

CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE US REACTION TO TERRORIST ATTACKS ON 09/11

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Abstract

The paper brings the look at the US reaction to 9/11th by the representatives of Critical Terrorism Studies. The main objective is to provide a critical point of view to the „war on terrorism” which should result in the consideration of the adequacy of the response to the attacks. In spite of some positive effects of war on terrorism, simple comparison of the number of causalities, or Al Qaeda costs of the attacks, or costs of security measures speak against it. In addition to that we do not mention the impacts related to the occurrence of new terrorist attacks, failed states and their nuclear program, civil security, civil and human rights and Muslim community. According to Critical Terrorism Studies’ authors, the US reaction was inefficient, inadequate and illegitimate. They stress its destructive impact and toy with the idea whether, in a specific case, there is a possibility to consider counterterrorism measures as the demonstration of state terrorism.

Key words

Critical Terrorism Studies, War on Terrorism, Overreaction, Counterterrorism.

INTRODUCTION

The reaction of the West, especially of the US to the attacks of 11th September 2001 is called „war on terrorism“. However, according to Derrida, already in the moment when George Bush just after the attacks talked about war, he was not able to identify the enemy on whom he had just declared it¹. Richardson² gives reasons for this fact. It is not possible to wage war against „combat tactics“ and similarly also Habermas answers the question by Giovanna Borradori whether terrorist attacks on World Trade Center were appropriate to interpret as declaration of war:

„Even if the concept „war“ is less misleading and not so morally disputable as „crusades“, I consider Bush decision to call for „war on terrorism“ as a serious mistake both normatively and pragmatically. From normative viewpoint nobody can wage war against „a net“, as long as the concept „war“ is to preserve its meaning“³.

Howard⁴ and Goodin⁵ are of the same opinion. They consider the denomination of the reaction to terrorism the war as the implicit legitimacy of terrorist attacks. Goodin conveys this idea into an extreme when he argues that as long as the attacks of 11th September are considered to be the act of war, i.e. attack on economic and military targets, the people who perished during them could be considered the war victims.

The objective of this essay is to offer an alternative look at and food for thoughts on the impacts of „war on terrorism“. The essay is theoretically anchored in Critical Terrorism Studies. The representatives of this dynamically developing approach describe two principal processes with which they limit themselves regarding traditional theories. The first one is the process of deepening the examination of terrorism. Critical authors include in this examination the caution that it is always necessary to take into consideration the fact that a theory comes from some thinking – e.g. specific assumptions, values which are not universal, but they are formed by a specific context – they always serve somebody and some purpose. In comparison

with traditional approaches they emphasize human security before national security. The other process called broadening the examination of terrorism encompasses topics such as violence perpetrated by state, antiterrorist measures and other forms of violence. They mention the importance of the study of terrorism in relation to the context in which it takes place and prefer the interdisciplinary approach.⁶

Providing that we want to assess any political decision and its consequences, it is always indispensable to realize its subjective demand. As the title of this paper says, we will deal, first of all, with the criticism of the reaction to terrorist attacks from the viewpoint of Critical Terrorism Studies. However, we deem appropriate to mention also the success which the “war on terrorism” brought. We can mention the arrest of hundreds of people suspected of terrorism which managed due to new legislation measures (see below) and several condemnations of those who were caught just before the commitment of a terrorist act or after it. From the viewpoint of the US administration the “war on terrorism” worked as prevention against other extensive terroristic attacks in the USA. Further, military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq resulted in the overthrow of brutal political regimes where the so called „future terrorists“ were trained and a substantial part of so called „heads“ of Al Qaeda was arrested or killed. And the last success, according to my opinion quite disputable, the construction of global war against terrorism developed a close cooperation of international community in the implementation of anti-terrorist measures which might have a positive effect regarding the deepening of relationships between individual states and greater willingness to address also other worldwide problems.

In order to evaluate the above mentioned successes, it is necessary to contextualize financial, human, social and political costs, our values and their desirability.⁷ In this respect, critical authors generally talk about “war on terrorism” as a problematic war both from normative and pragmatic viewpoint⁸. “War on terrorism” is considered as the ineffective response to terrorist attacks of 11th September, furthermore as inadequate against the threat that terrorism represents for us and also illegitimate regarding applied tools and their results. Let us have a look at their arguments more closely.

