

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE
Doctoral School of Military Sciences**

Author's Summary

Krisztián Béla Répási

**The threat of the European Union at the beginning of the 21st
century on the basis of TE-SAT reports**

PhD thesis

Supervisor:

Dr. Péter Tálas, CSc in political science

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Framing the problem

The results of Standard Eurobarometer 83 and 84 show that high percentage of respondents in the Visegrad and Baltic states mentioned terrorism among the two most important issues that EU faces.¹ Although in the two above-mentioned groups of countries far less people considered terrorism as one of the two most important issues that their country faces than in other member states,² there is a kind of general fear related to the phenomenon of terrorism also in the Eastern part of the European Union. At the same time, none of the databases consider the Visegrad and Baltic countries as threatened by terrorism. In short, there is a paradox here: respondents could not have gained direct experience of domestic terrorism, because, except for a few isolated cases, terrorist incidents (completed, failed or foiled) have not been committed either in the Baltic states or in the Visegrad countries yet. However, there is a fear of terrorism in both of the two groups of countries.

In the European Union a false idea has been developed according to which the European Union, and Europe in the broader sense, are endangered by only one type of terrorism: the religiously inspired (Islamist) terror. One of the reasons for this development is the fact that relating to terrorism media shows us this picture. On the other hand, regarding the six strategic terrorist acts executed in the European Union and Norway between 2004 and 2016, only one attack (the 2011 Norway carnage) was not committed by radical Muslims. Five were indeed religiously inspired (the 2004 Madrid, the 2005 London and the March 2016 Brussels bombings as well as the 2015 Paris massacres). The Norway attack demonstrates, religiously inspired terrorism is not the only one among the various sorts of terrorism which poses challenge to the security of the European countries. At the same time, since the 11 September 2001 attacks both the media and the political discourse have focused on terrorist acts perpetrated by radical Muslims while paying marginal attention to other types of terrorism. In light of these facts, there is a need for a thorough examination which would give a more differentiated picture about terrorism in the European Union.

In order to gain comprehensive knowledge of terrorism in the European Union, we have to examine statistical data about terrorist acts and compare these to the picture that media shows us. I hypothesize that “facts” disclosed by media and statistical data do not give the same

¹ „Standard Eurobarometer 83 – Spring 2015”. *Official site of the European Commission*, 2015. p. 53. <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/68710>;
„Standard Eurobarometer 84 – Autumn 2015”. *Official site of the European Commission*, 2016. p. 56. <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/72826>, 2016. 06. 17.

² „Standard Eurobarometer 83 – Spring 2015”. *ibid.* p. 46.; „Standard Eurobarometer 84 – Autumn 2015”. *ibid.* p. 49.

picture. I primarily used the Europol's annual reports (Terrorism Situation and Trend Report – TE-SAT) that provide an overview of the terrorism in the EU. I chose TE-SAT because regarding the terrorism in the EU, this is the only issue or database where data and information are provided by authorities of the EU member states. Importantly for my research question, there is data on terror threat charts that show together the degree and dynamics of the threat in the member states. Regarding data quality, there is no major fraud, only a few questionable and controversial data can be found.

Research objectives

There are only few publications that analyse the terrorism threat of the world and the European Union with the help of empirical data and databases. The primary goal of my research is to explore the changes of the terrorism threat of the European Union for the period between October 2005 and December 2015 with the help of TE-SAT reports, and draw tendency lines for this decade. In addition, dissertation was written to refine the rough images about terrorism, and to adjust the general beliefs on terrorism accordingly. Furthermore, prior to analysing the development and evolution of the types of terrorism in the EU I briefly review the history of the European Union's fight against terrorism. Besides, I seek answers to the question whether the most important goal of the European non-Islamist terror groups is to draw attention, and whether these terror groups could be considered as agents of "symbolic terrorism" because of this and for the low number of casualties. Moreover, I intend to highlight the fact that both the degree of threat perception and the counterterrorism methods are dependent on what kind of terrorism we have to face. Additionally, in connection with the terror threat, it is very important how society sees terrorism, therefore, it is worth examining how EU citizens perceive terrorism threat.

I also aim to investigate the threat perception of the political leadership of the EU member states, i.e., if an EU country reports a given quantity of incident, arrest or verdict, I assume that these should reflect the official standpoint of the country in question. Besides, I seek answers to the question: what is considered to be terrorism by the body politic and what society considers to be terrorism. I also wish to investigate why society perceives non-Islamist terrorism less threatening.

