

UDC: 323.285(100)
351.865
COBISS.SR-ID 159554825
doi: <https://doi.org/10.61837/mbuir020224141m>

ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

RECEIVED: 20. 10. 2024.
REVISED: 20. 11. 2024.
ACCEPTED: 26. 11. 2024.

CHARACTERISTICS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CONTEMPORARY TERRORISM

Martin I. MATIJAŠEVIĆ

MB University, Faculty of Business and Law,
Belgrade, Serbia

martin.matijasevic@yahoo.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-5840-7446>

Aleksandar P. DABETIĆ

MB University, Faculty of Business and Law,
Belgrade, Serbia

aleksandar.dabetic@mup.gov.rs

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6191-6624>

Abstract: *At first glance, the criminal offense of terrorism appears to be a phenomenon of modern society, where, with the advancement of technology and the development of society in all its segments, as well as with different social systems, processes emerge that threaten the basic values of society. Traditional forms of threats are being replaced by new, modern, and more sophisticated attempts to undermine these values, creating space and opportunities for the emergence of new forms of threats, such as terrorism. The main idea of this paper is to present the genesis and characteristics of the criminal offense of terrorism in all its segments, from its origin and development to the monitoring of terrorism trends in line with technological advancements, as well as the development of the architecture of terrorism and aspects of the fight against it. Today's terrorism differs drastically from the forms of terrorism at the end of the twentieth century. Changes in the ways terrorist acts are carried out and in security risks follow the development of technology, as well as the methods of counteraction implemented by security forces.*

Keywords: *fight, terrorism, victims, actions, offense*

1. INTRODUCTION

Looking at the history of the emergence of terrorism, we can observe its ability to adapt to new trends in counterterrorism, which have been implemented by states that are victims of terrorism [16, pg. 81]. Terrorist acts have evolved from operations involving a larger number of terrorists, either operationally or logistically [10, pg. 90], to smaller terrorist cells, which, while fewer in number, have caused significantly more casualties and destruction through the use of special methods and means [8, pg. 7,13]. The main characteristic of these

new methods is strict conspiracy between the perpetrators at the top of the terrorist hierarchy and those executing the act itself [20, pg. 201].

Simenunović believes that the phenomenon of contemporary terrorism can theoretically be most generally defined as “a complex form of organized, individual, and more rarely institutionalized political violence, characterized by terrifying, brachiologically-physical and psychological methods of political struggle, which are usually, during political and economic crises, and rarely in conditions of achieved economic and political stability within a society, systematically used to achieve great goals in

a manner completely disproportionate to the given conditions, primarily the social situation and the historical possibilities of those who practice it as a political strategy” [5, pg. 174].

In his work “The Issue of Scientific and Theoretical Definition of Terrorism,” Dimitrijević Ivan points out the observations of Israeli expert Ganor. Ganor, the director of the Israeli Institute for Counter-Terrorism and former analyst at the Israeli Ministry of Counter-Terrorism, approached the definition of terrorism through determining its place among violent conflicts, where terrorism is classified as a conventional conflict. He considers terrorism to be “a violent struggle that uses or threatens to use violence against civilians to achieve political goals, while guerrilla warfare is a violent struggle that uses or threatens to use violence against military targets, security forces, or political leaders, to achieve political goals” [4, pg. 973].

Ganor argues that there are three main phases in the evolution of the phenomenon of terrorism: classical, modern, and postmodern terrorism. Classical terrorism is the oldest form. Its characteristics, according to the same author, are the personalization of the target, that is, the attack is directed at a specific, individually chosen person who holds certain social power and influences important political or similar decisions [5, pg. 17].

Modern terrorism emerged in the second half of the last century. Its target is the civilian population, and the goal is to exert pressure on the public by creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, indirectly influencing political decision-making and achieving other goals (such as obtaining autonomy or independence for certain regions, national liberation, etc.) [8, pg. 35].

For the final phase in the evolution of the terrorist phenomenon, Ganor considers what is known as postmodern terrorism. Its target is the broader population, the methods and means are more drastic and deadlier than ever before, and its goal is the complete transformation of political reality [12, pg. 34].