COSTS VERSUS (NOT) SAVED LIVES

Terrorist attacks of 11th September cost Al Qaeda about a half million dollars and caused death to almost three thousand people⁹. What are the costs of “war on terrorism” for the US?

Till 2011, the amount of money climbed to 444 billion dollars on the war in Afghanistan and 806 billion dollars on military operations in Iraq.¹⁰ The death toll among coalition forces has reached the number 1 974 in Afghanistan during the period from October 2001 to July 2010, and 4730 in Iraq within even shorter period of time - from March 2003 to July 2010.¹¹ The comparison is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
The survey of death tolls and costs of 11th September attacks and “war on terrorism”

Survey of death tolls	
2 975	Death tolls after 11 th September attacks
4 730	Coalition soldiers killed in Iraq from March 2003 to July 2010
1 457	The estimate of private soldiers killed in Iraq
1 947	Coalition soldier killed in Afghanistan from October 2001 to July 2010
125 583 – 140 219	The estimate number of civil casualties in Iraq according to Iraq Body Count
654 965	The estimate number of civil casualties in Iraq to July 2006 ¹²
Survey of costs	
\$500 000	Estimate costs of Al Qaeda of terrorist attacks on 11 th September
\$50 billion	Estimate amount of damage caused by terrorist attacks on 11 th September
\$1 250 billion	US Administration Costs of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq 2001-2011
\$50 billion	Estimate of annual costs of homeland security in the USA

Source: Belasco (2011)¹³, Jackson (2011)¹⁴, Stewart, Mueller (2008)¹⁵, Iraq Body Count¹⁶.

The spending on warfare are not the only costs which the US Administration has spent on war against terrorism. In a fiscal year of 2001¹⁷ the budget to ensure homeland security¹⁸ was 20.1 billion dollars and 4 years later it was even 54.3 billion dollars. The budget increase to ensure homeland security during several years has been striking. For this reason Stewart and Mueller¹⁹ carried out the analysis of the effectiveness of spent financial resources.

Our main fear of terrorism is that we might become its victims i.e. the measure of effectiveness of spent resources should be the number of saved lives in the USA. The authors in the study compare the budget increase with the number of saved lives. They specify several ways of its calculation of which they select three “representative” results. These results, after the confrontation with costs are compared with statistical value of life which is according to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the USA 1- 10 million dollars. In Table 2 we demonstrate one of the methods based on publicly announced attempts to commit a terrorist attack but they were prevented. It is estimated there, how many people might have perished due to terrorist attacks consequences.

Table 2
Attempts at initiating terrorist attacks which were allegedly prevented by the US measures and the estimates of saved lives

Date	Description	Estimate of saved lives	Commentary
December 2001	Richard Reid as a suicidal bomber with a bomb in a boot tried to blow up the plane of American Airlines from Paris to Miami	200	The catastrophe was prevented by the crew and passengers, not by security services
May 2003	Iyyman Faris convicted of planning of the destruction of Brooklyn Bridge	100	Comparison: Collapse of a bridge in Minneapolis in 2007 caused death to 13 people
August 2004	Two men convicted of planning of an attack on NY Stock Exchange and other financial institutions in New York	200	Comparison: incident of 1995 in Oklahoma caused death to 187 people, attack on World Trade Center in 1993 – 6 people
August 2004	Two men convicted of planning and blowing up the subway station in New York	100	Comparison: 39 casualties after the attack on London underground
August 2005	Four men convicted of planning an attack on targets in military area near Los Angeles	100	High level of security in the area of military bases
June 2006	Seven men convicted of planning to blow up „Sears Tower“	200	Comparison: The incident of 1995 in Oklahoma resulted in 187 casualties, the attack on World Trade Center in 1993 – 6 people
July 2006	A man arrested because of planning to blow up „New York City train Tunnels“ and cause flood in financial district in New York	100	Comparison: In London 2005 the attack on the underground – 39 casualties. It is not probable that the floods would cause enormous losses of lives
May 2007	Six men convicted of planning to shoot American soldiers on Fort Dix	100	High level of security around military bases
July 2007	Four men planned to destroy international airport JFK by blowing up fuel lines	500	High number of losses of lives is improbable due to the flammability of fuel rather than the possibility of explosion
Total		1500	

Source: STEWART, M., G., MUELLER, J. (2008). Assessing The Costs And Benefits Of United States Homeland Security Spending. New South Wales: The University of Newcastle, p. 12.

