TERRORIST SUICIDE AS A TACTICAL METHOD OF ASYMETRIC WARFARE

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Summary. The article describes the problem of terrorist suicide as a method of asymmetric warfare. It explains the definitions of terrorism, suicide and asymmetric warfare within the issue. Suicide is presented as a specific engagement method of terrorist organisations in the context of asymmetric warfare. Suicide terrorism is presented as part of the criminal's terrorist career. Terrorist suicide is a characteristic of the so-called "New Terrorism" and a type of altruistic suicide.

Key words: terrorist suicide, terrorism, asymmetric warfare, hybrid warfare, method, tactics, motivation

1. PRELIMINARY NOTES

The purpose of the article is to present the specificity of terrorist suicide as a tactical method of asymmetric warfare, i.e. a method used by terrorists to intimidate countries and the international community. Discussing terrorist suicide requires an explanation of the terms terrorism, suicide and asymmetric warfare. They lack uniform definition, both in legislation and in existing literature on the subject [Jałoszyński 2009, 8–10; Tomasiewicz 2000, 11–15]. Such diversification is deepened by the fact that both terrorism and terrorist suicide are subjects addressed by a number of fields of science: security science, legal science and social science. Each of these areas uses its own research methods and research results to define the threat that is terrorism and terrorist suicide, seek their root causes, examine the underlying conditions and propose countermeasures.

The term 'asymmetric warfare' is used in military science, political science and forensic science. The issue is multi-layered as we are faced both with the problem of terrorism and the problem of suicide in the context of asymmetric warfare and the threat thereof. These are completely separate categories of

research subject, highly diversified and characterised by negative social evaluation [Hołyst 1983, 48–82; Laqueur 1983, 183]. Both terrorism [Piwowarski, Depo, and Pajorski 2015] and suicide pose a serious threat to state structures, society and the individual, to varying degrees.

A basic clarification of the terms addressed in the article must include that the term 'terror' was originally used to denote a form of reign where the primary method involved intimidating society with bloody repression against political opponents (state terrorism). As time went by and terrorist acts became more frequent in various types of conflict, the term started to mean destructive extremism oriented towards fighting against organised society and the state (individual terrorism) [Pawłowski 1984, 10]. Hołyst asserts that from a subjective perspective terrorism is a more or less organised group that brings together people who share the same ideology, political beliefs or religion [Hołyst 2009, 56; Ismayilov 2010, 16–18].

Definitions of terrorism highlight the political motivation behind the acts of terrorist organisations, which are directed against civilians (individuals not involved in the fight) [Czabański 2009, 260; Karolczak 1995, 9].

According to P. Wilkinson, political terrorism means "coercive intimidation," i.e. "systematic use of murder and destruction, and the threat of murder and destruction, in order to terrorise individuals, groups, communities or governments into conceding to the terrorists' political demands" [Wilkinson 1979, 49]. R. Schulz understands political terrorism as "the threat and/or use of extranormal forms of political violence [...] with the objective of achieving certain political objectives/goals" [Schultz 1978, 8].

Definitions of terrorism also commonly highlight such characteristics of terrorist activity as the intention to cause psychological effects (fear or intimidation), use or threat of violence or force, taking advantage of the media to seek publicity, and the clandestine nature of the operations of terrorist organisations [Aleksandrowicz 2008, 20–21].

Various organisations and groups use terrorist acts to achieve at least several distinctive objectives: casualties, damage to property, intimidation and panic, or changes in the policy of the opponent (political terrorism). While analysing the objectives of terrorism it is important to bear in mind that it is not physical damage that is the primary goal, even if it is the most visible one directly after an attack. Violence is used to cause a psychological effect in the form of panic in the widest possible circles of society. However, this objective is also not the final one, as it is one way to elicit changes in the political decisions of the opponent [Crenshaw 1990, 7–24] such as to give up a certain territory or release an imprisoned leader of the organisation [Hołyst 1983, 416].