To better understand the evolution of postmodern terrorism, it is necessary to look at

its roots, or the causes of terrorism. The first group of causes includes [17, pg. 275]:

- Constant occupation and pressure imposed by a foreign cultural, ethnic, or religious group, accompanied by a sense of hopelessness and humiliation;
- National fanaticism or loyalty to an organization characterized by love and total devotion to the organization;
- Hatred towards a specific target group;
- Religious fanaticism and belief in martyrdom and its glorification;
- Failures in personal life – membership in a terrorist organization may be a response to hopelessness resulting from failures in personal life;
- Intense indoctrination (especially related to suicide terrorism) or so-called brainwashing by the terrorist organization.

2. BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF TERRORISM

The main characteristics of terrorism are considered to be: (1) violence and the threat of violence, (2) specificity in organization, (3) the role of the leader, (4) communication, (5) the unusualness and immorality of the terrorist act, and (6) the international character of terrorism [8, pg. 48].

Today’s state of terrorism represents a combination of classical, modern, and postmodern terrorism, depending on the degree of organization of the terrorist group and its connections with the global terrorist network [15, pg. 57]. It is significant to list acts carried out by terrorist organizations, both in the past and today, with the main difference being the use of more modern means and methods, ranging from communication to technical and operational tools [3, pg. 30]. Some of the basic forms of terrorism include [19, pg. 43].

Assassinations – Generally, an assassination refers to the killing of prominent or important individuals, symbolic enemies, or traitors who have left the group or terrorist organization. Assassinations are among the oldest forms of

terrorist actions and continue to be carried out today. They lead to political and social destabilization, which gives this form of terrorism its particular impact.

Arson and Fires – These also represent a form of terrorist action. A key aspect of this type of terrorism is the significant material damage or total destruction of a facility, while simultaneously generating publicity to create fear in the general public. Many terrorist groups use incendiary devices of various complexities to carry out these acts.

Bombing Attacks – This refers to the placement of bombs or improvised explosive devices (IEDs) at specific targets. The use of improvised explosive devices is a modern tactical choice for terrorists.

Hostage Taking – This involves the deliberate kidnapping of one or more individuals with the aim of gaining publicity or other concessions in exchange for the release of the hostages.

Kidnapping – Kidnapping typically involves the secret abduction of one or more specific individuals with the intent to make specific demands. The purpose of kidnapping can also include compromising a government, obtaining other concessions, or gaining public popularity.

Hijacking of Airplanes – This terrorist tactic involves seizing control of an airplane, either in the air or on the ground, to achieve the terrorists' objectives.

Armed Attacks – These are direct assaults using firearms or other weapons to achieve a terrorist aim.

Commercial or Industrial Sabotage – These acts involve the deliberate disruption or destruction of infrastructure and industry to create economic damage [11, pg. 111].

False Alarms and Warnings – These are deliberate attempts to create panic or distract security forces with false reports of attacks or threats.

Suicide Terrorism – “Suicide attacks refer to violent, politically motivated attacks carried out by individuals who, in a state of conscious determination, blow themselves up along with their intended target. The pre-preparation for

certain death is a prerequisite for a successful attack” [1, pg. 47].

All of these forms, in addition to conventional weapons, can also be carried out through the use of other means, such as the attempt by terrorists in the U.S. to use anthrax, by sending letters to the addresses of government officials.

One of the main dangers that these changes bring is the potential use of unconventional means by terrorists [19, pg. 45]. These unconventional means include nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, which, if acquired by terrorist organizations, could pose a global threat, with any country in the world potentially becoming a target [18, pg. 17].

A key characteristic of contemporary terrorism is the use of information resources for planning actions, coordinating the activities of terrorist networks on the ground with leadership, propaganda, and recruitment of potential members [2, pg. 50]. The maintenance of a global terrorist network would not be possible without the communication channels provided by the global Internet network [9, pg. 55].

