

THREATS AND RISKS OF TERRORIST NATURE IN THE CONTEMPORARY SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: *Terrorism is a phenomenon whose success is based, in fact, on the creation or identification of security breaches, of niches that allow the access or infiltration of espionage elements within security systems. It may be added that, viewed as a whole, terrorist offenses are those which, in a specific case, constitute serious threats, with the tendency to repeat themselves. In the meaning of the concept of terrorism, the nature of the action's motive is not important, but its method of execution.*

The risks are perceived at the potential level and can become real in a context where the security environment is influenced by concrete vulnerabilities. If the risk materializes, it can be seen as a threat. The risks lead to threats, the threats lead to the onset of the crisis, the crisis leads to a conflict, and the conflict can extend through the implicit repercussions in a security environment characterized by a high ratio of instability and unpredictability, by manifesting new risks and threats, especially asymmetric, by redefining the relations among the great powers and increasing the freedom of action of the regional factors.

Keywords: *security environment, threats, risks, terrorism.*

Contemporary security environment

At the beginning of the millennium, the world entered a new phase of its evolution, marked by the coexistence and confrontation of some major positive tendencies with others that generate risks, threats and dangers. Nowadays, at the beginning of the third decade of this millennium, the world continues to be strongly conflicted. The causes of conflicts operate in the field of access to resources, of their distribution mechanisms, but also of the existing differences of ethnic, religious, cultural and ideological nature.

Worldwide, the security environment presents, as a whole, a series of features, consisting of: the dissolution of bipolarity and the entry into a new period, in which only the US proves to have real capacities and possibilities

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of effective involvement in managing the major problems of humanity, being considered as the only credible and viable political, economic, financial and military superpower; the emergence of centers of power, by increasingly affirming the EU as a factor of stability, China's unprecedented economic and military development, as well as Russia's diplomatic offensive, which shows that the future of international security will be realized on a multipolar structure; the emergence and manifestation on the international scene of new international (non-state) actors, who will tend to control and manage the latest technologies, the performing economic fields, the world finances, as well as the energy resources; asserting new trends in the development and functioning of international political, economic and security institutions and organizations, aimed at developing new concepts, new structures and appropriate means of action as well as increased possibilities for crisis management on regional considerations.

“In this regard, international security organizations such as the UN or the OSCE encourage the taking of mandates for the accomplishment of international missions by coalitions or regional organizations”¹.

In direct relation to the features of the security environment, its main evolutions also appear, which are part of a wide range of actions, consisting in increasing the role of security structures (UN, OSCE, EU) in the prevention and management of crises, which, in the last period, have proved somewhat inefficient, and as a result, countries of the world have begun to settle disputes or to promote their interests outside these international security institutions; the promotion by the US of a policy capable of maintaining a close unity with the EU. At the same time, US continues to play the leading role of the democratic world, which has the economic, financial and military power to offer the world peace and stability and being able to effectively solve problems and differences that arise or will arise in the general security environment. In fact, in the short run, the US remains the only pole of world power, and in this respect, they will continue to take the risks that a strong and flexible economy entails, but which does not have all the energy resources it needs. On medium and long term, at least two more power poles at the global level are likely to emerge, engaged in the

¹ P.V. Coșcodaru, *Centrele de putere ale lumii*, Editura Științelor sociale și politice, 2009, p.53.

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geographical areas delimited by the EU and by the states of Southeast Asia, but it should be mentioned that this will happen at first, with the tacit acceptance of the US, which at this point, bear, quite difficult, the costs of holding the role of world superpower. Parallel to the emergence of the other two poles of power worldwide, it is expected that a number of non-state organizations will appear and develop, structured according to different criteria, of which the ethno-religious one will be the most important, trying to replace the official power from the states that will host them. Probably, in the future, these structures will become supranational actors with transnational activity.

At regional level, the EU is likely to focus its economic and military efforts on solving its own problems (stopping immigration to Western Europe, stopping drug, human and weapons trafficking and money laundering). These issues will be the future priorities for the EU to address together with preventing local conflicts.