The spectacular nature of the employed methods of combat, e.g. suicide or bomb attack, is designed to ensure an appropriate level of fear, thus helping the terrorists to win acceptance for their organisational objectives. Attacking

a society so that the members are under the influence of strong fear for their own safety and for their loved ones is considered to be an effective mechanism of applying pressure on those in power. Society not only demands that the government intensifies the fight against terrorism but it also pressures the authorities to make political concessions to terrorist organisations so that they remove the citizens of their country from the lists of targets.

The diversification of terrorist organisations and their *modus operandi* have led to the development of numerous typologies of terrorism, based on various criteria [Karolczak 1995, 12–18; Czabański 2009, 259–60; Aleksandrowicz 2008, 23].

One of the fighting methods used by terrorist organisations is suicide. The self-slaughter by terrorist organisation members displays a certain specificity when compared to suicides committed outside of terrorist structures.

The attempts to define suicide undertaken in the literature present it as a violent act of taking one's own life, as the most serious act of self-aggression, where the individual's behaviour it oriented towards self-death. Suicide is a type of voluntary death of a person [Hołyst 1999, 598].

2. SPECIFICITY OF A TERRORIST SUICIDE

It is a distinctive feature of contemporary terrorism, especially New Terrorism, that it uses suicide attacks as a method of combat [Harmon, Mujkic, Kaukinen, and Weir 2018, 7].

The extremely pathological functioning of terrorist organisations, with their traditional methods of combat, is gaining an additional dimension of abnormality – suicide terrorists taking their own lives. Just by being a member of a terrorist organisation, a terrorist renounces a certain legislative and social order, and by committing suicide they also negate the biological and axiological order. With their actions, a terrorist denies the first biological law, which involves striving to preserve one's own life, and refuses to treat life as a primary value.

Interesting research questions emerge in this context:

1) Does the decision to take one's own life result from individual pathology of the person and, if yes, what kind of pathology?

2) To what extent a terrorist organisation contributes to a decision to die by suicide and what is its role in the whole process of preparing a suicide attack?

3) How does the community where the individual committing suicide grew up and was raised contribute to the process of the person "maturing" into suicide behaviour?

4) Does society – which approaches the phenomenon of terrorism and the method of combat that is a suicide attack in a specific way – somehow

contribute to the development of the foundations for the person's individual decision to take their own life in a terrorist attack?

In this context, we must separate two opposite ways of addressing the phenomenon of suicide. A society that perceives terrorist actions as a legitimate form of fighting, for instance for national independence, will see suicide terrorist attacks in a different way from the society against which they are directed.

In his analysis of terrorist suicides based on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Czabański notes that "Suicide terrorism has two tactical roles: first, it represents highly effective tactics used in asymmetric warfare against Israel, and secondly, the majority of Palestinians are aware of the tactical advantages of suicide bomb attacks" [Czabański 2009, 275; Ismayilov 2010, 15–26].

Another researcher on the topic, Hołyst, also emphasises the escalation of the problem of using suicide by terrorists [Hołyst 2009, 643].

The 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century is a period of intensified terrorism in various forms [Czabański 2009, 262]. Analyses of the problem of terrorism draw attention to the fact that the last two decades of the 20th century could be characterised by the emergence of new methods of terrorist warfare, including suicide bomb attacks. Hołyst states that "272 terrorist suicide attacks have taken place over the past 20 years, the majority (168) in Sri Lanka and India (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam), 52 in the Middle East, 22 in Israel, etc" [Hołyst 2009, 643].

Terrorism researchers wonder why suicide as a method of conflict employed by modern terrorism has become common so quickly with various terrorist groups and why it was absent in the 1960s and 1970s – a time of particularly severe terrorist activity. At that time, the death of the attacker was treated as a possibility, it was a significant risk factor, but it was not considered as certain as a result of using a specific method of attack [Reuter 2003, 11].

