Sebastian Wojciechowski

Reasons of Contemporary Terrorism. An Analysis of Main Determinants

1. Introduction[1]

When analyzing the reasons for terrorism, a few key questions need to be asked. What makes terrorism escalate? Is it possible to identify one or several main sources of terrorism? Are certain reasons for terrorism characteristic (specific) of only a given historical period or region? Is there a single universal model (classification) of sources of terrorism, and what elements should it encompass?

The fundamental objective of this text is an attempt to answer the above questions, together with:

A. Discussing the reasons for terrorism as presented in the literature on the subject (through an analysis of selected examples).
B. Presenting a handful of classifications of the sources of terrorism (including one proposed by the author).
C. Presenting the hybridity of causes of terrorism which emphasizes the multiplicity and complexity of sources of terrorism and indicates the mutual relations between them. The key role is played by three main groups of determinants, namely ideological, socio-economic and psychological reasons, as well as their mutual interactions.

It should be stressed that the discussion that follows does not aspire to be an exhaustive analysis of the reasons behind terrorism, but it rather aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the subject in question. It also involves the presentation of a new concept and its components.

2. Causes of Terrorism

The reasons for terrorism are an example of the so-called system of communicating vessels. This means that they are a sum total of a plethora of different elements, their mutual relations and the conditions that influence them. Therefore, they are

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1 This article is the revised and updated version of the analysis included in the book: S. Wojciechowski, *The Hybridity of Terrorism. Understanding Contemporary Terrorism*: Logos Verlag, Berlin 2013.

a "system" coupled with other elements of terrorism (such as tactics, strategies, or the consequences of terrorist activities).

The literature on the subject reveals significant disparities when indicating the main reasons for terrorism. P. Wilkinson, for example, names the following generators of terrorism: ethnic, religious or ideological conflicts, poverty, negative aftermath of modernization, injustice, revolutionary sentiments among society, weak governments or an internal power struggle. He refers to an extensive range of determinants from various categories of political, social, economic, cultural, and psychological nature.[2] Similar factors are pointed out by H. Hall, who sees the sources of terrorism in the political, religious and ideological realms, or in response to violence.[3]

Another list has been compiled by C. Sterling, who indicates the following motives for terrorist activity:[4]

□ Initiative taken on one's own behalf or on behalf of a certain group;
□ A desire to attract attention to oneself or to draw the public's attention to certain issues;
□ Demonstration of an aversion to and disrespect for the existing legal order, the principles of social coexistence, or the principles of a given political or religious group;
□ Attempt to undermine the authorities and their political role;
□ Attempt to coerce government to behave in a certain way;
□ Revenge for a certain activity of government or its representatives;
□ Justification of the attack with a certain ideology.

In the opinion of M. Crenshaw, there are four key motives for terrorist activities:[5] the hope to change the *status quo*, the need to belong to a group, the attempt to improve social status, and the desire to obtain material reward.

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2   P. Wilkinson, *Political Terrorism*, Macmillan Press, London 1974.
3   H. Hall (ed.), *Terrorism: Strategies for Intervention*, The Haworth Press, Binghamton 2002, p. 2.
4   C. Sterling, *The Terror Network, The Secret War of International Terrorism*, Henry Holt & Co, New York 1981.
5   M. Crenshaw, *An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism*", "Orbis" no. 29, 1985, pp. 465–488.

3. Taxonomy of Reasons

Even on the basis of the several selected examples that are presented above, one can observe the considerable diversity of the sources of terrorism. This calls for some order to be introduced. In the opinion of certain specialists, it is difficult to develop a single, universal model of reasons for terrorism to encompass different forms and geographical regions. An example is provided by F. Gross, who identified a separate mechanism of terrorism emerging in democratic societies in contrast to the mechanism present in autocratic states. The former applies to the United States, among other countries, and focuses primarily on the terrorism generated by Muslim groups, including Al Qaeda. Among the factors that apply here, F. Gross mentions the pressure of US global domination, the "holy war" syndrome, or undermining of American supremacy. The latter model refers primarily to Eastern Europe, where the key form involves individual terrorism aimed at the representatives or promoters of the democratic system.[6]

In an attempt to classify the sources of terrorism, one can divide them into simple and complex ones. The former group characterizes only selected instances of terrorism, where a single, clearly defined motive predominates, for instance, the attacks executed by Ted Kaczynski, or the so-called anti-abortion terrorism. The latter group involves complex reasons, where various motives, e.g. religious, ethnic, political, overlap. This applies to a majority of cases of terrorism, as exemplified by Palestinian or Northern-Irish terrorism.