Although it has been, is and will be a great military power, Russia nevertheless represents a country without an economic power similar to its military one, with multiple problems arising from military unresolved issues, but with high capacity human and spiritual resources, which can offer it unquestionable advantages at the moment.

Doubled by an immense amount of energy resources that other world players want to have unlimited access to, in the near future, an economic resurgence of the position of this country on a global level is expected, which will again impose it as a super-actor at the global level. From this point of view, Russia will remain an important element of the global balance of power.

Our country, through its geostrategic position, integrated in the EU, is probably one of the channels of connection among several spheres of influence.

Under these conditions, *“Romania has become an area of interference with the geostrategic interests of some of the global power actors (US, EU, Russia and, in the future, Arab countries). It is expected that, due to the divergence of these interests, our country will become a place where the*

risks to its national security become more and more serious, which will lead to some dependence on certain global actors”².

As a border state of the EU and as a member of NATO, Romania has a major interest in bordering stable, democratic and prosperous states that maintain peace and good understanding in relations, create pluralistic communities and have predictable behavior in the field of security.

The construction of a regime of security and prosperity in the Black Sea area represents a distinct direction of action of the Romanian strategy, democratic and closely connected to the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Under this interest, the strategic goal of our country, a vector of democratic security, economic stability and prosperity, is to stimulate a strong European and Euro-Atlantic involvement in the region.

From Romanian perspective, regarding its national security, the participation in the Alliance processes has given it a new status in the international relations plan promoted by the country. In this regard, the state has made considerable efforts to be not only an importer, but also an exporter of security. By gradually increasing the participation of forces and means in the multinational operations (Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, etc.), it has gone to another stage in adopting a new concept of national security. In the security conditions at regional and global level, new risks and threats to the national security of Romania have emerged.

Also, the process of building the future European configuration is extremely complex and must be carefully constructed. If the approach that prevails is a realistic and pragmatic one, a clear distinction is required between the short-term priorities of the European agenda and the concerns whose chances of realization in the near future are minimal.

The transformations produced in the international security environment in the last decade, especially in its last period, have turned all the attention of the international community towards clarifying a vision that will contribute to a consolidation of world peace and security, thus reducing conflict situations of any nature, implicitly, to the reduction, until

² Teodor Frunzeti, Dorel Bușe, *Politici și instituții de securitate*, Editura U.N.Ap. „Carol I”, București, 2010, p.38.

elimination, where possible, of the causes that generate them. This vision essentially involves the global identification of vulnerabilities, possible risks and threats that could lead to the emergence of sources of instability or aggravation of already existing ones.

The security environment is in a process of continuous transformation, whose effects are found in the deepening of interdependencies, as well as in the unstable and especially hardly predictable character of the evolution of the international relations system due to the way of managing geopolitical interests by some states, but also to the considerable increase of *threats and risks* of another nature, in which a central place is occupied by those coming from the *area of terrorism*.

The picture of terrorist threats and the ways in which they are manifested highlights that, despite the proclamation of seemingly just ideals, in reality the fundamental human rights and freedoms are diverted from the natural senses and used as a motivation for exacerbating nationalism and ethnic and religious separatism, almost daily, by committing terrorist acts with hundreds and thousands of human victims.

At the same time, a phenomenon that has grown and characterizes almost all the outbreaks of armed conflict of the last decade and a half, the insurgency, has evolved in the direction of combining the classic insurgent methods of fighting with the methods of action used by the terrorist entities, exposing the military structures present in the theaters of operations in the situation of reviewing and reconsidering their own missions, forms and procedures of action.

Even if today's terrorism has not received a precise and universally accepted definition, both in the official language and in the current one, the definitions, even so contradictory, analyze the phenomenon by placing it in a highly diversified and complex social context.