The authors come to the conclusion that the value of one saved life thanks to security measures which have been implemented after the attacks of 11th September varies from 64.2 to 617.3 million dollars which exceeds many times the “effective level” from 1 to 10 million dollars.

Among others, the authors also specify that applied security measures do not have to have only a positive effect. For example due to long checks at airports some people start going more by car which resulted in the increase of death tolls on roads in average by 516 per year.²⁰

The above specified data prove that in comparison with the damage caused by the attacks themselves, the total material and human losses caused by “war on terrorism” have been much more devastating than the direct impact of terrorist attacks.

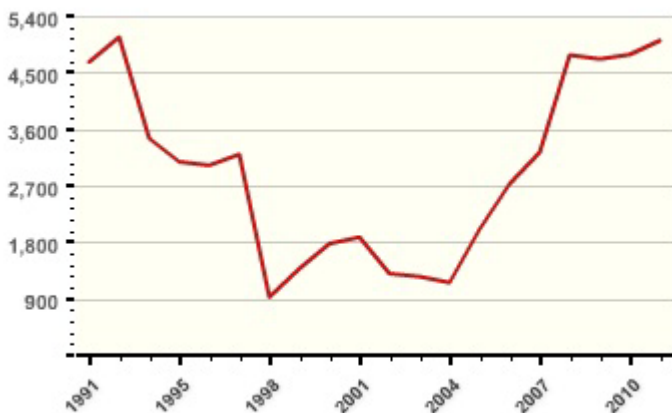
OCCURRENCE OF TERRORIST ATTACKS

Waging “war on terrorism” and first of all two military operations were to prevent the occurrence and further spread of terrorism worldwide. However, the achievement of this goal has catastrophically failed.

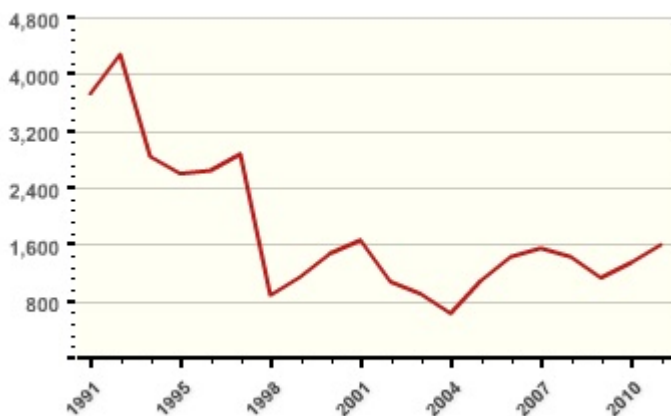
The US Department of State report of 2009²¹ quotes almost 12 thousand attacks worldwide in 2008, in 2006 and 2007 there were even 14.5 thousand attacks in each of these years which are quite high numbers. Moreover in 2006 and 2007, a half of all attacks were committed in two war zones – in Afghanistan and Iraq. The data presented by the Department of State come from the database “Worldwide Incidents Tracking System”.²² However, this website was not available when this essay was written, therefore these important numbers were obtained from the database “Global Terrorism Database”.²³ Each of these databases probably use different criteria for the assessment of terrorist acts since the absolute numbers of the quantity of incidents differ. For this reason we will focus on the monitoring of trends of the progression of terrorist attacks ten years before and after the attack of 11th September. This is illustrated in graphs No. 1 – 4.²⁴

Graph No. 1 shows the progression of the number of terrorist attacks from the years 1991 – 2011 worldwide. Before 2001 there is an obvious decrease of the occurrence of attacks; however, especially after starting the war in Iraq, the number of terrorist attacks substantially increases. If we take away the incidents from the graph which took place in Iraq and Afghanistan which is demonstrated in the graph No. 2, we can see the progression of attacks in the world without these war zones. This graph does not prove at all that the “war on terrorism” substantially decreased the number of terrorist attacks worldwide.