Research methods

In the course of research I applied the following methods:

1. Comparing and analysing databases, particularly the data of the TE-SAT reports.
2. Reviewing and comparing analogue articles and studies (especially in English and, to a lesser extent, in Italian, Spanish and French) found in the domestic and international literature regarding the terrorism threat of the European Union.
3. Analysing the results, developments as well as drawing conclusions for the purpose of achieving new results.

My dissertation is principally based on the TE-SAT reports issued by Europol, but throughout the research I have utilized several other databases such as Global Terrorism Database, whilst I have had recourse to the Standard Eurobarometer reports to survey the sense of threat of the EU citizens. Besides, I have also used books, studies, articles and annual reports published by police or national security services that helped me to gain a more thorough knowledge relating to terrorism within the European Union. Europol annual reports have been examined in detail from TE-SAT 2007 to TE-SAT 2016, therefore, I have analysed data of the period between October 2005 and December 2015.

Research hypotheses

During the research the following hypotheses were set up:

1. There is discrepancy between threats outlined in TE-SAT reports and threats laid out by media and the political discourse. Besides, in connection with terrorism notable discrepancy can be discovered between the picture appearing in terrorism databases and picture outlined from TE-SAT issues.
2. Based on the TE-SAT data there are significant differences between the EU member states relating to terror threat, which means that in spite of the European political discourse, EU countries are not equally affected by terrorism.
3. Strategic terror attacks are the main reasons why European Union considers religiously inspired terrorism as the most threatening type of terrorism. Nevertheless, there are notable differences between the purposes of various sorts of terrorism. Islamist and, to a lesser extent, right-wing terrorism aim to cause enormous fear and great number of fatalities while for the other sorts of terrorism addressing the political message is the most important thing. As a result, single issue as well as contemporary separatist and left-wing terrorism can rather be considered only “symbolic terrorism”.
4. If we accept the presupposition that security perception of society has decisive influence on policy-making, then European counterterrorism efforts can be made more

effective by giving credible detailed as well as differentiated picture about terrorism threat of the European countries.

Brief summary of the research by chapters

In the first chapter, based on the number of incidents, fatalities and the injured, I compare the terrorism threat of the European Union to the terrorism threat of the other parts of the world in the last fifteen years. Furthermore, I also examine the neighbouring countries and regions that can affect the EU's terror threat, namely Turkey, Russia, the five north African countries on the Mediterranean coast as well as the non-EU member Western Balkan states.

In the second chapter, I write in detail the strategic terror attacks committed in the European Union and Norway between March 11, 2004 and March 22, 2016. I posit that these have determined our image on terrorism, on the other hand, I research how the EU citizens considered terrorism as a problem for their country and the European Union between spring 2005 and autumn 2015.

In the third chapter first, I look at the compilation methodology of TE-SAT reports, then I focus on the structure and content of TE-SAT issues. In the next subchapter, I study the TE-SAT reports published before 2007 comparing them with the current issues from the point of view of content, framework and methodology. Moreover, comparing them with TE-SAT, I explore other databases and annual reports that also contain information about terrorist incidents. Finally, I point out the strengths and weaknesses of TE-SAT reports.

In the following chapter, I investigate the fight against terrorism of the European Union analysing how counterterrorism policy of the supranational organization has developed from the early cooperation of the various antiterrorist agencies until the global strategy of the European Union's foreign and security policy published in 2016.

In the fifth chapter, I examine the various types of terrorism within the European Union (the religiously motivated or Islamist, separatist, left-wing, right-wing and the so-called single issue terrorism) analysing how they have developed in the past decade. In the same chapter, I compare the sorts of terrorism with each other highlighting the similarities and differences. Moreover, I also investigate what kind of threat the types of terrorism have posed to the security on national, regional and local level. In the end, I write about the fact that certain terrorist organizations have been trying to build a transnational and trancontinental network.

In the second half of the dissertation, I mainly focus on the analysing of TE-SAT data. In the first half of the chapter six, I choose the EU countries where both the number of the

completed, failed and foiled attacks and the number of arrests were high revealing what sorts of terrorism have posed the greatest challenge to them whilst in the second half of the chapter, I examine the less threatened EU member states, i.e., the countries where the number of incidents is low but the number of arrests is high.