Terrorism is, in my opinion, a phenomenon outside international law and humanitarian law, which is based on non-discriminatory violent actions designed to induce fear, executed by individuals, groups or state structures or belonging to non-state organizations that act under conditions of secrecy or semi-clandestine nature, to reach ideological, criminal or political goals.

Terrorism is therefore a complex phenomenon, aggravated by the mix of different factors and motivations, which can be grouped into three

categories: rational, psychological and cultural, but also characterized by a combination of them.

Terrorist-nature threats and risks

The concepts of *danger*, *threat*, *risk* and *vulnerability* have been defined by various implicit and explicit theories and doctrinal approaches in the field of security, but the consensus does not seem to be reached.

In the debates initiated in the circles of experts and in the content of some security studies, we have increasingly found lately the expression devoted to *global threats and risks*³.

This category comprises various other categories including *threats and risks generated by the global expansion of terrorist networks*.

At an individual level, *the threat* has much more concrete indicators, representing a statement of an intention to punish or hurt a person, especially if he/she does not want a sign or warning about a possible distress, danger, etc.

Threats can materialize through attitudes, gestures, acts, or deeds that create (lead to) imbalances and instability and generate situations of danger. Threats can be identified in relation to their nature (political, economic, military, social, and environmental), their form (attitudes, gestures, deeds, events, phenomena, and human actions), stage (latent, possible, probable, and imminent) or their type (hideous, masked, mixed, violent, and nonviolent)⁴.

In delimiting *the risk factors*, the material elements (situations, circumstances, conjunctions) are brought to the forefront.

Thus, *the risks* intervene as a state of fact, their relation or evolution, potentiated by certain dysfunctions, vulnerabilities or (in some cases, exceptionally) by a succession of actions and activities in which subjective factors also intervene, which can generate insecurity effects or can even materialize through *threats*. Therefore, we can state that the risk factors are

³ M. Ciobanu, *Vulnerabilități, riscuri și amenințări la adresa securității mondiale la început de mileniu* (I). Revista Constelații Ieșene, anul III, nr. 1 (9), martie 2008. Iași, Ed. Organizația de Tineret a Despărțământului ASTRA „Mihail Kogălniceanu”, 2008, p.79.

⁴ Lucian Stăncilă, *Terorismul provocare a secolului XXI*, Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, București, 2007, p. 158.

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predominantly immaterial, objective, referring to the circumstances that may favor the generation of a threat or a danger.

In practice, it is sometimes difficult to accurately separate risks from threats, given the intertwining, in the various fields of activity, of the material factor with the human factor. In the systemic-evolutionary succession, starting from simple to complex, for theoretical analysis needs, we can operate with the formal distinction between these two concepts, considering both the distinction given by the presence or absence of the subjective (human) factor, respectively of the intention, as well as and their logical sequence: risk factors (materials) → risks → threat vectors (people or groups of people) → threats.

In the analysis of the terrorist topic, we will consider, first of all, that *risks* occur *accidentally and conjecturally*, while *threats* are based on the *intention* to produce certain negative effects, through a *programmed/planned sequence* of events/actions, by an individual, an unorganized group of individuals or by certain group /organizations/entities.

Secondly, we will take into account the anteriority relationship: the existing risks can generate or favor the occurrence of a threat, and the threats (as an applied intention, put into practice) can lead to the emergence of danger situations.

Specifically, regarding the *risk*, it can be stated that it is materialized in the discrepancy between the “positive expectation” and the “negative event” which can occur, and by its probability of occurring. The risk is caused by indeterminacy, by the impossibility to know with certainty the future events, representing a potential situation, which, under certain conditions, can become real.

“Sociology defines risk as an expression of either the structural indeterminacy of reality (the probabilistic objective character of events) or the uncertainty, the insufficiency of our knowledge about the real processes. At the same time, social psychology emphasizes the subjective side of risk, defining it as: complex psychological phenomenon resulting from the ratio between the probability of success and the failure of an action aimed at

reaching a certain objective (“win”) with individual or social significance”⁵.