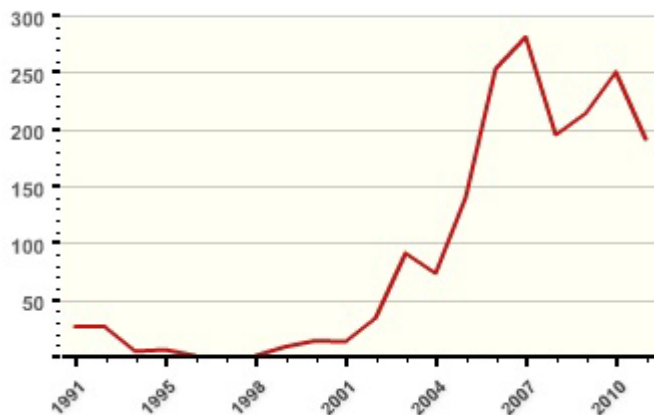
Graphs No. 3 and 4 demonstrate the number of attacks in Afghanistan and Iraq in the same interval. It is evident that the steep rise of the occurrence of terrorist attacks in both countries started after the initiation of military operations.



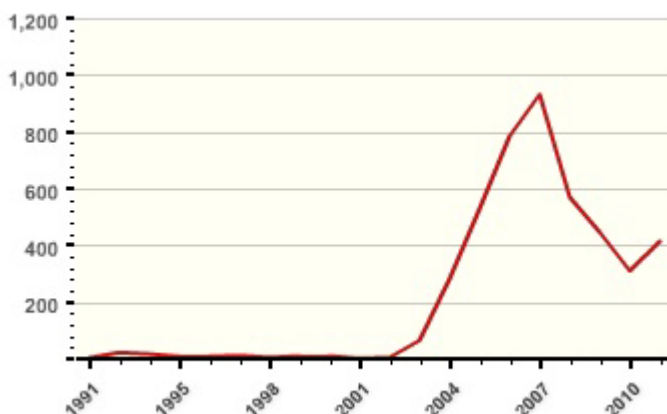
Graph 1
Progression of terrorist attacks worldwide in 1991–2011



Graph 2
Progression of terrorist attacks in the world except Afghanistan and Iraq in 1991–2011



Graph 3
Progression of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan in 1991–2011



Graph 4
Progression of terrorist attacks in Iraq in 1991–2011

Summarizing facts, “war on terrorism” did not result in the elimination of terrorism. On the contrary, by the initiating of the „war on terrorism, the phenomenon of terrorism has grown up.

„ROGUE STATES“ AND THEIR NUCLEAR PROGRAM

One of the strong arguments often mentioned in the speeches of high-ranking politicians who agreed to wage “war on terrorism” was to prevent the terrorists from using nuclear weapons, inter alia, with the assistance of so called “rogue states”.²⁵

It is necessary to say that the experts in this respect concur that a nuclear attack committed by terrorists is improbable.²⁶ The reasons for this conclusion are the following. The first one is the fact that to obtain, locate and detonate these weapons are not as feasible as it might seem at first glance. They require a high level of professional and technological knowledge and also provision of materials which are indispensable for their production, often beyond the capabilities of terrorist groups. Furthermore they are quite unstable and therefore they represent risk not only for their target, but also for those who manipulate with them. Moreover with regard to risks, their impact did not have to be as effective as a similar attack committed by conventional weapons²⁷.

Another reason is a high risk of a devastating reaction of an affected state. The terrorists are aware of risking total destruction in case of using weapons of mass destruction. This might have resulted in the loss of support on which terrorist organizations are dependent²⁸. Subsequently, as many researches prove, the terrorists are often rational and very carefully calculate the consequences caused by their actions²⁹.

The United States in 1999 appointed Gilmore Commission to assess the threat of terrorism. The Commission came up to the conclusion that it is very improbable that so called rogue states would provide the terrorists with the weapons of mass destruction since the risk of the loss of control over a specific situation is very high³⁰. Moreover according to Jenkins³¹ the possibility to turn nuclear or other weapons on themselves is a sufficient reason for not giving these weapons to terrorist hands.

It is possible to say that before waging “war on terrorism”, a real threat related to the usage of nuclear weapons by terrorists in connection with “rogue states” was minimal. Despite this fact it was one of the main arguments of military operations in Iraq. United States had the idea that they would stop Iraq in the development of nuclear weapons and that it would be the lessons for other states which would try something similar. However, at the end, no evidence of the development of nuclear weapons in Iraq was found and this reality had a rather opposite effect for states such as North Korea. Despite warnings, North Korea continues in its nuclear program and, inter alia, also in order not to end up like Hussein.

