimension, through instilling fear in the society. Terrorists, therefore, use fear as a tool to disintegrate and paralyse society, and fear is the source of a decline in its confidence in the actions taken by the government<sup>38</sup>. Such a model of terrorists' actions aims to discredit the authorities which, in the eyes of the citizens, are becoming incompetent and weak, incapable of dealing with terrorism<sup>39</sup>.

## Psychological consequences of terrorism

Terrorism is designed to have far-reaching psychological effects that go far beyond the immediate victim or target of a terrorist attack. Terrorism is designed to increase the feeling of fear and thus intimidate a much wider, specific *audience*, which may include a hostile ethnic or religious group, an entire country, government or political party, or public opinion<sup>40</sup>. In practice, concessions are thus forced on a person or organisation that was not the target of a direct attack<sup>41</sup>. The priority is not for terrorists to commit a specific crime (e.g. an assassination attempt), but rather to trigger a specific effect and reaction from the authorities and/or public opinion. Terrorism is violence for the effect, but not for the result: the current victim. The victim may be completely unrelated to the purpose of the terrorists' action, so the most important intention of a terrorist act is that the fear of a ricochet should lead someone else — not the person directly attacked — to take the course of action that the terrorist expects<sup>42</sup>. In this sense, the direct aims of violence are not its

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<sup>34</sup> Horgan J, p. 55.

<sup>35</sup> Hoffman B, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> Tomaszewicz J, *Zło w imię dobra. Zjawisko przemocy w polityce*. Warsaw — Bielsko-Biała, 2009, p. 43.

<sup>37</sup> Wójcik J.W, *Przeciwdziałanie finansowaniu terroryzmu*. Warsaw, 2007, p. 36.

<sup>38</sup> Bolechów B, *Terroryzm — aktorzy, statyści, widzowie*. Warsaw, 2010, p. 250.

<sup>39</sup> Gearty C, *Terroryzm*. Warsaw, 2001, p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> Hoffman B, p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> *Encyklopedia terroryzmu*. Warsaw, 2004, p. 100.

<sup>42</sup> Aleksandrowicz T, *Terroryzm międzynarodowy*. Warsaw, 2008, p. 22.

main objectives. Direct victims of human violence are usually selected blindly from the target population and serve as relays for the terrorists' message to someone else. In this way, terrorists manipulate the main purpose of their actions by forcing or attracting their attention, depending on whether the perpetrators in the situation seek intimidation, enslavement or propaganda<sup>43</sup>. Each act is designed to affect as many people as possible in pursuit of a specific goal. The feature that distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence is the message it carries. Paradoxically, the assassins are not directly concerned with greater loss of human life, but with a stronger psychological impact on public opinion and thus a greater sense of fear and powerlessness<sup>44</sup>. One of the leaders of the Japanese Red Army explained: *There is no other way for us. Acts of violence (...) cause shock. We want to shock people (...) it is our way of communicating with them.* Similar messages usually mean a call to change the situation, drawing attention to problems to be resolved, injustice, etc. — from the point of view of the terrorists, of course<sup>45</sup>. Terrorists want to be heard and noticed, and the publicity that accompanies individual attacks is to serve this purpose. In such a context, even the threat itself — as perceived by the public — is already a great success for terrorist groups<sup>46</sup>.

Terrorist actions are intended to be spectacular and to move public opinion, so they are very brutal and bloody<sup>47</sup>. Brian Jenkins even described the phenomenon of terrorism as a *theatre*<sup>48</sup>. As Janusz Danecki wrote, *the attack on America* had its actors, directors and audience, but most of all, it was a staged attack on symbols, identified by some with the military and financial power of the USA, by others with the corruption and imperialism of the West. It was a politically and religiously determined effort, aimed at causing a shock in the world of *the Great Satan*<sup>49</sup>. Such actions have taken on a public character, the publicity of individual acts is not only a message to society, but also strengthens their meaning. Regardless of where a terrorist attack has taken place, information about it rapidly circulates around the world. For this reason, terrorism has become an international problem, despite the fact that not every corner of the world has been attacked. Thus, it has a constant impact on security problems not only locally or regionally, but also internationally. In the era of globalisation, it is a method of exerting pressure from narrow groups of people on countries, organisations and the entire international community, with increasingly serious consequences. The cost of its impact is also borne by those societies that are not even directly involved in the conflict. The phenomenon

<sup>43</sup> Białoskórski R, Wyzwania i zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa XXI wieku. Warsaw, 2010, p. 43.