At the beginning of the chapter seven, I have compiled three schedules. The first one indicates the number of completed, failed and foiled terrorist attacks, in the second one we can see the number of arrests while on the third schedule the number of verdicts is shown (all of the data of the three schedules are broken down per countries). Thereafter, I evaluate the schedules' data. In the second half of the chapter, I investigate why alleged perpetrators (suspects) have been arrested, on the other hand, I discover if verdict (conviction or acquittal) followed arrests and if yes, what percentage of cases went to trial?

In the final part of the thesis, I summarize the conclusions of the research, prove the hypotheses, introduce the new scientific results, set up recommendations and identify the possible new fields of the research.

Summarized conclusions

On the basis of my research I have drawn the following summarized conclusions.

In the past decades, EU member states tried to promote integration in the field of justice and home affairs in order to fight against terrorism in a more effective way. Conceptions and measures have mostly built on each other, at the same time, progress can be considered unbalanced in this field. The European Union's counterterrorism policy developed only after major terrorist acts while in the "more peaceful" periods the policy rather stagnated than evolved. Another important feature of the European counterterrorism policy is the parallelism. EU member states have been planning to fight against terrorism rather by informal cooperations and agreements than by using the framework of the EU. Furthermore, counterterrorism policy has not moved to the community level that would ensure tighter integration than the intergovernmental level. Besides, full sovereignty is still more important to member states than effective cooperation.

TE-SAT reports are the proof and the result of the "evolutionary process" within the EU's counterterrorism policy. In spite of its weaknesses, TE-SAT issues can be considered useful because on the one hand, the reports show that in addition to the Islamist terrorism there are several other types of terrorism within the European Union, on the other hand, we can see what the EU member states consider terrorism. Moreover, in the reports, we can read about

the various tendencies and changes that occurred within the sorts of terrorism and that can modify the image about terrorism.

Authorities have not managed to eliminate religiously motivated (Islamist) threat entirely after the September 11, 2001 attacks because incidents of the 2000s and 2010s prove that radical ideology of Al Qaeda and Islamic State has found way to certain members of the European Muslim communities. Two tendencies are outlined from the TE-SAT reports in connection with Islamist terrorism. On the one hand, both the number of arrests and, except for 2013, the number of verdicts have grown while the number of incidents has varied within the EU since 2011. At the same time, only a small percentage of all terrorist acts in the EU is Islamist attack, however, religiously motivated attacks have the most casualties. On the other hand, Islamist radicals have been aiming to execute terrorist acts in more and more EU member states: between the 1980s and 2004, with some exceptions, France was the only target for Islamist extremists. Since 2004, several other EU countries have become a scene of religiously inspired incidents. However, in spite of the threatening announcements, numerous EU and non-EU European countries, including the Visegrad countries and the Baltic states, have not been considered as target by Islamist extremists. According to research institute The Soufan Group, by December 2015, more than 5000 “jihadists” had travelled from Western European countries to Syria and Iraq to join the rebel groups. Based on the estimates, almost three-quarter of the total European Union foreign fighter contingent come from only four countries such as France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Belgium. A certain part of the European foreign fighters died in the fightings, a small part of them might not return to Europe ever and travel to fight from conflict zone to conflict zone, whilst another part of the volunteers try to come back to Europe. Those fighters of European origin that have returned and are not disillusioned with “jihad” and do not intend to re(integrate) to society, might attempt to perpetrate terrorist act in Europe and/or try to recruit other volunteers with intending to send them to one of conflict zones of the world. European foreign fighters and terrorists who are not EU citizens might hide in the flow of illegal migrants and asylum seekers, at the same time, their number is very small. According to TE-SAT 2016, there is no concrete evidence to date that terrorist travellers systematically use the stream of refugees to enter Europe unnoticed. Furthermore, past experience shows that European terrorists either lived legally in the place where they executed the attack or it was not the flow of asylum seekers and illegal migrants that they used to enter the Schengen zone.

Based on TE-SAT data, separatist terrorism is still the most active type of terrorism in the European Union although the number of incidents and arrests have decreased significantly

since 2005. The number of completed, failed and foiled attacks is between 150 and 180 per year in the four regions affected by separatist terrorism, namely Northern Ireland, Basque Country, Corsica as well as Galicia, besides, about half of the incidents have occurred in Northern Ireland. In place of executing violent attacks in Europe, separatist groups based outside the EU, such as Kurdistan Workers' Party and Tamil Tigers, rather pursue their double-pronged strategy focusing on non-violent propaganda, recruiting people as well as collecting money in the EU in order to continue or restart the fight in the mother country.