An answer to this question may be sought in analysis of the success rate of suicide terrorist attacks. The elimination of any measures to protect the bomber substantially increases the effectiveness of the attack, for which a terrorist organisation strives. Besides, it seems even more understandable that terrorist organisations are seeking new methods of conflict, suicide terrorism being the result of such a search [Zimny 2017], if we consider the fact that the "opponent," i.e. a state or the international community, is becoming ever more aware of terrorist threats and consistently seeks new ways to combat it. Since the resources and the territorial, political and financial possibilities of such an opponent go well beyond those at the disposal of terrorist organisations, it already has an advantage at the beginning of the conflict. So it can be assumed that terrorist suicide as a method of conflict is an outcome of the terrorist organisations' rational search for more effective procedures. Particularly important in this context are the observations of A. Czabański that "Suicide terrorist attacks have led to a completely new perception of aggression. The emergence

of this phenomenon has wrought great havoc in the governments of many countries. A terrorist suicide attack is rooted in such motivations that render conventional counteracting methods ineffective. After all, whoever treats martyrdom as a positive value and at the same time rejects the value of earthly existence does not fear death. This puts any authority that is unable to threaten a terrorist with anything more than death in a particularly difficult position" [Czabański 2009, 263–64].

So a terrorist organisation that decides to use a suicide attack on the one hand increases the effectiveness of its activity due to the range of its direct and indirect outcomes and on the other hand it substantially limits the anti-terrorist actions of its opponent, who is unable to bring the suicide bomber to justice. In many cases, the chances of establishing which terrorist organisation is actually responsible for the attack are also considerably limited as it is often impossible to identify the suicide bomber in any way. This may explain why terrorist suicide is so "attractive" as an asymmetric warfare method, in addition to the social and religious factors that contribute to the individual motivations [Ismayilov 2010, 16] of those joining terrorist organisations and choosing death by suicide [Perlman 2002, 19–31].

The use of suicide attacks is connected with the adopted strategy of terrorist activities, which is to guarantee [Hołyst 2009, 650–51; Czabański 2009, 286]:

1) precise execution of the objective of the attack. This is possible if death by suicide is a part of the plan because there are no protective or preventive measures for the bombers – no retreat path needs to be provided. By choosing a suicide attack, an organisation does not need to secure any escape route or other escape solutions for the attacker, which is always the most problematic element of attacks that do not entail suicidal death;

2) maximisation of the damage done by the attack, in terms of both the number of casualties and damage to property, as well as the psychological effect in the form of total fear and panic in civilians;

3) difficult prosecution of accessories and organisers because the preparation of the attack assumes minimising any traces that could be left after suicide bombers. Consequently, this ensures the success of subsequent actions of the terrorist organisation;

4) the spectacular nature of a suicide attack carried out by terrorists leaves lasting effects of fear in the international community, as a result of which there can be fewer attacks of this kind because their impact is additionally reinforced by the dramatic effect of death by suicide.

Use of suicide makes it possible to plan the attack in the best possible place and at the best possible time, in the most convenient circumstances ensuring the greatest possible extent of damage. The suicide terrorist becomes a human bomb – a medium that transports the explosives to an optimum site and sets

them off [Czabański 2009, 287]. As a result, suicide bombers achieve maximum efficiency with minimised risk for the organisers since the young perpetrators usually die at the site of the attack [Hołyst 2009, 651]. This prevents the organisation from losing experienced leaders, strategists and ideologists, who can successfully prepare subsequent missions in accordance with the organisation's objectives.

The advantages of suicide terrorism are considered the causes of the growing number of such incidents, both within the territory of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and in Iraq or Afghanistan [Hołyst 2009, 286].

The safety of the terrorist organisation accompanied by the very low risk of its responsibility being established is a strong argument in favour of applying this method of conflict in practice. Another major factor is the limited financial costs of such operations and that fact that they have huge media coverage, which ensures publicity for the actions of terrorist organisations.

3. TERRORIST SUICIDE VERSUS ASYMMETRIC WARFARE

Asymmetric warfare includes use of weapons of mass destruction by an entity posing an asymmetric threat, as well as activities using information technologies, terrorism, and actions taking advantage of the unique terrain conditions in the area of the conflict.