*In the current period, the identification and assessment of threats and risks, as a mandatory step in formulating any security strategy, is confronted not only with the conceptual problems of risk definition but also with the high level of complexity of a world released from the bipolar system of international security*⁶.

Threats and risks of a terrorist nature do not have limits, because the main weapon of terrorism is human, this creative and imaginative being, no matter what position he/she is in.

Following the scientific research there were identified, as the *main landmarks of the terrorist threat area*, the following:

- The possibility to use weapons of mass destruction by organizations, groups or individuals for terrorist goals;
- The preparation and carrying out possible attacks on the nuclear bases of countries that possess such means, as well as on chemical companies, biological laboratories, etc., to procure nuclear, chemical and biological weapons or to detonate such weapons on the spot, in open/closed spaces, in crowded areas or wherever they are (by rail and road transport, in nuclear reactors, on board ships or aircraft, in stationary spots, etc.) and to produce spectacular catastrophes, in the name of ideologies, or some principles considered sacred or simply from assuming the vocation to punish;
- The proliferation of punitive or retaliatory actions against those who triggered the anti-terrorist campaign and of the countries that are part of the anti-terrorist coalition;
- The continuation of terrorist actions - individual, small, or organized, large - against Western democracies;
- The continuation of the assassinations and the actions to hit all those who, in one manner or another, oppose the state of chaos favorable to

⁵ G. Rugină, *Redimensionarea mediului de securitate*. Sesiunea anuală de comunicări științifice. București: Ed. Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, 2010, p. 49.

⁶ *Provocări la adresa securității și strategiei la începutul secolului XXI*, secțiunea *Istorie, geopolitică și geostrategie*, Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, București, 2005, p.82.

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the proliferation of organized crime, drug and human trafficking, and of illicit gain;

- The carrying out of attacks on environmental protection systems, dams and using toxic and radioactive waste to produce ecological disasters;

- The continuation and diversification of political assassinations;

- The attack of schools, research institutions, laboratories and economic units of national or international importance, to produce panic and terror;

- The attack of value systems and cultural institutions;

- The creation of diversions to cause insecurity, tension, instability and even violent responses and to deepen the anomalous state of social systems;

- The continuation, or even intensification of the attacks with bombs, plastic explosives and other artisanal means on the population, in crowded places and, as far as possible, in the presence of the media;

- The further degradation of the human condition and, for this reason, the proliferation of psychopathic terrorism;

- The maintenance and even increase of terrorist actions of ethnic origin for destroying the idea of living together and cultivating fierce individualism, aggression in ethnic purification, ethnic separatism;

- The perpetration of terrorist actions in cyberspace in order to create serious disruptions in the communication systems, the destruction of the command and control systems, of the banking systems, inserting viruses in the databases, the creation of a generalized state of chaos in the information systems.

For several decades, in the post-war period, *security risk analysis* only knew the dichotomous dimension of nuclear risk versus the risk of a conventional war.

At this moment, the enumeration of several theoretical dimensions shows us that risk analysis is often outdated by reality: we identify *political risks, economic and financial risks, societal risks, technological risks, natural risks, etc.* „*In security studies, we first and foremost need an analysis of dialectics, understood most of the time as a sort of realm of the*

becoming of morality, as a dynamic, complex and contradictory process undertaken by any person in order to reach ethical objectivizing.”⁷

In the context of the lack of unanimously accepted criteria, by analyzing conflicts and crises, we highlight a series of risks that marked the last decade, as follows:

- The political instability: poor legitimacy of some political regimes; political struggles; oppressive measures and violations of human rights;
- The economic instability mainly determined by the dependency effects associated with the phenomenon of globalization, the level of external debt, the problems of transition, etc.;
- The terrorism or activities related to terrorism: terrorist attacks, propaganda; membership recruitment; collecting information or funds; establishing logistical support networks and influencing personalities, political parties or even political regimes;
- The production, transport, sale and consumption of drugs;
- The corruption and organized domestic and international crime;
- The environmental degradation and access to natural resources: the unreasonable exploitation of resources; restricted access to some natural resources;
- The ethnic and religious politicization: nationalism; extremism; fundamentalism and xenophobia;
- The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and dual technologies: the diffusion of ballistic missile technology, chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Terrorism has no country and knows no borders. It has “globalized” before information and the economy, or concurrently with them, created cells everywhere, proliferating threatening and challenging, in hidden and spectacular manner⁸.