Thus, based on all of the aforementioned, we believe that, by summarizing the views of the mentioned authors, contemporary terrorism, for the purposes of this paper, can be operationally defined as a phase in the development of terrorist criminality characterized by the universal political and social goals of leading terrorist groups, the creation of regional and global terrorist networks, a changed structure of terrorist organizations, particularly in terms of their increased resilience, adaptability, and diffusion, an increased threat through the use of unconventional means, the possibility of carrying out serious cyber-attacks, the emergence of a growing number of activists willing to carry out suicide attacks, as well as those who are trained to conduct complex terrorist attacks on informational systems [12, pg. 33].

3. DEFENSE AGAINST TERRORISM

Defense against terrorism, or “counterterrorism,” consists of defensive measures and procedures aimed at increasing the protection

of individuals and property from terrorist activities. It involves the implementation of security measures, adherence to legality in the defense of facilities, reconnaissance, surveillance, and intelligence security, with the goal of providing timely warnings about threats and understanding the dangers posed by terrorism.

Thus, counterterrorism is an activity that brings together all the actions taken by state institutions and international organizations in the fight against terrorism. "Counterterrorism represents a set of measures, activities, and procedures implemented by the United Nations and national institutions on their territories to promptly recognize and eradicate contemporary terrorism through the application of deterrence and retaliation strategies. It is a very complex process that requires preventive, repressive, and combative actions by state security structures, along with the application of international legal acts adopted by the United Nations" [13, pg. 571].

- Preventive Measures in the Fight Against Contemporary Terrorism:

Preventive measures are a highly significant activity in a democratic society that is truly committed to permanently opposing modern terrorism. These activities are the most difficult, as their results are not immediately visible. They come only after a longer period of time, and for this reason, many express skepticism regarding democratic prevention in the fight against terrorism [1, pg. 53].

- Economic Measures:

Economic counterterrorism measures follow diplomatic efforts because it is well known that huge amounts of financial resources are necessary for the functioning and connection of terrorist organizations on the international stage. Economic counterterrorism measures are aimed at the financial aspects of terrorism and prohibit the financing of terrorist organizations, freezing assets of the families of kidnapped individuals to prevent ransom payments. These measures impose sanctions on those who finance terrorist organizations and target legal entities that invest in regions labeled

as financing hubs or provide any other form of assistance to terrorism. Simultaneously, the routes of money funding terrorist attacks are tracked, including the abandonment or limitation of the so-called banking secrecy. These measures also envision cooperation between states to monitor and confiscate funds financing terrorism and offer rewards for information on terrorist organizations or intentions for terrorist attacks [*Ibid*, 55].

- State Measures:

When it comes to the state (the primary victim of terrorist attacks) as a subject in the fight against contemporary terrorism, there are a number of state measures that are undertaken to more effectively and efficiently counteract terrorism.

Such defensive counterterrorist optimality can be established (achieved) and maintained by adopting comprehensive measures and activities, including:

Adopting appropriate laws and other regulatory provisions and keeping them up to date.

Adopting offensive strategies, particularly national security strategies and national counterterrorism strategies.

Ensuring the availability of respectable forces for counterterrorism efforts.

Maintaining the ability of counterterrorism forces to effectively prevent terrorists from executing their activities.

Periodically analyzing and evaluating the results of counterterrorism defense, including the bold recording of any shortcomings and taking measures to eliminate them.

Predicting terrorist threats to national security in the near future.

Assigning adequate importance to international defense against terrorism [14, pg. 70].

- Local Level Measures:

At the local level of a state in the fight against contemporary terrorism, several prerequisites must be observed.

The main prerequisites for "successful protection against contemporary terrorism are" [12, pg. 39]:

A highly professional and organized protection service.

An objective (real) assessment of the danger (or vulnerability), ensuring that terrorist organizations are neither underestimated nor overestimated.

A commitment to the professional and successful execution of duties by citizens in their respective workplaces.

Consistent application of legal provisions to reduce the space for terrorist activities, which is a very important factor in protecting society.

Developing a democratic social awareness within all structures of the country.

Continuous efforts to develop a security culture, which refers to the knowledge and motivation of individuals to personally and proactively oppose terrorism and take measures to prevent terrorist activities.