During the transformation of left-wing terrorism, which occurred between the 1990s and the 2000s, not only the ideology but also the players have been replaced. Marxist-Leninist terrorism was replaced by anarchist terrorism, and today the most important left-wing terrorist groups are not the Red Brigades (Brigate Rosse) or the First Line (Prima Linea) but the Italian Informal Anarchist Federation (Federazione Anarchica Informale) and the Greek Conspiracy of Cells of Fire (Synomosia Pynon tis Fotias). The most affected countries by anarchist terrorism are Italy, Greece and Spain, nevertheless, comparing with Marxist-Leninist violence, anarchist terrorism is much less organized and has much fewer supporters. TE-SAT data show on the one hand that the number of left-wing terrorist incidents has decreased significantly, on the other hand, more and more arrests have been occurred since 2010. Similarly to the Kurdish and Tamil separatists, the Turkish Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front use the EU member states only for logistical background, recruiting base and hide-out. Terrorist acts including suicide attacks have been carried out in Turkey.

According to TE-SAT reports, right-wing terror is the second rarest one among the sorts of terrorism in the EU. After the string of attacks of the 1970s and the '80s had decayed, right-wing violence changed in some aspects. Attacks have become sporadic and less organized as well as less bombing incidents have occurred. Furthermore, today right wing-violence is manifested by sporadic vandalism, killings (stabbings or shootings) and arson attacks. Hence, right-wing violence have not become "more peaceful". Instead, the actions turned into less organized. Today the bulk of the right-wing violent acts are categorized as extremism or hate crime, therefore, only a small percentage of the attacks is considered terrorist act. Such examples are the incidents of the Hungarian Budaházy group, the killings and the bombings of the German National Socialist Underground and Anders Breivik's mass killing. TE-SAT reports suggest that although the number of right-wing radicals is on the rise, right-wing terrorism will enjoy little popular support.

Single-issue terrorism aims to change only one aspect of government policy and social behaviour rather than to destroy or seriously destabilise the fundamental, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country. Issue-group militancy has appeared principally in connection with the radical environmentalists and animal rights activists (ALF, ELF, SHAC, No TAV) in the EU. Unlike the USA, European authorities consider single issue militancy mainly extremism and not terrorism, as a result, the number of single issue terrorist acts is expected to be low in the future.

Based on TE-SAT issues, the number of completed, failed and foiled attacks was very high in France, Spain, Italy, Greece, the United Kingdom and Germany between October 2005 and December 2015; adding, that in France all the types of terrorism is present. Among the six countries, Islamist terrorism posed a serious problem to the United Kingdom, France and Germany in the period under review, while in the other three countries it was not religiously inspired terrorism, but separatist or left-wing violence constituted the greatest challenge.

There are other member states in the EU where terrorism did not pose as serious problem as in the abovementioned six countries in the period under review. This group of countries consists of 13 EU member states.³ Within this group and most arrests related to religiously inspired terrorism occurred in those countries where large number of Muslim minorities live whose members are struggling with integration problems. Contrarily, except for Romania and Bulgaria, much less arrests happened in the middle and in the Eastern part of the EU where much lower number of and much better integrated Muslim minorities live compared to the Western, Northern and Southern part of the continent. In addition, among the sorts of terrorism, it was not the Islamist the only one which poses threat in the observed 13 countries. Relating to terrorism, among the Visegrad countries, right-wing terrorism was the sole problem for Poland and Hungary in the period under review. Regarding the left-wing militants, it is worth mentioning Austria, Belgium and Denmark because examining the less threatened 13 EU member states, we can see that almost all of the suspects were arrested in these three countries. However, the type of terrorism which poses threat to almost every EU member state is not the Islamist or the left-wing terrorism but the separatist one. Among the less threatened 13 EU member states, Ireland and Portugal were the sole countries where arrests occurred on separatism based inside the EU while in the other 11 member states, arrested suspects were or might have been Kurdish and Tamil activists.

³ Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Hungary.

Examination of the EU citizens' terror threat perception has a surprising result. EU citizens did not consider terrorism as the most important problem for their country and the European Union between spring 2005 and autumn 2015. Everyday problems were more important to them than terrorism. It is a fact that terrorism had been one of the most important problems in certain countries earlier, but terrorism lost its importance also in these member states in the middle of 2000s. Nevertheless, it can be stated that terror threat perception was permanently higher than the average level in those countries where several types of terrorism have been presented. Besides, the possible reason for the high terror threat perception in autumn 2015 was that EU citizens linked Islamist incidents to the migrants and refugee seekers.

