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# THE EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY AND THE TERRORISM<sup>1</sup>

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### **SUMMARY**

*The security of Euro-Atlantic area must be analyzed and understood in the context of the international security environment specific to the beginning of the 21st century, an active and effervescent one, where hybrid threats and deep economic and social imbalances are real risks. The terrorism has been, is and will continue to be a topic of maximum interest. The approach of this phenomenon from the psychological perspective not only of those directly involved, but also of those affected after the attack, is of interest and very topical, in the context of the unprecedented technological and informational explosion.*

**KEYWORDS:** security, terrorism, psychology

### **INTRODUCTION**

In an extremely unpredictable security environment, in a world of gaps and asymmetries in which the threats` synergies unbalance the systems, a structured, pragmatic, and balanced approach to security, at all levels, is an absolute necessity.

The international security is decisively conditioned by the Euro-Atlantic security, considering the concentration of military personnel and equipment in this area, including the nuclear arsenal. For this reason, when analyzing the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, we must consider all the international organizations involved (UN, NATO, EU, OSCE), the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union being among the most active.

Considering the composition of the EU and NATO (figure no. 1), more than two thirds (21 states) of the 27 EU members and 30 NATO members, being common

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<sup>1</sup> The content of this article represents the opinion of the authors and should not be perceived as an official position of the NATO Center of Excellence in the field of HUMINT.

members and consequently, expressing common interests, we can say that the approach of the Euro-Atlantic security must be a NATO-EU common one (Dinca, 2012, p.65). NATO-EU inter-institutional cooperation has intensified in recent years, especially in the field of hybrid threats, an example being the European Center of Excellence for Combating Hybrid Threats opened in October 2017 in Helsinki, at the initiative of Finland.

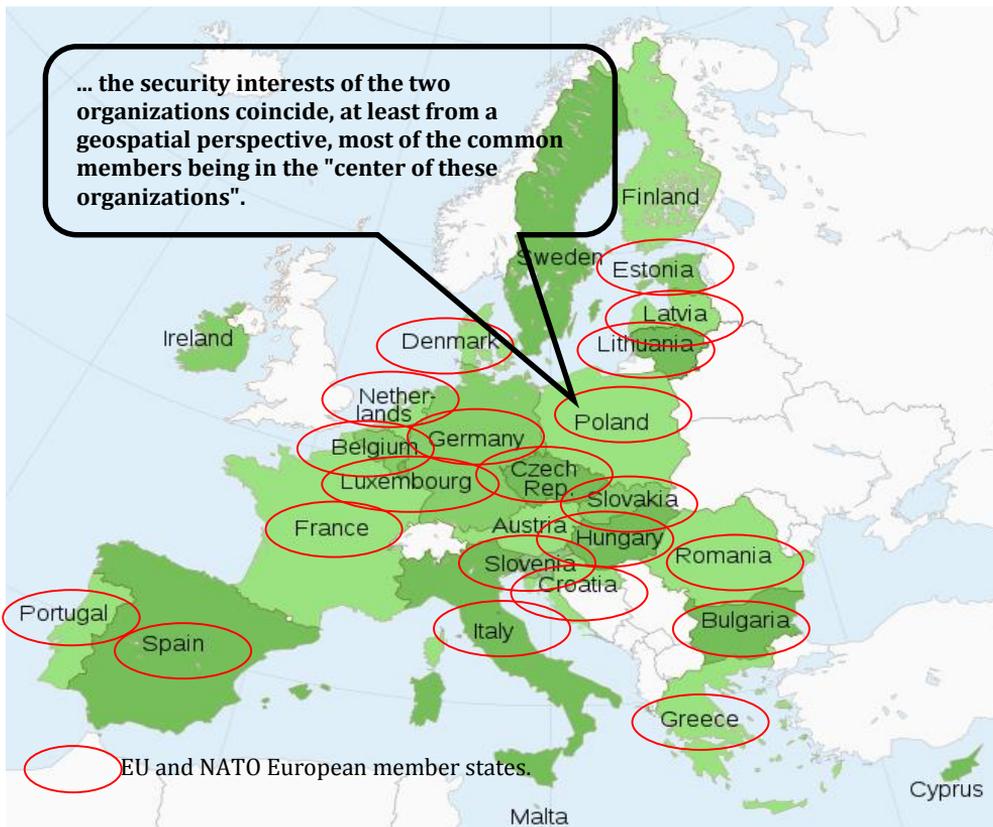


Figure no. 1: EU and NATO European member states.