<sup>44</sup> Dietl W, Hirschmann K, Tophoven R, Terroryzm..., *op. cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>45</sup> Aleksandrowicz T, Krótki film o ścinaniu głowy. O symbiozie między terrorystami i mediami. *Electronic source*: <https://wszystkoconajwazniejsze.pl/tomasz-aleksandrowicz-krotki-film-o-scinaniu-glowy/>, accessed: 07.01.2020.

<sup>46</sup> Kosmyńska P, Od Boga to terroru. Rola religii w ideologii dżihadyzmu na przykładzie organizacji Al-Kaida. Łódź, 2012, pp. 81–83.

<sup>47</sup> Bartnicki A, Dalewska-Greń H, Dehnel-Szyc M, Gawrycki M, Grzebyk P, Lizak W, Nijakowski L, Spyraa J, Stachura J, Konflikty współczesnego świata. Wielkie tematy. Warsaw, 2008, p. 49.

<sup>48</sup> Jenkins B, International Terrorism. A New Model of Conflict. California Seminar on Arms Control and Foreign Policy, Los Angeles, 1975, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Danecki J, Dżihad — rozważania o muzułmańskiej 'wojnie świętej'. *Puls*, 1991, No. 2.



is spreading rapidly to other countries, and its effects are not limited by either geographical or cultural area.

Terrorism is an action aimed at creating chaos, which means, among other things, that terrorists most often consider themselves to be a force that can control people and make them listen. The second characteristic is that terrorism is an activity aimed at loosening or even destroying social bonds, which creates a kind of vacuum into which terrorists wish to introduce their preferred patterns of behaviour and social bonds<sup>50</sup>. Terrorism draws its strength from the surprise, the effect of an impact and the consequent uncertainty of the next attack. This uncertainty becomes a source of anxiety<sup>51</sup> — a state of strong emotional tension, appearing in a situation of real danger<sup>52</sup>. The choice of victims is determined mainly by the desire to shock, to cause a shock in those who became observers of the attack (local community, international community). Assassinations violate the interests of outsiders, i.e. those who did not express their negative attitude to the terrorist act, its purpose or justification, or even to a specific ideology or views<sup>53</sup>. Victims are selected on an *opportunistic* basis and it is this apparent randomness and actual randomness that creates the desired psychological effect, based on surprise. This creates the impression of being unable to oppose a terrorist attack<sup>54</sup>. The randomness in the choice of victims, as well as their innocence and vulnerability, makes terrorism often be described as a *blind crime*, because the most important point is not the choice of the victim, but the achievement of the intended goal. These findings confirm the results of studies which show that 70% of the victims of terrorist attacks are casual civilians, 10% business representatives, 10% military representatives, and the rest are representatives of government offices, including diplomats<sup>55</sup>. Thus, the victims are not those who die, but those who are paralysed by the fear of further attacks and agree to make concessions to the demands made. The use of crime blindly, i.e. without deliberately distinguishing between victims, does not, however, mean *acting blindfolded* — irrationally, recklessly and aimlessly. Usually, assaults are well-thought-out and based on a careful selection of targets<sup>56</sup>. Terrorists, by rooting their fears in the society, seek to increase the impression of their abilities, in the face of limited forces. *Ten people acting together can make a hundred thousand scattered people tremble*, wrote Mirabeau<sup>57</sup>, an influential politician of the Great French Revolution, and society is supposed to get the impression that the terrorists are invincible — one hundred more will come in place of one eliminated<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> Białek T, pp. 55–56.