Constantly undertaking and improving protection measures in all collectives and environments.

Gaining specific knowledge about the methods and tools terrorists use in carrying out their activities.

- Repressive Measures:

Repressive measures represent the final stage and constitute a comprehensive system of action that includes criminal legal protection mechanisms and the activities of state law enforcement agencies to observe, identify and use operational measures against terrorist organizations on the territory of a state. Repressive measures also include cooperation with agencies of other states and international organizations.

4. CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of terrorism, as discussed in the previous sections, has shown how complex this phenomenon is. Previous experiences in the analysis and suppression of terrorism have had limited effects, which is evident in the ongoing expansion of terrorism through terrorist acts around the world.

In the first part of this paper, which deals with the emergence and genesis of terrorism, we conducted a historical review with the aim of understanding the origins of terrorism and emphasized the need for a unified terminological definition of terrorism. This would ensure that terrorism is treated and interpreted equally on a global level, while also taking into account the specificities of each region and country where terrorism occurs. We also examined the modern aspects of terrorism, which have evolved from traditional criminal acts to the use of more sophisticated means.

When discussing terrorism as a global phenomenon, deterring terrorist acts through the emphasis on repression has become insufficient, especially in an era of rising terrorist violence and suicidal terrorism. This calls for the need to apply preventive measures through international legal instruments to prevent terrorist attacks and create a secure international environment.

The primary goal of prevention instruments is to restrict access to the means by which terrorists can carry out their violent acts. In this context, conventions have been enhanced to prevent access to explosives, chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, as well as legal tools that block the financing of terrorist activities.

In the future, particular attention must be given to establishing a strong international mechanism for effectively overseeing the measures implemented against terrorism. This involves linking the fight against terrorism with the fight against organized crime, through regional networks and direct cooperation with national bodies combating terrorism.

In line with all the points discussed so far, we can conclude that the criminal offense of terrorism, as a complex phenomenon, requires an equally complex approach to its suppression. This approach should include analyzing the emergence of terrorism and understanding why individuals resort to terrorism, such as the factors behind the criminal motivations of terrorists, the cultural context in which terrorism arises, and how terrorist organizations operate.

Terrorist activities are highly complex and not yet fully understood, especially when it comes to their perpetrators. Moreover, it has been noted that the targets of these attacks are constantly changing. Therefore, to effectively counter terrorism, continuous work is required, conditioned by various circumstances. This demands moderation, patience, serious scientific research, top-notch protection and control organization to identify the goals and methods of terrorist activities in time.

Monitoring the development of terrorism on the international level involves the constant exchange of information between international

organizations and states through the application of criminal law mechanisms, quality intelligence and security measures, media and educational-scientific activities, and, at the individual level, achieving the necessary degree of education about terrorism within society.