From the broad spectrum of hybrid threats, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyberattacks, organized crime, disruptions in the flow of supplies of goods and services (energy, gas, food, etc.), migration, terrorism, I will focus on the last one.

I am convinced that the subject will continue to be one of maximum interest.

### THE TERRORISM - GENERALITIES

What is terrorism, its forms, and characteristics have been debated and analyzed in various forums, but I propose an approach to the terrorist phenomenon from the psychological perspective of the subject, whether we are talking about

individual, group or terrorist organization and the psychological effect (post-traumatic reactions, behavioral changes, or even psychiatric disorders).

The terrorism is a phenomenon that must be managed and combated firmly and timely. It can have serious effects on any state, not necessarily in terms of infrastructure or material damage (which are not negligible) but especially for the psychological and mass effect. Technological developments and the extensive influence of the media do nothing but exponentially amplify these devastating effects for society. The incidents of September 11 showed the whole world that even great powers like the USA are not safe from such a threat that can occur anytime and anywhere.

Defining the phenomenon of terrorism is not an easy task because this threat does not have an unanimously accepted definition due to its complexity and all forms of manifestation, and therefore we can appreciate it as "the totality of acts of violence committed by an individual, group or organization, to create a climate of insecurity or to change the form of government of a state" (Dex online, definition of terrorism, 2010).

The complexity of this phenomenon makes it manifest itself in various forms, such as international terrorism, political, religious, nuclear, state and many others. It is characterized by maximum violence, is practiced by non-combatants, is based on the element of surprise, is asymmetrical, wants to convey a message and in most cases is political and religious in nature due to differences in culture or mentality (Simileanu, 2004, p. 127).

Usually, the purpose of terrorist actions is to generate widespread media comments, the destruction or partial damage of significant buildings to the adversary, political negotiations, the assassination of key figures and why not, increasing the reputation and credibility of the group.

### **THE TERRORISM IN THE EURO-ATLANTIC AREA**

The analysis of the EUROPOL report for 2020 (figure no. 2) shows a downward trend in the detection and detention of terrorism suspects in Europe, however Europe continues to feel the effects of jihadist radicalization, especially in countries like Austria, France, Germany and the United Kingdom, countries that have shown a somewhat exaggerated openness to migration specific to the last decades of the last century.

However, the number of terrorist attacks remains relatively constant: 69/2018, 55/2019, 57/2020, including successful, failed, and thwarted attempts. In the Eastern European space, actions have been few, detected in time and thwarted by the structures with responsibilities in the field, and those involved were detained and arrested. In other words, it can be appreciated that there were some intentions of terrorist attacks in this area as well, but all of them were countered in time.

Possible explanations for this situation can be attributed to the unprecedented information and technological explosion and to a certain "professionalization of terrorism".

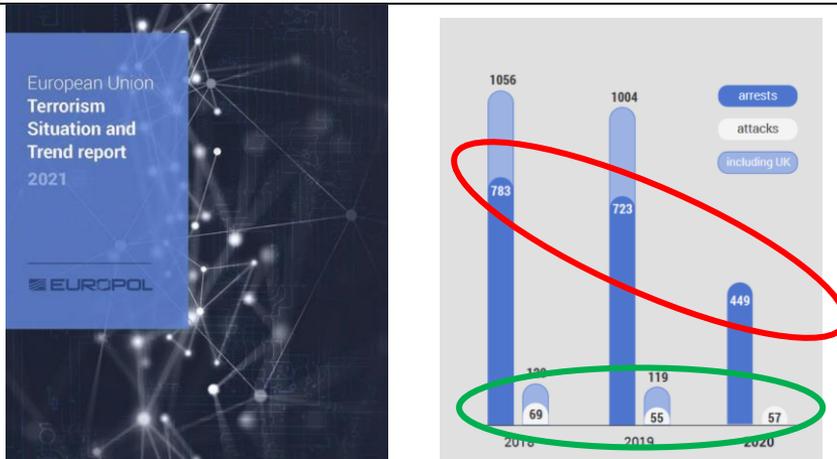


Figure no.2: Comparative analysis of terrorism in Europe (2018-2020)  
 -according to "European Union.  
 Terrorism Situation and Trend report", (EUROPOL, 2021, p. 12).