HUMAN SECURITY

“War on terrorism” in general, resulted in great human suffering, first of all in Afghanistan and Iraq. In spite of assurances of the sophisticated waging of wars and absolute minimization of collateral damage (let’s admit that this concept itself smacks of euphemism), civilian casualties reached enormous dimension in both mentioned countries. The overthrow of brutal regimes in mentioned countries probably saved many human lives; nevertheless the number of the dead many times exceeded the number of people who perished during the attacks of 11th September. According to the organization “Iraq Body Count” in June 2014, the estimated number of “post invasion” civilian casualties amounted from 125,583 to 140,219.³² The study which was carried out in 2006 and published in medical journal “The Lancet” estimated the number of war casualties and with it connected violence even to 654,965.³³

However, these casualties are not the only war consequences. First of all, the escalation of a conflict in Iraq resulted in a million of refugees.³⁴ Moreover, the existing regime fell down which resulted in the disruption national infrastructure and the collapse of local security forces and obviously, the level of public safety got worse.

Nevertheless, there is the effort through the ISAF mission to recover and reconstruct the consequences of conflicts and repossession of the administration by local authorities in order to ensure security.

EROSION OF CIVILIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS

“War on terrorism” caused among others the erosion of civil liberties and human rights. The greatest attention was paid to the issues related to the level of security at the expense of freedom and torture of terrorism suspects.

The culture of fear developed the people’s intolerance, enhanced suspiciousness against foreigners and enabled adoption and implementation of legal procedures undermining cornerstones of justice. Terrorist attacks of 11th September induced a chain reaction in production of so called antiterrorist acts worldwide (see table no. 3).

Security measures were implemented not only at the airports but also at the entrances to many public buildings. The promise of security means for people to be at the spotlight of state apparatus. Even Zbigniew Brzezinski himself expressed negatively about this fact when he mentioned his own experience regarding the visit of Washington Newspaper Publishing. At the entrance of a building was an “uninformed” guard who asked for his identity and filling out a form with the purpose of his visit. Do you think the “visitor – terrorist” would fill out the purpose of his visit „blowing up the building? And would the guard be capable to arrest this “terrorist” at all? And in order to be this situation even more absurd, why in the buildings such as shopping malls where there are a large number of people and might be a good target of terrorist attacks these checks are not carried out? According to Brzezinsky these procedures became a routine, they cost incredible sums of money and moreover they contribute to “mentality of siege”³⁵.

*Table 3
Selected legislation documents regulating fight against terrorism worldwide after
11th September 2001*

State	Year	Document
Australia	2004	Anti-Terrorism Act 2004
Canada	2001	Anti-Terrorism Act 2001
India	2001	Prevention of Terrorism Act 2002
Ireland	2005	Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 20025
Jamaica	2005	Jamaica Terorism Prevention Act 2005
The Netherlands	2004	Crimes of Terrorism Act 2004
New Zealand	2002	Terrorism Suppression Act 2002
South Africa	2004	Protection of Constitutional Democracy Against Terrorist and Related Activities Act 2004
Tanzania	2002	Prevention of Terrorism Act 2002
Great Britain	2001, 2005, 2006	Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, The Terrorism Act 2006
The USA	2001	Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 (USA Patriot Act)

Source: JACKSON, R., JARVIS, L., GUNNING, J. and SMYTH, M., B. (2011). Terrorism: A Critical Introduction. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 230.

Are these steps indispensable? Is it necessary to give up civilian freedoms in favor of a higher rate of security? Critical authors claim that this dichotomy is incorrect for several reasons. Firstly, democracies are not originators of terrorism. Terrorism has been progressing in conditions of repression and often has been fighting for the democracy and respect for human rights.³⁶

Secondly, there is no evidence that the repression of civilian rights and freedoms resulted in the improvement of security situation or a significant elimination of the risk of terrorist attacks. On the contrary, there are examples when the suppression of freedoms resulted in the outrage of civilians and provision of the support to terrorist groups.³⁷ Moreover current modern societies are so “vulnerable” that it is not possible to forestall or prevent completely from all attempts to commit violence by any restrictions.