In the opinion of A. Cronin, all reasons for terrorism can be divided into four levels. The first one is the individual level. The main point of reference is provided by external factors that lead an individual to become involved in terrorist activities, and the personal traits making such involvement more or less likely. The second level is of organizational nature. It is related to a group dynamics and the issues of group identification. Shared ideology, belief systems, and the activities of a given group are of key significance. The third level is related to the activities of the state and the need to analyze the different ways in which states take advantage of terrorism. Finally, the fourth level is focused on the international system and

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6   F. Gross, *Violence in Politics: Terror and Political Assassination in Eastern Europe and Russia*, Mouton, Hague 1972, cit. after A. Schmid, A. Jongman, *Political Terrorism. A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature*, Transaction Publishers, Amsterdam-Oxford-New York 1988, p. 124.

refs to Samuel Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations, or the transformations that accompany globalization, secularization, etc.[7]

The experts from the National Research Council of the National Academies in Washington also emphasize that it is necessary to comprehensively analyze the reasons for terrorism, claiming that the separate analysis of individual reasons is erroneous.[8] They justify this both by their multiplicity and variety, as well as the complexity of the mutual relations between different reasons. In their opinion, two levels of reasons for terrorism can be distinguished. One concerns historical, social, political, and cultural conditions which facilitate the escalation of terrorism. The other refers to direct determinants, such as motivation, group, and ideological or organizational factors that culminate in terrorist activity.

Another division of motives for terrorist activity has been designed by J. Horgan, who identified three groups of factors:[9]

A. Injustice. The sense of injustice and harm is one of the strongest psychological conditions. This may concern an individual, group or a given situation, and so on, leading to various responses, including the use of violence. The significance of the "sense of injustice" is also stressed by J. Rossa, who distinguishes economic, ethnic, racial, legal, political, religious and social harms.[10]

B. Identity. The sense of identity is considered to be a significant element of human existence. In their search for identity, or as a consequence of an "underestimated" level of identity, some individuals begin to identify with radical groups, including terrorist groups, as exemplified by the numerous members of Al Qaeda, IRA, Hamas and many other, similar organizations.

C. Membership. The sense of membership is another significant element of human personality. R. Luckabaugh emphasizes it, observing that "the true reason

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7   A. Cronin, *Sources of Contemporary Terrorism in Attacking Terrorism*, in: *Elements of a Grand Strategy* A. Cronin, J. Ludes (eds.), Georgetown University Press, Washington 2004, pp. 19–43.

8   F. Mitchell (ed.) *Terrorism. Perspectives from the Behavioral and Social Science. Washington: Committee on Science and Technology for Countering Terrorism*, Center for Social and Economic Studies, National Research Council of the National Academies, 2002.

9   J. Horgan, *The Search for the Terrorist Personality,* in: *Terrorists, Victims and Society. Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and its Consequence* A. Silke (ed.), John Wiley & Sons, London 2003, pp. 3–26.
     J. Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, Routledge, London-New York 2005.

10   J. Rossa, *Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism*, "Journal of Peace Research" 1993, no. 30, p. 326.

to become terrorists is the need for membership of some group of people."[11] A terrorist organization can become the main, or sometimes the only community a potential terrorist can identify with.

However, A. Wejkszner divides the reasons for modern terrorism into the following categories.[12] One source is cultural. A broader analysis is founded on numerous concepts, including those developed by S. Huntington, E. Staub, F. Moghaddam, O. Roy. In this approach, terrorist organizations use violence as a consequence of isolation, finding violence an efficient means of social destabilization, a "war of cultures," or the so-called "cultural shock."[13] Another group of factors distinguished by A. Wejkszner involves politico-organizational determinants. On the one hand, they concern the issue of state sponsorship of terrorism, on the other, they concentrate around the issues that allow the preparation or execution of specified terrorist actions in the most efficient manner.[14] The third group of conditions that influences the escalation of terrorism involves socio-economic factors. The elements discussed here include globalization, neocolonialism, or consumerism. Another group of sources of terrorism concerns technology. Technical progress has an indisputable influence on the majority of social phenomena and processes in the modern world, including terrorism. What is meant here is mainly its influence on the strategy and tactics employed by terrorists as well as by the formations that combat them.