Political science links asymmetric threats to the activity of non-state entities, i.e. trans- or subnational organisations (terrorist organisations, organised crime). Transnationality means that the structures of the entities posing asymmetric threats are developed regardless of national borders, within a territory of more than one country, and so there is no clear conflict area or front. The rivalry between the entities is total – it may cover the whole territory of the threatened country and go beyond its borders. Asymmetric warfare is also characterised by unpredictability of the place, time and method of specific activities. This is reinforced by the substantial adaptation skills of the non-state entities involved in the conflict – quick adjustment to changes in the operational environment and modification of tactics depending on circumstances.

Next to asymmetric warfare, we can also identify hybrid warfare, understood as warfare using traditional methods combined with new-generation activities. Evans described the nature of hybrid warfare as follows: "we are confronted with a strange mixture of premodern and postmodern conflict – a world of asymmetric and ethnopolitical warfare – in which machetes and Microsoft merge, and apocalyptic millennials wearing Reeboks and Ray-Bans dream of acquiring weapons of mass destruction" [Evans 2003, 137]. In hybrid warfare, even a clear military success does not guarantee securing the objectives and interests in the strategic, political and social dimension [Lasica 2009, 11]. The hybridisation of modern warfare means the coexistence of

"old" and "new" warfare, classic military conflicts and "postmodern" wars, clashes of national armies and asymmetric warfare, military supertechnologies ad primitive weapons, fighting for territories and resources, as well as disputes about identities and values, confrontations between parochialism and cosmopolitanism [Kaldor 2001, 5–10; Robb 2007, 152–64].

Asymmetric warfare' means a conflict between parties that have unequal resources, where the weaker party attempts to neutralise the enemy's forces, and especially the enemy's higher technological advancement, by exploiting its weaknesses. This may mean, for instance, the guerrilla war used by the Algerians against the French in the 1950s, by the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese against the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s, and by Afghan mujahideen against the Soviet Union in the 1980s. This may also mean using a force that the enemy does not have, e.g. air forces to destroy targets of great importance for the country, such as water intakes or power plants. Terrorist activities are yet another example of asymmetric warfare, such as Al-Qaeda's attacks on embassies in 1998 and cities in 2001.[1] Asymmetric warfare is also called the "unfair fight," which may include the use of surprise in all of its operations and strategic dimensions, and unconventional use of weapons.

The operations of terrorist organisations represent asymmetric warfare. Their military preparation does not match that of their opponent's forces, they seek new methods of conflict where they exploit the enemy's weaknesses to their advantage. As emphasised by Czabański, "Opposing sides in asymmetric warfare use the tactics they find the most beneficial to exploit the weakness and the actual or subjective defencelessness of the enemy. Asymmetric warfare means that one party to the conflict is unable or reluctant to use the tactics of its opponent" [Czabański 2009, 286]. Unable to engage in equal conflict with a professionally prepared national army, they choose unconventional methods to ensure optimum efficiency. These methods include guerrilla warfare, planting of explosives by roads and in cars, shooting at civilians and terrorist suicides.

As emphasised by Zimny, "It is basically impossible to fight suicide terrorists. They cannot be negotiated with, stopped or convinced not to go through with the attack because no arguments, even the most rational ones, can get through to them and, first and foremost, because they cannot be identified. They are characterised by complete «contempt for death», which is very important from the point of view of combating such terrorism" [Zimny 2017, 59].

An analysis of terrorist actions in the context of asymmetric warfare leads to the conclusion that the asymmetry arises not only from military differences. There are also "[...] asymmetric values, asymmetric pressure and asymmetric

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[1] See http://stosunki miedzynarodwe.pl/slownik/68-w777-wojna asymetryczna [accessed: 13.11.2019].

objectives, which are juxtaposed with the qualitative and quantitative differences related to military potential. This determines the use of asymmetric tactics" [Czabański 2009, 285]. In asymmetric warfare, the stronger party concentrates on the opponent's fighting skills, while the weaker party tries to undermine the stronger opponent's will to fight. It achieves this by using such military tactics against which it is hard to defend; it bases its actions on the element of surprise and change in the setting of the conflict, it engages all social groups, and targets large segments of the enemy's population. This is about using a tactic which is supported by local people and which targets the whole population of a given country, for example, or keeps taking the conflict to different cities or other areas [ibidem].