Thirdly, as it was said several times, anti-terrorist measures are easy to manipulate and may serve political elites to achieve their goals. Restriction of civilian freedoms in the name of the protection against terrorism may be just the camouflage to strengthen execution power, reduce the opposition, greater control of immigrants and providing more power to security forces. There is no exception that even if the measures were adopted for a standby, they are advantageous for the politicians and therefore it is not necessary to repeal them and they become normal in everyday life. The belief that it is possible to “protect” liberal democracy by denying liberal rights and forms of governance appears to be a very dangerous illusion.³⁸

“War on terrorism” had, not only, a negative impact on civilian freedoms, it also resulted in abusing human rights, most clearly in the form of torture of people “suspected” of terrorism. There are hundreds of stories of people who were arrested and tortured in connection with terrorism. Some of the well known examples are e.g. Maher Arar, Canadian citizen of Syrian origin, general Abed Hamed Mowhoushi or a British citizen Martin Mubangy.³⁹ In 2004 brutal treatment of prisoners in prison Abu Ghraib in Iraq and then also in Guantanamo came out. This also includes the establishment of “death squads” or special units “Task Force 373” in Afghanistan which was supposed to detain or kill Taliban members.⁴⁰

The reality, such as a relatively reserved approach of the public and moreover opening the question of legalization of the torture as a tool of the fight against terrorism by the lawyer Alan Dershowitz already in 2002 according to Jackson⁴¹ gives evidence of the establishment of culture promoting torture. How could we come up to this stage? We can look for the answers in the inadequacy of a terrorism threat, in speeches and regulations of politicians and also in so called presentation of a „scenario of ticking bomb“. In a Military Order of November 2001, George W. Bush claims that the detained in the war on terrorism are not entitled to protection guaranteed by Geneva Conventions and they are supposed to be inspected by special military commissions because: *„after considering the extent of potential deaths, wounded and material damage as a result of potential terrorist attacks I appoint the existence of emergency standby for purposes of national defense“*⁴².

A bit later, just in connection with the treatment of prisoners, high ranking officials argued that interrogations of people suspected of terrorism in the manner which exceeded the manner of approaching to war prisoners who are protected by Geneva Conventions, will be possible, because a detained person might have information which could help the US prevent from the attacks so dramatic as those on 11th September.⁴³ Therefore any damage caused to a person during interrogation is quite insignificant in comparison with the damage which might be prevented and which might result in the loss of hundreds or thousands of lives.⁴⁴

As already mentioned above, in 2002 Allan Dershowitz came with the idea of legalization of the torture in connection with so called “ticking bomb scenario” which is about terrorists who refuse to reveal where they placed a bomb which is to blow up in a very short time and cause death to a large number of innocent people and just torturing might help get important information quite fast, see e.g. series “24hours”. However, this scenario is very far

from the reality since in order to be the case where torturing might be carried out, it is indispensable to be sure that we arrested the right person, this person has the right information which will prevent the catastrophe and that the accomplices did not change the plan otherwise we cannot rely on the information obtained by torturing.⁴⁵ Moreover, despite torturing of tens of thousands of suspects during several decades in many countries, there is no clear evidence of a real case of a „ticking bomb scenario“, the case in which the torturing of a terrorist resulted in the prevention of an explosion.⁴⁶ Provided facts clearly demonstrate how discursive construction of a terrorist threat anchors the justification and normalization of institutional abuse of human rights.

Finally we may say, provided that torturing was legalized as required by Dershowitz, it would result in a moral practice which is incompatible with democratic norms, such as e.g. training of interrogators and doctors in torturing practices, medical securing of torturing seance, the research and development of „illegal“ techniques of torturing and the production of indispensable tools and aids.⁴⁷ Furthermore, even if the torturing was limited to specific cases, under precisely specified conditions, sociologic and historical practice shows that exceptions of prohibition of torturing have always resulted in its spreading also „outside“ exclusive cases and effected badly societal morale and respect for human rights in general.⁴⁸

MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Elementary impact of the “war on terrorism” was the generation of a construction of Islam and Muslims as “those others”, dangerous, devilish, those who represent an enormous threat to our civilization, our values. Terrorism and terrorists became a parallel or almost a synonym to Islam and Muslims. According to Jackson⁴⁹ – even if political representatives often separated „this campaign“ from any connection with a specific religion, Muslims all over the world were exposed to violence, stereotype behavior, suspicion just only due to a construction of a Muslim – a terrorist. After the attacks of 11th September, in the United States, about 80 thousand of Arabs and Muslims were interrogated, they were registered with fingerprints and about 5 thousand of them were interrogated.⁵⁰

Not only politicians with their speeches and utterances caused the generation of paranoia in a society, perception of Muslims as fanatic terrorists who do not want anything else than to destroy western civilization. Mass media and show-business participate in this perception by making series and films in which “the bad” are Arabs or are connected with their religion, which obviously support Islamophobia across societies. Also the cartoons in press, picturing stereotypes of Islamic culture similarly contributes to this phenomenon. Brzezinski⁵¹ with sadness compare it to Nazi campaign against Jews. Arabs and Muslims became “new suspected community”.