Can technical progress provide a direct stimulus for terrorism, though? If so, how is it done? J. Adamski, for example, explains this dependence in the following way: progress "stimulates the development of terrorism in its practical aspect,"[15] i.e. in terms of access to modern technology or advanced weapons. Thus it has a direct impact on the efficiency of terrorist activities and generates new kinds of terrorism, such as cyberterrorism. Other authors point to the unequal

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11　R. Luckabaugh, J. Cangemi, C. Kowalski, *Terrorist Behavior and US Foreign Policy. Who is the Enemy? Some Psychological and Political Perspectives*, "Psychology" no. 34, 2007, pp. 1–15.

12　A. Wejkszner, *Ewolucja terroryzmu motywowanego ideologią religijną na przykładzie salafickiego ruchu dżihadu,* Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Politycznych i Dziennikarstwa UAM, Poznań 2010, pp. 40–46.

13　O. Roy, *Terrorism and Deculturation*, in: *The Roots of Terrorism.* (Vol. 1 *Democracy and Terrorism*) L. Richardson (ed.), Routledge, New York –London 2006; S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Touchstone, New York 1997.

14　D. Byman, *Deadly Connections, State that Sponsor Terrorism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 40.

15　J. Adamski, *Nowe technologie w służbie terrorystów*, Wydawnictwo Trio, Warsaw 2007, p. 7.

opportunities concerning the use technological progress and the fact that this makes social divisions even more acute.

An extensive classification of the sources of terrorism has been proposed by R. Kosta, who divided them into four basic groups: socio-economic, historico-political, sociological, and psychological.[16] The first category is related to such phenomena as economic crises, social tensions, instances of ethnic or social discrimination, and the disparity between reality and what the media show. Terrorism may also result from economic backwardness, illiteracy, demographic growth, social disproportions, aggressive policies of large companies, as well as globalization or reduced social spending. The range of factors presented above is thus quite extensive and varied. The second group of sources of terrorism indicated by R. Kosta concerns historico-political conditions. Their origins can be found in the demands that human rights be respected, among many other factors. In the opinion of M. Brewer, the analysis of historico-political sources of the activities of such organizations as the Red Army Faction or the Tamil Tigers[17] should also be perceived in relation to postcolonial conflicts and respect for the rule of law.

Another category deals with sociological reasons. R. Kosta couples them with a so-called "atmosphere of violence." This atmosphere is particularly observable in some Muslim states (e.g. Algeria, Afghanistan), but also in Europe (Northern Ireland, former Yugoslavia) or South America (Columbia, Mexico, etc.). The fourth group embraces psychological sources. To a large extent they are a consequence of serious psychological imbalances in the perpetrators, including excessive self-esteem. This point of view is also shared by R. Robins and J. Post, when they emphasize that a charismatic leader with paranoid traits can frequently persuade people with similar views to share certain ideas.[18]

A slightly different method for classifying sources of terrorism is presented by the authors of *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism*,[19] who distinguish three basic kinds of sources of terrorism. The first concerns various ideas of a nationalist or fundamentalist nature. The second category results from the intention to execute or maintain certain social changes. This can be based on anarchist, left-wing or

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16 R. Kosta, *Terroryzm jako zagrożenie dla bezpieczeństwa cywilizacji zachodniej w XXI wieku*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2007, p. 23.

17 M. Brewer, *Kryteria typologii terroryzmu*, in: *Encyklopedia terroryzmu*, Wydawnictwo Bellona, Warsaw 2004, pp. 190–192.

18 R. Robins, J. Post, *Paranoja polityczna. Psychopatologia nienawiści*, Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 1999, pp. 185–186.