This form of aggression has expanded rapidly, bringing with it new ways in which states can be vulnerable. *Terrorism has multiple motivations,*

⁷ Siteanu E., „Objective security”, *Annals Series on Military Sciences*, volume 11, 2019, issue 2, Academy of Romanian Scientists Publishing House, Bucharest, page.64.

⁸ M. Ciobanu, *Vulnerabilități, riscuri și amenințări la adresa securității mondiale la început de mileniu (I)*. Revista Constelații Ieșene, anul III, nr. 1 (9), martie 2008. Iași: Ed. Organizația de Tineret a Despărțământului ASTRA „Mihail Kogălniceanu”, 2008, p. 126.

*most of them being forms of vindictive hate against the values and actions different from those of terrorists*⁹.

But the spectrum of terrorist threats is much wider. Basically, an exhaustive catalog of threats and risks of a terrorist nature cannot be made, just as a catalog with the products of negative intelligence cannot be created.

The terrorist risk is daily amplified by the media and already universal. *The threats* and, in line with them, *the risks* involved are unlimited. We can anticipate some, others we cannot. It might be possible that, in a short time, terrorism will resort to a new type of weapon that we can call the *genetic weapon*¹⁰. But this is also one of the strategic goals of terrorism, and the terrorist type of war: *creating insecurity, universalizing and making the threat permanent*.

The spectrum of terrorism, as already stated, is very broad and is not reduced to the actions of organizations, individuals, ethnic, religious groups, etc. There is a terrorism exerted by the economic factor, one exerted by one state against another state, a policy against other policies, an ideology against other ideologies, and the list could be continued.

Terrorist threats and risks have no borders. Yet, they have sources, resources and causes. These threats may have a local character, with the aim of intimidating a state, a party, a personality in relation to the politics carried out in the area. However, they can have a much larger character, even worldwide. Some may be actions for “punishing” a state or a leader for a policy, for what is done (actions against Yugoslavia and Slobodan Milosevich, but also against US embassies in Africa, etc.).

There are also actions that hit the “democratic forces” all over the world, others have an integralist, fundamentalist, intolerant, separatist philosophy, etc., such as the actions of the Basque separatists and those of the Palestinians in the Near East.

Also, it is very difficult to distinguish between acts that are terrorist and those that are normal actions, justified against decisions that affect a

⁹ G. Alexandrescu, *Amenințări la adresa securității*. București: Ed. Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, 2004, p.153.

¹⁰ *Terorismul – dimensiune politică și geostrategică. Războiul terorist. Războiul împotriva terorismului*, Centrul de Studii Strategice de Securitate, Editura AISM, București, 2002, p. 47.

part of the population, against the process of globalization, against political forces, unpopular or dictatorial regimes, etc.

On the other hand, these movements also have many forms of expression, materialization, nuances, connotations, ways of perceiving and justifying what they do. For example, a movement that opposes regimes that practice discrimination and do not recognize the rights of constituent ethnic groups or who want autonomy, separation, independence, etc., or the indifference to what happens there, considers that terrorism is the only means to make itself heard, to attract the attention of the world and to force a solution.

Such acts occur on the Asian continent, especially in the Caucasian and civilizations contact areas. Afghanistan - a country that is on the verge of an inter-civilizational slump - is still considered to be a training ground for various terrorist organizations, including Al Qaeda networks, which has prompted the United States' response as a result to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington¹¹.