<sup>51</sup> Kozielski J, *Koncepcje psychologiczne człowieka*. Warsaw, 1998, pp. 129–130.

<sup>52</sup> Gerstmann P, Orlikowska H, Stachnikówna I, *Z badań nad psychologią strachu*. Poznań, 1957, p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Hanausek T, *W sprawie pojęcia współczesnego terroru*. *Problemy Kryminalistyki*, 1980, No. 143, p. 45.

<sup>54</sup> Bolechów B, *Terroryzm — aktorzy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

<sup>55</sup> Pikulski P, *Prawne środki zwalczania terroryzmu*. Olsztyn, 2000, p. 25.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Coady C.A.J, *Moralność terroryzmu*, [in:] Żuradzki T, Kuniński T (Eds), *Etyka...*, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

<sup>57</sup> Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, Hrabia de Mirabeau.

<sup>58</sup> Horgan J, p. 54.

## Asymmetry in terrorist activities

Terrorism is a dynamic and developing phenomenon, evolving in many different directions, but it is still dominated by the asymmetry of forces. It concerns both quantitative parameters of military potentials and factors determining the level of civilisation, and the differences lie in the way of thinking and views, as well as in the method of fighting. The weaker side chooses such a strategy and tactics of action that limits the possibility of the stronger side to use its military potential by performing a unilateral act — the chosen target is usually completely defenceless at the moment of the attack.

The power of terrorism comes from surprise, brutality and the task of inflicting the greatest possible damage in the shortest possible time, using unconventional methods. In an asymmetric conflict, the stronger side is the state, while the weaker side is the terrorist organisation, which, however, as a result of the methods it uses, effectively influences the creation of a sense of common threat and engaging the entire state apparatus to oppose it<sup>59</sup>. This confrontation is not a direct battlefield confrontation; the attacker hits unknown areas with available means. The aggressor does not recognise moral, ethical or legal principles, so it does not limit its attacks to the military sphere, and losses also affect civilians. At the same time, it evades the opponent's strengths and attacks its most sensitive areas<sup>60</sup>. The weaker side, in order to achieve success, must show the stronger side what it can afford. It wants to prove that it can do anything — even kill innocent people — to achieve its goal. It becomes important to draw the opponent into unknown areas, to use his strength against him and his weaknesses as our strength. Terrorists always have the advantage of time and place over the state. They can strike at a time of their choice, at a target of their choice, and the state cannot protect everything at all times<sup>61</sup>. In most cases, terrorists seek to escalate violence and choose a course of action that maximises fatalities and material loss<sup>62</sup>. From a praxeological point of view, the choice of this method by the *weaker* subject is correct, because — as Carl von Clausewitz's often paraphrased thesis shows<sup>63</sup> — *the war for the Matter* is the continuation of politics by different means<sup>64</sup>. Relative to other forms of political violence, terrorism remains a way of achieving goals or manifesting aspirations, with relatively low risk for organisations that act secretly, by small forces, using unconventional methods.

The external manifestation of terrorist activity is a single, spectacular assassination, taking into account the psychological effect of spectacular action. The attack

<sup>59</sup> Jałoszyński K, Jednostka kontrterrorystyczna — element działań bojowych w systemie bezpieczeństwa antyterrorystycznego. Szczytno, 2011, p. 19.

<sup>60</sup> Koziej P, Między piekłem a rajem: szare bezpieczeństwo na progu XXI wieku. Toruń, 2006, p. 35.

<sup>61</sup> Aleksandrowicz T, Nowy terroryzm, [in:] Szafranski J (Ed.), Współczesne zagrożenia terroryzmem oraz metody działań antyterrorystycznych. Szczytno, 2007, p. 46.

<sup>62</sup> Majczak M, Współczesny terroryzm zagrożeniem dla bezpieczeństwa światowego. Zwalczanie terroryzmu. *Electronic source*: <http://konkursy.byd.pl/userfiles/files/Majczak.pdf>, accessed: 07.01.2020.