19 M. Crenshaw, J. Pimlott (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism,* Routledge, London-Chicago 1998, pp. 189–190.

right-wing approaches. The last category involves psychological determinants that characterize both terrorists and their victims.

T. Bjørg divides the reasons for terrorism into four groups:[20]

A. Structural reasons, which, in his view, include demographic imbalance, globalization, modernization, urbanization, migration and social changes, among other things.
B. The so-called "accelerators," which are not the primary reasons, but which nonetheless stimulate interests in terrorism or make it easier to use terrorist means (e.g. weakening of state structures, or easy access to weapons).
C. Motivational reasons, involving for example a sense of injustice that may motivate some individuals to take specific steps.
D. "Detonators" that provide the initial spark for terrorist activities both on an individual and group level (e.g. Bloody Sunday in Ireland in 1972).

Yet another method for categorizing the sources of terrorism is their division into six categories, devised by this author: A. Religious and cultural sources; B. Territorial and ethnic sources; C. Socio-economic conditions; D. Politico-historical reasons; E. Psychological sources of terrorism; F. Other selected reasons.

A. Religious and cultural sources. Various surveys and analyses show that over the years the role of religious factors that inspire terrorism is increasing. For example, in the 1980s only a small proportion of terrorist attacks in the world stemmed from religious motivations. At present, this proportion is globally high[21]. Its precise level depends *inter alia* on the geographical region; being high in the Middle East or in Asia and relatively low in, say, Latin America. Escalation of terrorism motivated by religious factors is a result of Al Qaeda and ISIS activities and other related organizations. A significant factor leading to the escalation of terrorism can be related not only to cultural differences (cf. Huntington's clash of civilizations theory)[22] but also to the fear that they may "disappear" and different cultures will become somewhat universal.

B. Territorial and ethnic sources. There are approximately 200 recognized states in the modern world, and around 3,500 large nations.[23] This means that

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20 T. Bjørg, *Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, Routledge, London-New York 2005.
21 RAND Corporation and St. Andrews University in Edinburgh, available at http://www.rand.org, accessed 2 February 2016.
22 S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*…op.cit.
23 E. Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*, Nations and nationalism (2nd ed.), Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2006.

only a few nations have their own states, which produces a series of different consequences. While a majority of nations have accepted the fact of being deprived of their own state, there are groups that use various measures (ranging from negotiation to terrorist activities) to change the situation and win or regain their statehood (e.g. some Basques, Kurds, Chechens, Palestinians, etc.). We are faced here with a classic conflict of interests that involves territory, ethnic identity, and other (e.g. political or ideological) factors. This is reflected in the activities of ISIS, Hamas, Hezbollah, IRA, ETA, and so on.

C. Socio-economic conditions. Experts disagree on the importance and influence of specific economic factors concerning terrorism. This can be well illustrated by the issue of poverty (destitution) as a trigger of terrorism, or the relations between terrorism and profound financial disparities present in a given territory. Another issue is that of financing of terrorism.[24]

D. Politico-historical reasons. Considering the various factors that generate terrorism, one needs to emphasize the importance of historical conditions. The memories of injustices suffered (whether real or imagined), disputes rooted in history, and a range of animosities can stimulate the emergence and escalation of radical attitudes, terrorism being one of them. Whether in the past or present, terrorism has frequently been connected with the policies of great powers, such as Ancient Rome (the terrorist acts of the Zealots or Sicarii), Russia (Narodnaya Volya), Turkey (Kurdish or Ormian radicals), Austria-Hungary (Serb nationalists), Great Britain (Irish nationalists), and so on. At present, this is illustrated by the attacks of Al Qaeda (aimed against US interests), Chechen terrorists (against the Russian Federation) or Urghuy terrorists (against China). Another significant historical factor that has profoundly influenced the escalation of terrorism has been the collapse of the communist system. It has brought about a rapid and radical change in international relations, but has also made it easier for various extremist organizations, including terrorist ones, to operate, which has stimulated increased activity.