The atmosphere induced by “war on terrorism” also caused improper behavior of politicians towards Arabic Americans, members of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) regarding their attempts to compete with American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Some Republicans called the members of CAIR the “defenders of terrorists” who are not supposed to use the boardroom in Capitol.⁵²

Discrimination in society, e.g. against Muslim passengers on airplanes was, among others, an unwanted “side product”. Muslim grievances against the USA even among those, indirectly connected with the Middle East issues have become more intensive, whilst the reputation of the USA as a leader of making relations with people of various races and religions has been seriously ruined.

Besides the above mentioned negative impacts, the “war on terrorism” basically affected the functioning of the international system namely in several areas. Firstly, security and stability in some regions such as the Middle East, Caucasus, Horn of Africa and some Asian areas were disturbed. Secondly, within the frame of international community, the disagreements first of all due to the US diplomacy in relation to Iraq appeared. The NATO experienced the biggest schism in their history. Regarding the UN, on one hand it meant the war in Iraq without the Security Council Resolution, i.e. circumventing the “authority” of the UN by the US and on the other hand, specific discrediting regarding protection of human rights, as just “war on terrorism” induced in people the willingness not to respect these rights. Thirdly, a significant growth of anti Americanism appeared, both in the world generally, and in Europe as well (see Table no. 4).

Table 4
Opinion of Europeans on the role of the USA in relation to some security questions

	Positive (%)	Negative (%)	Neither positive, nor negative (%)
Peace in the world	23	55	18
Environmental protection	18	60	15
War on terrorism	37	43	16
Growth of world economy	38	33	20
Fighting poverty	21	50	22

Source: Eurobarometer 66, 2007, p. 174.

Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_en.pdf

Moreover, „war on terrorism“ caused high costs of sacrificed opportunity, because by its high costs and demands on resources, certain areas related to human security were omitted e.g. poverty, famine, diseases or environmental issues represent a much bigger threat for the mankind than the phenomenon of terrorism.

It is possible to say that “costs of war on terrorism” expressively exceeded its positive effects. Regarding a normative aspect, it globally caused huge human suffering and therefore we cannot consider it as an adequate and legitimate response to the attacks of 11th September. In reality, in this war, the USA did not succeed and did not achieve their main goals, such as stopping spreading terrorism or deter „rogue states“ in the development of a nuclear program. Moreover, with regard to the fact how much inadequate and brutal the reaction was, Goodin⁵³ points out to exceeding the boundary in terms of the consideration of „war on terrorism“ as a form of state terrorism.

ATTEMPT TO JUSTIFY THE US REACTION

Based on the above mentioned findings, the question arises, why the Bush Administration reacted the way as it did.

The main reason for the declaration of “war on terrorism” has been the psychological impact of terrorist attacks of 11th September on American public and political elites. This traumatic experience disrupted the US conviction on their hegemony, invulnerability and

feeling of their exceptionality. It was necessary to react rapidly and sufficiently forcefully. There „was no time to think why this had happened and whether it was possible to respond in another, “more rational” way. According to Galtung⁵⁴, in this particular case, the US would have to renounce part of their identity which is connected right with the position of a world hegemon that is invulnerable and also their offensive military doctrine which would, in psychological terminology disrupt cognitive harmony in the perception of themselves and would cost the US enormous “psychical costs”. Nevertheless, at a given moment the Bush Administration was so overtaken by ongoing events that their “brain” was obscured, flooded by negative emotions and by the desire for revenge.

National Security Strategy of 2002 also played a big role in this situation, specifically its four pillars, nicknamed Bush Doctrine. It includes the waging of preventive wars, unilateralism, idealism and maintaining American hegemony.⁵⁵

“War on terrorism” was supposed to be the way of the consolidation of the USA position and the tool for the accomplishment of their interests.⁵⁶ An important aspect was also the neo-conservative political arrangement with Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and Colin Powell which gained an advantage after the events of 11th September and asked for more aggressive foreign policy of the US.