<sup>63</sup> Carl Phillip Gottlieb von Clausewitz — Prussian theoretician of war, 1780–1831.

<sup>64</sup> Kupiecki R, NATO a terroryzm. Nowy etap transformacji sojuszu. *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, 2001, No. 3, p. 10.

itself comes as a surprise, the members of the attacking group are conspiring on the enemy's territory, and their infrastructure is hidden. The subject of *asymmetric actions* can be any group of people (political, economic, religious, ethnic, criminal, ideological, ecological) who are connected by specific goals. This group does not necessarily have to be organised, more and more often, acts of terrorism are carried out by independent individuals, who are only linked to the *movement* by an ideological bond<sup>65</sup>. The asymmetric opponent usually strives to play the conflict in such a way that the other party does not decide to use its advantage, even if this is possible for tactical or technical reasons<sup>66</sup>.

The use of terrorist methods has become widespread, and the threat of terrorism has become global. The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said of the phenomenon that it undermines all of the values for which the United Nations was created, striking at its very heart. It represents a global threat to democracy, the rule of law, human rights and stability<sup>67</sup>. Politically, terrorist acts force terrorists' demands on state leaders and disintegrate and even polarise societies. In the social sphere, there is an increase in racial and cultural antagonisms, cumulative conflicts and the disintegration of social groups<sup>68</sup>, and as a consequence, various social aspirations and contradictions may arise, which may result in armed conflicts, clashes with the authorities, and changes in internal and external policies<sup>69</sup>. In this way, terrorist groups are not only increasing their influence on national governments but are also becoming influential players in international relations<sup>70</sup>.

## Conclusions

Terrorism is a multi-faceted phenomenon, and the generation of the meaning range of the concept itself is based on a variety of concepts. They are accompanied by different gravity, and the context is sometimes debatable, sometimes contradictory, none of which seems to be complete.

The researchers of terrorism clearly emphasise its political nature. Although terrorists aim not only at politicians and centres of power, also striking at ordinary citizens, they want to cause a change in the policy of the country. The political goal of terrorism is to destabilise the social, economic and political life in the state and, as a result, to have a destructive impact on the authorities. This does not mean, however, that every act of violence against the state and society always deserves

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<sup>65</sup> *Electronic source:* <http://www.terroryzm.com/przyszlosc-terroryzmu/>, accessed: 07.01.2020.

<sup>66</sup> Nowakowska-Krystman A, Zubrzycki W, Daniluk P, Mazur-Cieślak E, *Terroryzm w ujęciu analiz strategicznych*. Warsaw, 2015, p. 103.

<sup>67</sup> *Legislative Guide to the Universal Anti-Terrorism Conventions and Protocols*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. New York, 2004, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Prońko J, *Istota terroryzmu*, [in:] Liedel K, Prońko J, Wiśniewski B (Eds), *Administracja publiczna w systemie przeciwdziałania nadzwyczajnym zagrożeniom dla ludzi i środowiska*. Wyższa Szkoła Administracji w Bielsku-Białej, Collegium Civitas, Warsaw, Bielsko-Biała 2007, p. 71.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Future Trends in Terrorism*. *Electronic source:* <http://www.terrorism-research.com/future/>, accessed: 07.01.2020.

to be described as such; it is primarily determined by the intention and nature of the act committed, distinguishing terrorists from other criminals. It should also be remembered that terrorism is not only committed by opponents of governments and their policies. A terrorist can be a religious fanatic, an anarchist, an opponent of abortion and a defender of animal rights, and their motives can be varied, such as geographical, economic, ideological, religious or national.