E. Psychological sources of terrorism. The process of the emergence and formation of terrorism is to a large extent related to psychological factors, and it is strictly coupled with issues of hatred, prejudices, familiarity and alienation, intolerance, injustice, retaliation, trauma, and so on. We frequently deal with terrorism when a certain individual or group considers a given idea or approach to be ultimately the highest value that all other issues should be subordinated to, including one's own life and the life of a person's nearest and dearest. A range of

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24   C. Clarke, *Terrorism, INC. The Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Irregular Warfare*, Praeger Security International, Santa Barbara 2015.

psychopathic attitudes also plays an important role here, as is well exemplified by Anders Breivik[25] and numerous suicidal terrorists. J. Horgan presents it in the following way: "We can easily quote the arguments that support the theory of psychopathy as a likely feature of terrorist behavior. Terrorists intentionally get involved in a destructive activity resulting in suffering, death and other consequences, and they willingly assume responsibility for such activity."[26]

F. Other selected reasons. Apart from the above-presented sources of terrorism there is also a range of other factors that can contribute to the manifestation or escalation of terrorism. The following sources are among them:

– **Globalization and its consequences.** Some experts include globalization, and the processes that accompany it, among the factors that influence terrorism. In this case globalization can be seen as a threat to the interests, values or attitudes of individuals or groups. This is emphasized by M. Stevens,[27] who points to three main threats to local communities posed by globalization. One concerns the weakening of the position of the community, which follows from the economic burdens imposed on its citizens, or the introduction of social transformations that may bring about frustration or aggression, which finds its expression in terrorism, among other things. Another concerns the fact that globalization can threaten local societies, posing a threat to such elements as their local identity. The final threat pertains to a scenario where globalization-related processes, including the furtherance of individual rights, among other things, can stimulate conflicts on an inter-group or inter-cultural level.

– **Activities of leaders and elites.** Terrorism can be generated "downwards," as it were, when it is inspired by political, social or religious leaders. It may provide a means to overthrow authorities or win power, serve as a pretext to reject responsibility for problems, and so on. Thus it can serve the implementation of both immediate goals and long-term objectives. State authorities may constitute another factor generating terrorism. Their role can be quite varied. Primarily, they play a positive role, combating given manifestations of terrorism. However, a state can also be a negative factor, supporting or actually running terrorist activities itself. We can see an interesting relation here, where the potential of a

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25 E. Humphrys, G. Rundle, T. Tietze (eds.), *ON UTØYA: Anders Breivik, Right Terror, Racism and Europe*, Elguta Press, London 2011.

26 J. Horgan, *The Search for the Terrorist…*op.cit.

27 M. Stevens, *The Unanticipated Consequences of Globalization. Contextualizing Terrorism"* in: *The Psychology of Terrorism* (Vol III. *Theoretical Understandings, and Perspectives*) S. Stout (ed.), Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport 2002, p. 39.

state or its institutions can be used by terrorist organizations, but also where terrorist organizations can be a tool for state structures. This has been exemplified by Iraq, Iran, South Korea, Sudan, Syria or Libya, which have all collaborated with terrorist organizations at some stage. In his analysis of the different reasons for terrorism B. Hoffman emphasizes the desire for power. "Terrorism is present wherever politics and violence overlap in a hope to rule. Terrorism is always about striving for power: the power that is necessary to dominate and coerce, threaten and control, and eventually implement a radical political change."[28] Striving for power can have more than a political or religious dimension, and it can involve the psychological sense of being in power and the desire to dominate, and enjoy the splendor, and so on that accompanies power.

– **Migration processes.** Mass migration processes and all their negative consequences can constitute a significant source of terrorism, as well as result from it. Such a situation can be observed as a result of the migration crisis which tackles Europe. This is not only the case in Europe, though, as evidenced by the situation in the US, Canada, or Australia, and so on. The inflow of immigrants or the presence of huge immigrant communities is frequently taken advantage of by terrorist organizations seeking new recruits, logistic or financial support, and so on. On the other hand, immigrants and the institutions supporting them more and more frequently become the targets of attacks, which can be exemplified by the 2015 events occurring in many EU countries.

– **Domino/avalanche effect.** The domino (avalanche) effect is another determinant that generates terrorism. It consists in the fact that an escalation of terrorism in one state may be coupled with similar events in neighboring countries (to take the example of the narcoterrorist organizations in Latin America). One variation involves a mechanism in which terrorism within one nation is transferred to some members of the same nation living in other states (e.g. Basque, Chechen, Kurdish, Northern Irish extremists, etc.).