Europe, and particularly the European Union, was not as threatened by terrorism as some other parts of the world in the past 15 years. As regards the number of fatalities, injured and hostages as well as the approximate level of total property damage from terrorist incidents according to Worldwide Incident Tracking System and Global Terrorism Database, the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel Belt as well as South Asia was more threatened than Europe. Regarding the neighbouring countries and regions which can affect the EU's terror threat, i.e., Turkey, Russia, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and the non-EU member states in the Western Balkans, except for Turkey, religiously inspired terrorism posed the greatest challenge in all of these countries in the past decade, although other radical movements have also been presented in the abovementioned countries, for instance, the ultranationalism in Russia and in the Western Balkans. Today Islamist rebels possess large coherent territories only in Libya sunk into chaos of the civil war. Al Qaeda and Islamic State have been aiming to gain greater influence in the observed countries, however, regarding these countries currently only the North African terrorist and rebel groups are able to pose direct threat to the European Union. Returning fighters embody potential threat to security in all of the countries, at the same time, according to the available public information, fighters that returned to Turkey, Russia as well as the non-EU member Western Balkan states have not had the capability to carry out terrorist attack on targets in the EU yet.

New scientific results

I consider the following statements as new scientific results of my research:

1. Through data analysis I proved detailed that a discrepancy can be discovered between the way the media and the European political discourse presents threats and actual threats disclosed by official politics. The above-mentioned discrepancy could have

serious effect to the counterterrorism policy of the European Union and its member states.

2. I proved with data and analyses that mainly the strategic terrorist attacks have determined the European societies' perception of terrorism. As a result, EU citizens consider religiously inspired terrorism as the most threatening type of terrorism, while the various other sorts of terrorism are considered "symbolic terrorism". This discrepancy is problematic as making the combat against terrorism difficult.
3. Regarding the period between October 2005 and December 2015, with the help of TE-SAT reports I gave differentiated picture about the terror threat of the European Union and its member states.

Recommendations of the thesis

Based on the research the following recommendations could be drawn up:

1. There is a need to elaborate an examination method that gives a reliable and sufficiently differentiated picture to society about terror threat.
2. There is a need of a method or a tool (e.g. a map) within both political communication and mass communication which shows the above-mentioned picture.
3. It is worth examining how a joint (pan-European) pilot-type counterterrorism center could be created in the less threatened countries. Experiences of this model could contribute to the reinforcement of the joint counterterrorism capacity.

Possible use of research results in practise

After having revised, the dissertation could be used in university education as lecture notes.

Familiarizing with the media and the public opinion, dissertation could be used as a tool to shape the terror threat perception of the media and the political discourse, hence our image on terrorism could be made more realistic.

I intend to publish my thesis in book form.

The thesis could be used in the terrorism research field in Hungary.

List of the publications of the author in the topic

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Professional-scientific curriculum vitae

KRISZTIÁN BÉLA RÉPÁSI

Personal Data

Place of birth: Budapest
Date of birth: 8th May 1980
Address: 115, Visegrádi utca, Budapest, 1133 Hungary
E-mail address: repasikrisz@gmail.com
Cell phone number: +3620-367-7723

Studies

2010- National University of Public Service
PhD studies (correspondence course)

2000-2007 University of Debrecen
MA in Italian Language and Literature
MA in Political Science
Specialization: European Studies

1999-2000 Studio Italia, Budapest
Travel guide course

1995-1999 Dózsa György Grammar School, Budapest

Professional Experience

2009-2014 Foundation for Afghanistan
assistant
- acquisition of official documents for tenders
- researching
- participation as fellow author in articles, studies

2008-2011 Centre for Fair Political Analysis
political analyst
- writing political analysis
- comparison of domestic policies with other countries' policies

2009 Generáció 2020 Society
collaborator, contributor
- writing studies in connection with terrorism

2009 European House
assistant
- writing resumes of workshops, conferences
- searching for tender opportunities

2007-2008

Center for Security and Defense Studies Foundation

project assistant

- writing the summary of lectures
- performing of personal assistant duties in the writing of tenders

trainee

- acquisition of official documents for tenders

Languages

English: state accredited language examination: general advanced level (C1) oral and written

Italian: state accredited language examination: general intermediate level (B2) oral and written