Terrorism is the way in which narrow groups of people influence states, organisations and the international community, and its purpose is to change or maintain things. It is influenced by the use of violence or threats of violence in the form of any behaviour capable of causing fear. This, in turn, is intended to subordinate certain behaviours to the will of the terrorists, and results in certain activities or their omissions, for the sake of their safety. Direct human victims may be chosen deliberately, but nowadays, they are most often accidental, and their death serves as a message to others. The use of force is to influence public opinion, which in turn is to put pressure on the government. A necessary element of terrorism is also publicity to reach as many recipients as possible — indirect victims. This promotes far-reaching psychological effects in the form of deliberate and methodical intimidation. Terrorist acts are therefore spectacular, attract attention and arouse emotions. The disproportion between the effect and the effort is, therefore, more significant the more considerable.

In the absence of a uniform, universally accepted definition of terrorism, as a result of this reflection, it can be concluded that the essence of terrorism is the pursuit of strategic political goals, based on the ideologies preferred by the groups of people who use it. Considering the asymmetry of the potentials of these groups and their actors, as well as the impossibility of enforcing their demands or reaching a mutually satisfactory compromise, they use violent action tactics, applying illegal methods and tools allowing their use.

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**Streszczenie.** Obszar treści, do których odnosi się termin terroryzm jest bardzo rozległy, stanowi też przedmiot licznych badań. Ich rezultaty wskazują jednak na znaczne rozbieżności w rozumieniu tego pojęcia, co skutkuje nie tylko niejednoznacznością jego pojmowaniem, ale — przede wszystkim — brakiem ogólnie akceptowanej definicji zjawiska. Badacze widzą w nim zarówno ideologię, jak i strategię, taktykę lub metodę prowadzenia walki, wreszcie — narzędzie, służące osiągnięciu założonych celów. Zasadność przypisanego im znaczenia zweryfikowano analizując definicje poszczególnych pojęć, a poszukując zakresu znaczeniowego słowa terroryzm sięgnięto również do terminów, które wskazuje się jako jego synonimy. Przeprowadzone badania wskazały na polityczną motywację, jako cechę odróżniającą terrorystę od zwykłego przestępcy. Terroryści usiłują wpływać na władzę danego kraju, zmierzając także do wywołania zaburzeń w jego procesach decyzyjnych, a w rezultacie do paraliżu aparatu państwa. Główną cechą charakteryzującą terroryzm jest użycie przemocy, która przyjmować może postać każdego zachowania się, którego rezultatem jest wytworzenie w ludzkiej psychice stanu strachu i poczucia niebezpieczeństwa w społeczeństwie. Celem terroryzmu jest zatem świadome wzbudzenie i wykorzystywanie strachu, a jego dalekosiężne skutki psychologiczne wykraczają znacznie poza bezpośrednie ofiary. Wzbudzenie w społeczeństwie obawy przed prawdopodobieństwem ataku terrorystycznego zmierza do wymuszenia na rządzie, organizacji lub grupie społecznej podjęcia bądź zaniechania określonych działań. Przyjęcie takiej taktyki działania jest efektem dysproporcji, dotyczącej zarówno parametrów ilościowych potencjałów militarnych, jak i czynników określających poziom cywilizacyjny, a różnice tkwią zarówno w sposobie myślenia i poglądach, jak i metodzie prowadzenia walki. W takim kontekście, siła terroryzmu bierze się z zaskoczenia, brutalności oraz zadania możliwe największych strat w jak najkrótszym czasie, przy użyciu niekonwencjonalnych metod. Niestety, stosowanie metod terrorystycznych stało się powszechne, a zagrożenie terroryzmem ogólnosiątkowe.