– **The role of the media.** Another issue that is frequently examined is the influence the media exert on terrorism, its forms, evolution, or reasons, and so on. The media are often recognized as an indirect determinant that influences the presence and escalation of terrorism in different ways and to various extents. This opinion is shared by some academics, politicians, and journalists. To some degree, W. Laqueur expressed this view saying that "terrorists need the media, and the media find all the components of an exciting story in terrorism."[29]

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28 B. Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Columbia University Press, London 1998, p. 174.

29 W. Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*, Little Brown, Boston 2007, pp. 16–18.

It can be observed on the basis of the above examples that academic descriptions refer to an extensive range of reasons for terrorism and their classification. A certain similarity of approaches can be noted among some, which offers a good starting point to develop a more comprehensive concept of the sources of modern terrorism.

4. Hybridity of Reasons

Hybridity of causes of terrorism is understood as the criss-crossing, complementing or combining of numerous different sources of terrorism, such as political, ethnic, religious and economic aspects, and so on. These processes occur to varying degrees and depend on geopolitical conditions, the type of terrorism, the period concerned, and so on. Therefore, hybridity considerably influences not only the nature or range of modern terrorism, but also how it can be understood or defeated.

The following assumptions can form the fundamental elements of the hybridity of causes of terrorism:

4.1. Not only do the multitude and diversity of reasons for terrorism need to be taken into account, but also the direct and indirect relations (interactions) that occur among them affecting the range, force or significance of their influence. In this understanding, the reasons for terrorism are treated as a part (a subsystem) of a terrorist system. The same factors frequently influence terrorism (to different degrees) over the long term and in many cases they are likely to occur also in the future, as is the case with ethnic or religious determinants.

More than once the sources of terrorism are characterized by the dynamics with which they occur. This concerns, among others: the strength of impact of a given source; the geographical territory where a given reason for terrorism occurs; the relations between individual sources of terrorism.

4.2. To investigate the issue of the reasons for terrorism in depth calls for a detailed analysis of the following components:

a – reasons for terrorism (e.g. x, y, z,…),
b – relations among the reasons for terrorism,
c – factors that are not directly linked to terrorism, but can influence its sources, e.g. economic situation, wars and conflicts, and so on.

However, a question arises of whether the above elements are sufficient to reach a comprehensive understanding of the sources of terrorism? Is an analysis presented in this manner possible in the first place? Perhaps, this model should be expanded to include one more element, "d" – the relations between these reasons and the other

elements of terrorism (e.g. types of terrorism, its manifestations, features, or consequences), which are related to the sources of terrorism to a greater or lesser extent.

4.3. The hybridity of causes of terrorism assumes the presence of four principal classifications of reasons for terrorism. They divide the sources of terrorism in terms of the following:

A. territorial range,
B. subjective reasons,
C. time of occurrence,
D. the evolution of the reasons.

A. The following reasons can be distinguished with respect to their **territorial range**:

a. **Local reasons for terrorism**. They occur only in a given location and are related to the local political or social situation (as is the case of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), the People Versus Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) organization, or the Tamil Tigers).
b. **Regional reasons for terrorism**. In this case the same factor, or a group of factors, results in the escalation of terrorism in several, separate geographical locations. The examples include Kurdish or Palestinian terrorism.
c. **Global reasons for terrorism**. These are the cases when the same reason, or a group of reasons, affects many different parts of the world, as is the case with Muslim fundamentalism.

The above division is not always clear-cut. There are sources of terrorism that are difficult to classify unanimously. For example, the terrorist activity of the "Unabomber" (T. Kaczynski) falls under the category "A" described above, but it can also be classified as a manifestation of radical alterglobalism.

*Figure 1: Division of reasons for terrorism due to their territorial range*

LR – local reasons for terrorism

RR – regional reasons for terrorism

GR – global reasons for terrorism

Source: Author's concept.

B. Another classification concerns the **subjective reasons for terrorism** and can be presented in the following manner.