All of this must be implemented within the framework of international and national criminal legislation, which forms the basis for further cyclical actions through these two pillars, with ongoing information exchange and experience sharing between entities involved in combating terrorism on the international level.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bochman, A. A., & Freeman, S. (2021). *Countering cyber sabotage: introducing consequence-driven, cyber-informed engineering (CCE)*. CRC Press.
- [2] Combs, C. C. (2022). *Terrorism in the twenty-first century*. Routledge.
- [3] Don, B. W. (2007). *Network technologies for networked terrorists: assessing the value of information and communication technologies to modern terrorist organizations (Vol. 454)*. Rand Corporation.
- [4] Dimitrijević, I. (2005). The Issue of Scientific and Theoretical Definition of Terrorism, *Journal "Security"*, Belgrade, 6, 973-974.
- [5] Simeunović, D. (2009). *Terrorism*. Crimen Edition. Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade.
- [6] Ganor, B. (2007). *Contemporary Terrorism*. Tel Aviv: Herz Institute.
- [7] Gaćinović, R. (2007). Defense Against Terrorism, *Political Review* No. 2-4, Belgrade, 571-594.
- [8] Hoffman, B. (1999). Terrorism trends and prospects. *Countering the new terrorism*, 7, 13
- [9] Herman, E. S. (1982). *The real terror network: Terrorism in fact and propaganda*. South End Press.
- [10] Kiras, J. D. (2006). *Special operations and strategy: From World War II to the war on terrorism*. Routledge.
- [11] Lossin, R. H. (2020). *The Point of Destruction: Sabotage, Speech, and Progressive-Era Politics*. Columbia University.
- [12] Milošević, M. (2009). *Terrorists, Victims, and Criminals: Factors of Criminal Motivation*. Belgrade: Faculty of Security, University of Belgrade.
- [13] Mojsilović, Ž. (2009). *Terrorism and Negotiation*. Belgrade: Center for Crisis Management and Negotiation.
- [14] Mijalkovski, M. (2010). *Terrorism and Organized Crime*. Belgrade: University of Belgrade, Faculty of Security.
- [15] Neumann, P. (2009). Old and new terrorism (Vol. 4). *Polity*.
- [16] Nacos, B. L. (2019). *Terrorism and counterterrorism*. Routledge.
- [17] Petrović, D. (2004). *Suicidal Terrorism*. Belgrade: Association for International Criminal Law Intermeks.
- [18] Sagan, S. D. (2000). The commitment trap: why the United States should not use nuclear threats to deter biological and chemical weapons attacks. *International Security*, 24(4), 85-115
- [19] Stern, J. (1999). *The ultimate terrorists*. Harvard University Press.
- [20] Wardlaw, G. (1989). *Political terrorism: Theory, tactics and counter-measures*. Cambridge University Press.

KARAKTERISTIKE I BORBA PROTIV SAVREMENOG TERORIZMA

Rezime: Savremeni terorizam se značajno razlikuje od tradicionalnih oblika terorizma i razvija se u skladu sa globalnim promenama, napretkom tehnologije i sve većim pristupom informacijama. Savremeni terorizam je često globalan, sa grupama koje deluju na međunarodnom nivou. Teroristi koriste globalne mreže, internet, i društvene mreže kako bi širili ideologiju, regrutovali nove članove i organizovali napade. Terorističke grupe sve više koriste naprednu tehnologiju, kao što su internet, društvene mreže, pametni telefoni, dronovi i improvizovane eksplozivne naprave (IED). Internet omogućava brzu komunikaciju i širenje radikalnih ideja, a dronovi mogu biti korišćeni za izviđanje i napade. Savremeni terorizam se često karakteriše decentralizovanim napadima koje ne organizuje centralizovana teroristička organizacija, već mali, neovisni napadači koji deluju samostalno ili u manjim grupama. Ovi napadi mogu biti brzo izvedeni i teško predvidivi, što otežava borbu protiv njih. Internet predstavlja glavni kanal za radikalizaciju, jer omogućava ekstremističkim grupama da šire propagandu i regrutuju nove članove, posebno mlade ljude, bez potrebe za fizičkim okupljanjem. Mnoge savremene terorističke grupe motivisane su ideološkim, verskim ili političkim ciljevima, s ciljem stvaranja promena u društvu, izazivanja političkih pometnji ili borbe protiv određenih vlada ili sistema. Savremeni terorizam često cilja na nevine civile, simboličke ciljeve, institucije, infrastrukturu i najuočljivije objekte, kako bi izazvao širi strah, destabilizaciju i političke promene. Napadi na softverske ili informatičke sisteme postaju sve češći. Borba protiv savremenog terorizma zahteva sveobuhvatan pristup i saradnju na međunarodnom nivou, jer terorizam ne poznaje granice. Države moraju implementirati proaktivne sigurnosne mere, uključujući bolje praćenje potencijalnih terorista, jaču kontrolu granica i bolje identifikovanje opasnih materijala koji mogu biti korišćeni u terorističkim napadima. Savremeni terorizam je kompleksan i evoluirao sa svakim novim tehnološkim i društvenim promenama, što znači da borba protiv njega zahteva inovativne, fleksibilne i sveobuhvatne pristupe.

Ključne reči: borba, terorizam, žrtve, akcije, delo.