**Zusammenfassung.** Der inhaltliche Bereich, auf den sich der Begriff Terrorismus bezieht, ist sehr umfangreich und Gegenstand zahlreicher Studien. Ihre Ergebnisse zeigen jedoch erhebliche Diskrepanzen im Verständnis dieses Konzepts, was nicht nur zu seinem mehrdeutigen Verständnis führt, sondern vor allem zum Fehlen einer allgemein akzeptierten Definition des Phänomens. Die Forscher sehen darin sowohl eine Ideologie als auch eine Strategie, eine Taktik oder eine Kampfmethodik und schließlich ein Werkzeug, um ihre Ziele zu erreichen. Die Legitimität der ihnen zugewiesenen Bedeutung wurde durch Analyse der Definitionen einzelner Konzepte überprüft, und bei der Suche nach dem semantischen Umfang des Wortes Terrorismus griffen sie auch nach Begriffen, die als Synonyme angegeben sind. Die durchgeführten Untersuchungen zeigten, dass politische Motivation ein Merkmal ist, das einen Terroristen von einem normalen Verbrecher unterscheidet. Terroristen versuchen, die Macht eines bestimmten Landes zu beeinflussen, um auch seine Entscheidungsprozesse zu stören und damit den Staatsapparat zu lähmen. Das Hauptmerkmal des Terrorismus ist die Anwendung von Gewalt, die in Form von Verhaltensweisen auftreten kann, die zur Entstehung eines Angstzustands und eines Gefühls der Gefahr in der Gesellschaft in der menschlichen Psyche führen. Der Zweck des Terrorismus besteht daher darin, bewusst Angst zu wecken und zu nutzen, und seine weitreichenden psychologischen Auswirkungen gehen weit über direkte Opfer hinaus. In der Gesellschaft Angst vor der Wahrscheinlichkeit eines Terroranschlags zu wecken, zwingt eine Regierung, Organisation oder soziale Gruppe dazu, bestimmte Maßnahmen zu ergreifen oder zu unterlassen. Die Annahme einer solchen Aktionstaktik ist das Ergebnis eines Missverhältnisses sowohl hinsichtlich der quantitativen Parameter des militärischen Potenzials als auch hinsichtlich der Faktoren, die das Zivilisationsniveau bestimmen, und die Unterschiede liegen sowohl in der Denkweise und den Ansichten als auch in der Kampfmethodik. In diesem Zusammenhang beruht die Macht des Terrorismus auf Überraschung, Brutalität und der Aufgabe, mit unkonventionellen Methoden in kürzester Zeit möglicherweise die größten Verluste zu erzielen. Leider ist der Einsatz terroristischer Methoden weit verbreitet und die Bedrohung durch Terrorismus weltweit.

**Резюме.** Сфера содержания, к которой относится понятие «терроризм», весьма широка и является предметом многих исследований. Однако, их результаты свидетельствуют о значительных расхождениях в понимании термина, что приводит не только к неоднозначному его толкованию, но и прежде всего — к отсутствию общепринятого определения данного феномена. Исследователи рассматривают его как идеологию, а также как стратегию, тактику или средство борьбы, и, наконец, как инструмент для достижения поставленных целей. Правильность присвоенного им значения проверялась на основе анализа отдельных понятий, а при поиске значений слова «терроризм» Автор упоминает также понятия, которые приводятся в качестве синонимов. Проведенное исследование показало, что политическая мотивация является чертой, которая отличает террориста от обычного преступника. Террористы пытаются влиять на власть той или иной страны, в том числе с целью вызвать нарушение ее процессов принятия решений и, как следствие, парализовать государственный аппарат. Главной особенностью терроризма является применение насилия, которое может принимать любую форму поведения, в результате которого в психике человека создается состояние страха и опасности. Поэтому цель терроризма заключается в том, чтобы намеренно вызывать и использовать страх, а его большие психологические последствия выходят далеко за рамки самых непосредственных жертв. Опасение в обществе в отношении вероятности террористического акта направлено на то, чтобы заставить правительство, организацию или общественную группу предпринять или отказаться от определенных действий. Принятие такой тактики действий является следствием возникновения диссонансов, как по количественным параметрам военных потенциалов, так и по факторам, определяющим уровень цивилизации, причем различия заключаются в образе мышления и взглядах, а также в способе ведения боевых действий. В таком контексте сила терроризма исходит из неожиданности, жестокости и нанесения максимальных потерь в кратчайшие сроки, используя нетрадиционные методы. К сожалению, использование террористических приемов получило широкое распространение, а угроза терроризма приобрела глобальный характер.