Although it accounts for less than a quarter of all attacks in the EU, jihadist terrorism is directly responsible for more than half of the victims (12) and almost all the injured (47). The number of deaths and injuries has doubled from 10 deaths and 27 people injured in 2019 to 21 victims and 54 people injured in 2020.

In locating terrorist actions in the European space (figure no. 3), the predisposition of the subjects for Western democracies, cosmopolitan states, strongly developed economically and socially, with areas very frequented by foreign tourists, with large financial centers and large institutional headquarters is obvious.

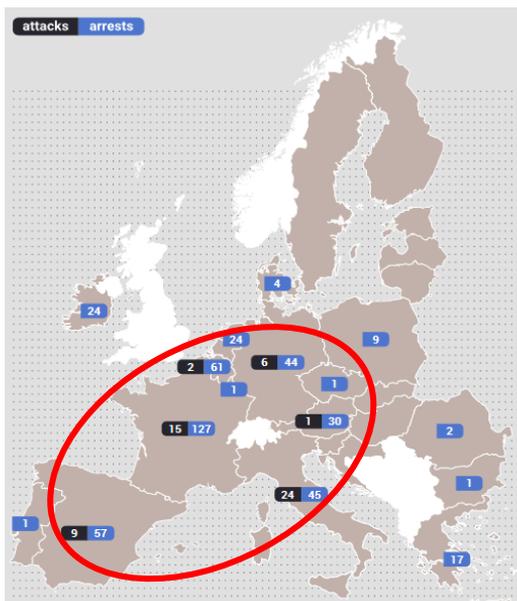


Figure no. 3: The terrorism in Europe, in 2020 -according to  
 "European Union.  
 Terrorism Situation and Trend report", (EUROPOL, 2021, p.15)

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**THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TERRORISM, the psychology of the subject and the psychology of the effect of terrorist actions**

The cruelty of terrorist actions and the violence directed, most of the times, against innocent civilians, led to an imprint of the subjects as individuals with serious psycho-behavioral disorders, impossible to integrate and adapt to a normal socio-cultural life. Thus, specialists in the field have identified two significantly different currents of opinion: the subject with pathological disorders, lacking awareness of his own deeds and the religious fanatic who acts under the influence of the so-called "divine commandments".

Indeed, there are very few cases of "psychopathic bombers" claimed by terrorist organizations, who usually act alone, based on claims and motivations, often illogical, meaningless. Most subjects do not suffer from mental illness, but are essentially normal, rational people, who evaluate the terrorist act from a cost-benefit perspective and summarize that it is profitable, not material but rather ideological, mystical-religious.

The second perspective, that of the suicidal fanatic, requires a higher level of education and training, allowing a comparative analysis, a quick decision, security and self-control, conscious self-destruction, all in the context of ideological motivations and / or political, non-material. The fact that some extremist leaders use quotes from religious texts to justify violence leads subjects to believe that they will assert their faith through violence. Usually, the political goals of extremist groups are masked by a religious discourse.

The terrorist attacks demand the maximum psychology of subjects strongly anchored affective and emotionally throughout the action. Affective tension, anxiety and stress increase with the action, reaching maximum levels as deadline approaches and uncertainty about possible hiccups or authorities' reaction increases. The psychological behavior of the subjects oscillates, the prolongation of the actions themselves leading to the appearance of a state of physical and mental exhaustion of them, which begin to make mistakes, this being the optimal time for intervention.

We can summarize that the subjects are predominantly young, without family obligations, balanced, educated, with significant physical abilities, strongly motivated, but very easily influenced by the socio-cultural and religious group (figure no. 4).