Figure 2: Division of reasons for terrorism due to their type (selected examples)
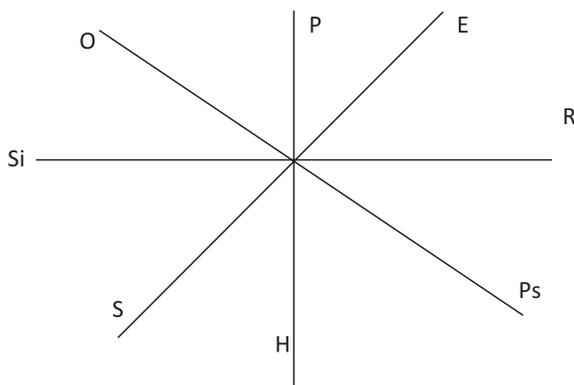
P – political reasons

E – economic reasons

R– religious reasons

Ps – psychological reasons

H – historical reasons

S – social reasons

Si –single-issue reasons

O – other reasons

Source: Author's concept.

C. The next classification divides the reasons for terrorism due to the **time of their occurrence** and includes the following:

a. Timeless reasons, that is those that have accompanied the phenomenon of terrorism since its beginnings (such as religious or political conditions) – **permanent reasons** for terrorism.

b. Sources of terrorism that accompany it only at a certain developmental stage (over a shorter or longer period of time) – **temporary reasons**. They involve certain ideas or the activities that follow from these ideas (e.g. the ideology of assassins).

c. **Cyclical reasons,** which disappear or wane after some time, but after a shorter or longer pause they can start to play some role again, e.g. anarchism as a

source of terrorism at the turn of the 19th century, and again after WWII, and in the first decade of the 21st century[30].

Figure 3: Division of reasons for terrorism due to the time of their occurrence

a) Permanent reasons (PR)

b) Temporary reasons (TR)

c) Cyclical reasons (CR)

Source: Author's concept.

The fourth distinction concerns the **evolution of individual reasons**, which can be divided into:

a. sources of terrorism undergoing continuous change;
b. reasons undergoing occasional change;
c. factors that do not change.

The first category is illustrated by the influence of technology on terrorism. Category "b" is characterized by ideological concepts, e.g. nationalism, anarchism, and so on, and their transformations, while the third one is reflected in the assumptions of anti-abortionist terrorism.

Considering these four classifications of the causes of terrorism, a relatively broad range of their manifestations or kinds can be appreciated, yet they do not account for all the possible scenarios. The theoretical character of this analysis is also a drawback, as is the less than thorough presentation of the interactions between the classifications.
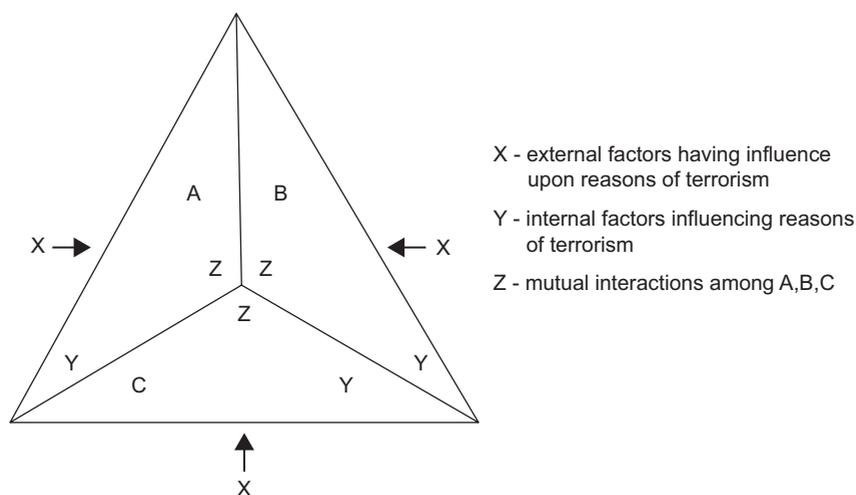
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30 Examples include the attacks on the embassies in Athens and Rome carried out in late 2010 and early 2011, the responsibility for which was assumed by anarchists.