The stronger opponent's will to fight is essentially weakened through all of the above tactical elements, and primarily through the evocation of strong fear in the whole community of the attacked side [Hołyst 2012, 811].

Suicide terrorist attacks are very important for a terrorist organisation due to their complex functionality. Czabański notes that such functionality manifests itself dually. Firstly, it consolidates the supporters of suicide terrorism by solidifying their conviction that use of suicide as an effective form of warfare is the right decision. Through the element of death, the conflict gains additional meaning. Secondly, terrorism that makes use of suicide has more impact due to the specificity of the reception of the media coverage by the attacked societies. TV broadcasts presenting the details of the dramatic bloodshed intensify the terror of individuals and the whole communities and as such act in furthering one of the goals of terrorist activities [Czabański 2009, 285].

4. FINAL NOTES

Terrorist suicides are a tactical method of asymmetric warfare where one of the opposing sides (in this case the terrorist organisation) takes advantage of the enemy's weaknesses.

Terrorist suicides are classified as altruistic suicides [Durkheim 2011, 277–307] where individuals sacrifice their lives in order to further some important community goals. The most typical suicides of such nature include self-immolation as a form of protest or hunger strikes leading to the individual's death. It is highlighted in those cases that suicide is a type of conflict without resorting to violence. The specificity of a cultural circle that is defined by sacred elements assigned to specific religious doctrines and properly interpreted [Czabański 2009, 469] is of importance for how the suicide is committed. After all, it is a form of "fighting without violence" because there are no casualties other than the person taking their life. It is the opposite for terrorist suicides – the death of the terrorist entails the death of many people, usually

random and innocent from the perspective of the foundations of the social conflict, the resolution of which the terrorist is involved.

Furthermore, as Jarosz emphasises, the main purpose of suicide terrorist attacks is to kill others. The author highlights that this "[...] requires reconsidering the phenomenon of terrorist suicide attacks, also in the theoretical dimension. After all, these are – both in the minds of the fanatics and in fact – terrorist attacks aimed to kill. And this (homicide) is their actual primary goal. Death by suicide is just the necessary, honourable and respectable cost of the undertaking" [Jarosz 2004, 49–50].

The specific justification of the presence of suicide in terrorist warfare presented in the article suggests that they should be analysed from a number of different points of view, with a multifaceted approach.

Some of the people executing suicide attacks for terrorist organisations are consistent with the profile of a suicide terrorist to a certain extent, but there are bombers whose personality and behaviour fails to comply with such a description and the general recruitment rules of terrorist organisations.

As we analyse terrorist suicides from the perspective of specific individual, special and organisational behaviour, we must remember that there are sleeper terrorists [Hołyst 2012, 810–11] many countries who are waiting for an order to carry out a suicide terrorist attack [Hołyst 2009, 645]. Identifying them is incredibly difficult. This is one of the reasons why terrorism is defined as a highly unpredictable threat, and combating it is a challenging, slow and costly task [Lisowski 2011, 102].

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SAMOBÓJSTWO TERRORYSTYCZNE
JAKO METODA TAKTYKI KONFLIKTU ASYMETRYCZNEGO

Streszczenie. Artykuł opisuje problem samobójstw terrorystycznych jako metody konfliktu asymetrycznego. W zakresie omawianego zagadnienia wyjaśniono definiowanie terroryzmu, samobójstwa i konfliktu asymeytrycznego. Samobójstwo zostało przedstawione jako specyficzna metoda walki organizacji terrorystycznych w kontekście konfliktu asymetrycznego. Terroryzm samobójczy został przedstawiony w artykule jako część kariery terrorystycznej przestępcy. Samobójstwo terrorystyczne jest cechą tzw. „nowego terroryzmu” oraz rodzajem samobójstwa altruistycznego.

Słowa kluczowe: samobójstwo terrorystyczne, terroryzm, konflikt asymetryczny, wojna hybrydowa, metoda, taktyka, motywacja

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