The reaction of the USA was influenced also by the idea of their exceptionality, the necessity to spread values and develop the authority in a global scale. Finally, from the historical point of view, there is the tendency to rely primarily on military force.⁵⁷

Despite the fact that specified reasons are not comprehensive, they can provide us with the explanation why the „war on terrorism“ penetrated so deeply into all corners of American society and became a dominant paradigm in the USA policy.

HOW TO APPROACH THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM FROM THE ASPECT OF CRITICAL THEORY?

To the conclusion, let us have a look briefly at the opinions of both critical and some orthodox authors on the assessment of the approach to the fight against terrorism.

Firstly, they question the view of terrorism as an existential threat to western civilization requiring an enormous activity to fight and control it. They refuse terrorism as a state of emergency where it is possible to cross the borders in respecting human rights. They argue that terrorist acts committed by non-state actors represent a minimal risk both for an individual and national security in comparison with other threats. For this reason it is not necessary to spend enormous resources on anti-terrorist measures which can be used much more effectively somewhere else. Furthermore there is the risk that all measures implemented due to actual state of “emergency” they will become a normal part of our lives. The experience from recent years has shown that it is probably better to do nothing new and treat the terrorism the same way as criminal actions and avoid, this way, collateral damage.⁵⁸ Also focusing more on state terrorism which, according to critical authors, represents much bigger threat.⁵⁹

Another important question in this respect, generally, is the use of military force and the generation of violence as a tool of policy.⁶⁰ In this connection, Galtung⁶¹ talks about a “cycle of violence” when the violence induces another wave of violence and points out to the fact whether the attacks of 11th September were not the result of the escalation in that cycle of violence. This means that forcible response is rather contra-productive and instead of solving the conflict it induces other forcible activity and the West should consider, when reacting to its opponents with the effort to destroy them, whether by its behavior does not provoke them.

Subsequently, critical approaches emphasize so called human security more than national security which specifically means e.g. avoiding the choice between respecting human

rights and ensuring security for the reason of “constructed exceptionality” of the threat of terrorism. This also results in the criteria of the assessment of the effectiveness and impacts of anti-terrorist measures on human rights, civilian freedoms, population well-being or social cohesion in the society.⁶²

The last remark of critical authors worth mentioning is to point out to the practice which should be avoided. This practice means that the anti-terrorist measures primarily serve to consolidate state power, multiply government bodies and last but not least serve the private actors to benefit from maintaining the presence of the threat of terrorism and inducing fear among the public.⁶³

CONCLUSION

The objective of this essay is to provide alternative view of the „war on terrorism“, considering its impacts – therefore the reality whether the reaction was not, in its result, much more destructive than terrorist attacks themselves. From the critical terrorism studies point of view, the response of the USA to 11th September attacks, regarding all mentioned negative impacts, was overreacted and suited the terrorists. Lessons learned from this situation are the following. When adopting any anti-terrorist measures it is necessary to consider their adequacy, effectiveness and legitimacy. It is indispensable to ask questions whether potential measures will not result in overreaction, whether the measures are able to reduce present threats, that they are not “more costly” than terrorist attacks themselves and whether they are not in discrepancy with basic values of the society and at the same time they do not question its moral principles. When keeping these assumptions, it should not happen that the fight against terrorism overgrew in the form of state terrorism.

NOTES:

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- ¹⁷ Fiscal year is always from the beginning of October (October 2000) to the end of September (September 2001) of the following year.
- ¹⁸ Office of Management and Budget – OMB with six main objectives: secret service and warning measures, security of borders and transport, homeland fight against terrorism, protection of key elements of infrastructure, defense against catastrophic threats and emergency preparedness and response (Stewart, Mueller 2008).
- ¹⁹ See STEWART, MUELLER, ref. 15.
- ²⁰ See STEWART, MUELLER, ref. 15.
- ²¹ Country Reports on Terrorism 2008, [online]. [cit. 2012/11/08]. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/122599.pdf>
- ²² Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, <http://wits.nctc.gov/>
- ²³ Global Terrorism Database, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>
- ²⁴ Graphs no. 1-4 are generated from the database “Global Terrorism Database”, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>
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