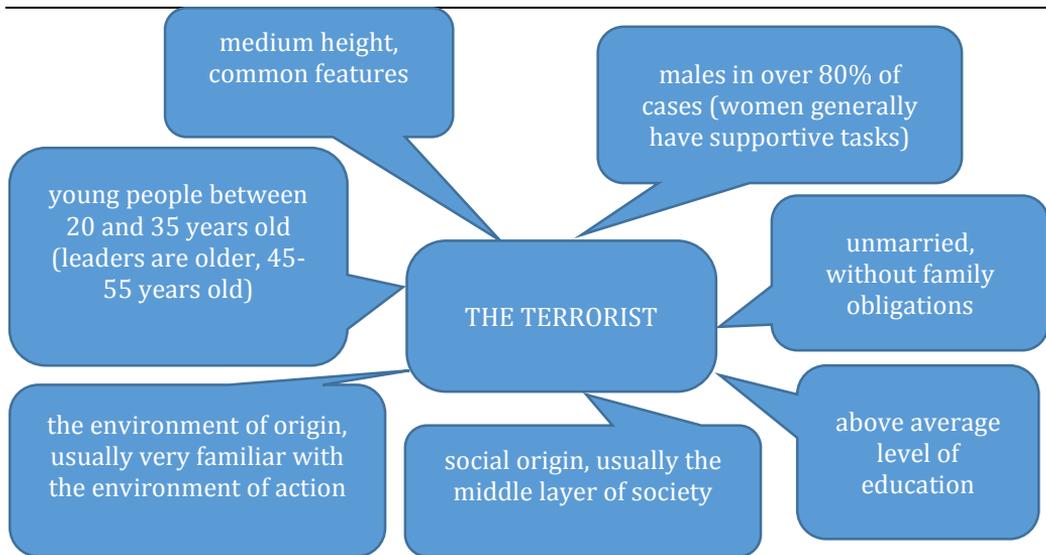


Figure no.4: General psycho-behavioral traits of the terrorist

However, the efforts of specialists to outline a unitary behavioral profile, unique and generally valid, have not proved sufficient, finding among the subjects as many similarities as differences.

The effects of terrorist acts, in addition to direct casualties, are significant, far-reaching, and long-lasting. Basically, direct victims as the main target of terrorism, are in fact in many situations, just means to reach the intended purpose, a kind of "cause of effect".

Many of the psychological consequences of terrorism (Figure 5) are like those seen in other disasters (natural disasters, serious and large-scale accidents, organized crime, rape and robbery), but most studies focus on post-traumatic stress disorder (SPT).

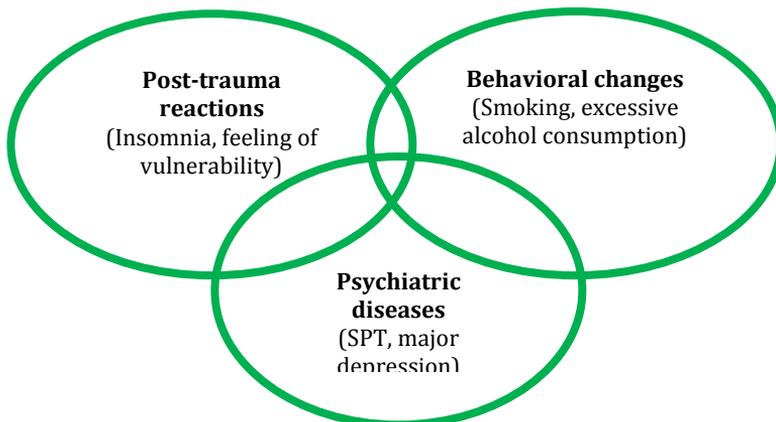


Figure no. 5: Psychological consequences of terrorism

The symptoms of PTSD are recurring memories, intrusive dreams, or thoughts (sudden and involuntary), isolation from people and certain situations, avoidance of what may remind you of the event, insomnia, extreme vigilance. In some situations, we may encounter increased consumption of alcohol and banned substances, domestic and interpersonal violence.

The terrorism can significantly disrupt the functioning of society on long-term - by eroding the sense of community and national security, damaging morale, opening ethnic or racial, economic, and religious fissures.

The current COVID-19 pandemic, one of an unpredictable magnitude and aggression, has also impacted the terrorist phenomenon in the Euro-Atlantic area. The measures like lockdowns, traffic restrictions, face masks, significantly influenced both the subjects' modus operandi and the purpose of the terrorist actions. The effects of these restrictions have already met last year in Belgium and Czech Republic.

Due to the temporary restrictions caused by the pandemic, the opportunities for large-scale attacks, with many victims, were significantly limited, public spaces (museums, theaters, churches, stadiums), public transportation, airports, tourist areas, reducing both their activity, as well as the maximum number of participants.

But we can say, without fear of being wrong, that the COVID-19 pandemic also brought through the polarization of society, misinformation and conspiracy theories, enough panic, fear, social anger, violence, so terror.

Instead of concluding, the question arises:

***"Aren't we witnessing a different kind of terrorism?"***

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