In Central Asia, especially in the Caucasus area, conflicts are taking place which require a careful analysis of their philosophy, as they are considered to be somewhere on the border between terrorism and banditry. The area is also at a violent confluence between civilizations, in which the Islamist offensive breaks out of the battle for Caspian oil and the reflexes of Soviet thinking and fundamentalism and, of course, the current configuration of the post-Soviet strategic space.

In the Middle East, Palestinian terrorism, Kurdish terrorism, Jewish extremism and, possibly, even Yemeni terrorism are struggling.

Then, regionally, because of the Turkish dam on the Tiger and Euphrates rivers, on the territory of Turkey, if such a project is to be completed, it is possible at any time to trigger a "water war, which will take place by all possible means, including through terrorist actions.

The numerous ethnic groups in Burma were subject to a dictatorship. The country is facing an unstable situation, due to the pressures of the autonomous factions (especially the Karen) and the actions of the armies of

¹¹ Lucian Stăncilă, Ioan Burghilea, *Războiul fără fronturi și fără frontiere*, Editura F&F Internațional, Gheorghieni, 2005, p. 96.

drug and precious stone producers. There is also an oil pipeline that crosses the Karen region.

There are many forms of terrorism - Pakistan, Hindus, Talmuk, and Sikh, etc. - which also exerts pressure and risks on the European continent, due to the presence of numerous Talmuds in Europe and their rebellious attitude towards state authority.

These types of risks are generally predictable. They belong to a certain philosophy of the dissatisfied, of the one who considers himself frustrated and persecuted.

However, there are also risks arising from the interests of different entities, different groups that are not in the third world, but within the Western civilization. They challenge (or question) the universality of the values of Western civilization and some act through terrorist means against it. However, “everyday” terrorism is concerned with the interest of groups that circumvent the widely accepted law, and want to impose their own “law”.

CONCLUSIONS

The last decades have shown that terrorism evolves with science and technology, *the risks and threats* thus becoming unknown for the time being. As long as terrorism serves to reaching some “goals”, its forms and methods will be in permanent development.

Thus, it can be appreciated that, as the risks and threats tend to globalize, as the propagating vectors of threats (organized crime and terrorist networks) are increasingly structuring and uniting their techniques and processes of illegal action, the awareness effect of the need for some forms of identification, analysis, prevention and concerted action of counteracting becomes more and more pronounced in a flexible security environment, characterized by cooperation, information exchange and interoperability at various institutional levels, as consequence and necessity of globalization.

Terrorism has always had a major media impact, mainly as a result of the actions of terrorist organizations operating in many parts of the world, trying to gain financial power and resources, and sometimes recognizing their own ideologies and frustrations.

By creating regional and global security organizations, leaders have tried to eliminate or reduce terrorism and its negative influence on society and/or, in the worst case, repair the effects that this phenomenon has produced. Thus, threats and risks gain new connotations and an increasing importance in the context of the expansion and organization of terrorist groups.

The main way to combat all these is, in fact, maintaining alertness and a high level of training. *Terrorism is one of the most important threats to the current security environment worldwide. It is a form of violence against people, against their actions, against evolution*¹².

Motivations of a political, nationalist, separatist, ethnic, religious, and economic nature have made terrorism a favorite area for presenting asymmetric warfare and, at the same time, a major transnational problem. It is, in our time, the main form of asymmetric response/action.

We consider that we must be aware that the same person is for some people a terrorist and for others a freedom fighter, and the use of military force is only a mandatory solution for short and medium term.

The ubiquitous situation of tension due in particular to the numerous terrorist actions in various places around the world, a state of tension amplified by the mass media looking for the most shocking news, creates the impression of a conflict situation that never ends.

The perception of terrorism has evolved from an eminently internal problem wherein necessary to apply of criminal law, to one of international security, which, if properly addressed, requires a broad spectrum of political, economic, information and legislative measures, but also a serious and total involvement, in which the military factor plays an important role.

¹² Lucian Stăncilă, *Terorismul provocare a secolului XXI*, Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, București, 2007, p. 117.



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