4.4. There are three main determinants that generate or escalate modern terrorism according to the hybrid of causes of terrorism:

A. **Various ideas/ideologies,** such as political, ethnic or religious ones, and so on that terrorists identify with, e.g. separatism, nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, chauvinism, religious fundamentalism, alterglobalism, and so on.

B. **Selected socio-economic conditions.** These concern a variety of socio-economic issues occurring on a large scale, such as widespread poverty, financial crises, gigantic and rapidly increasing disparities between individuals, states and between the rich and rapidly developing "North" and the significantly poorer "South." All these problems can generate or intensify various radical attitudes, including terrorism, directly or indirectly.

C. **Various psychological processes and factors.** They are mainly related to the issues of prejudices, stereotypes, hatred, hostility, intolerance, the sense of injustice or threat, retaliation, trauma, and so on. They very often assume the form of psychological disorders inducing e.g. suicidal attackers to commit extreme acts.

The above three elements dovetail and complement one another, entering into mutual interactions between one other and with a range of other factors. They produce a mechanism described as the so-called triad of terrorist motivation.

Figure 4: Three principal groups of reasons for terrorism (the triad of terrorist motivation)

X - external factors having influence upon reasons of terrorism

Y - internal factors influencing reasons of terrorism

Z - mutual interactions among A,B,C

Source: Author's concept.

A. Various ideas/ideologies. Sources of terrorism need to be sought not only in the presence or furtherance of various, frequently highly destructive, ideas, or ideologies, but also in their mutual contradictions or confrontational character. In this context, terrorism is treated as a highly radical reflection of certain opinions, attitudes or beliefs. It is also a consequence of a conflict of interests and is frequently an attempt to achieve a certain goal 'at any cost', whatever the material damage or human toll. It can also serve the purpose of achieving certain goals or obtaining some gains, such as a change in the political situation, furtherance of specified principles or values, and so on.

The importance of ideological factors finds an excellent illustration (using the example of ETA's activity) in the statement made by G. Jackson in the article *Why they kill*, when he observed that acts of terror are frequently "committed by people who are not the product of suburban violence, who do not come from homes where they were mistreated by older family members or bad neighbors, who are not victims of permanent unemployment, wars of drug pushers, or racism, or religious persecutions (…). There is only one possible answer to the question 'Why do they kill?', namely: a mixture of nationalism, racism, and mystified history has become a justification for terrorism."[31]

B. Selected socio-economic conditions. There are numerous criteria of different kinds that can help in the analysis of the range of socio-economic problems experienced by individual states or regions. One of them involves the presentation of developmental disparities between the so-called "rich North" and "poor South." This distinction is not as much geographical as economic and geographical. It shows that approximately 14% of the global population live in "the North" in contrast to 86% living in "the South." This juxtaposition becomes particularly expressive if the above figures are accompanied by certain economic indicators, e.g. the share of global capital. The difference is very meaningful here, with "the North" and "the South" possessing 75% and 25% of global capital respectively. It should also be stressed that these two indicators (but many others as well) are not static, but dynamic. Even over quite short periods of time, they clearly change, most often to the disadvantage of the underdeveloped states. The above example shows that, on the one hand, the proportion of people living in "the North" is falling, while, on the other hand, the share of "the North" in global capital is increasing.

Another important issue that is not addressed too often is the presentation of the interdependence between the economic situation in a given territory and the emergence of terrorist attitudes. In some states we are faced with a situation where

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31 G. Jackson, *Dlaczego zabijają?*, „Forum" no. 7, 2000, pp. 10–11.

on the one hand they are global leaders in terms of posing a terrorist threat, while on the other they are significantly backward in terms of economic development. This is corroborated by the annual reports published by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. The *Global Terrorism Index 2015* states that "two countries, Iraq and Nigeria, account for 53 per cent of all deaths from terrorism in 2014" and "in 2014, 57 per cent of all attacks occurred in five countries; Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Syria."[32] A definite nations and their states are in majority among the entities considered by the World Bank to be significantly backward in terms of socio-economic development.

This is not to mean that terrorism is a matter exclusively of poor states. After all, it occurs also in affluent countries, although the data show that it is not as frequent there. Obviously, socio-economic problems do not necessarily have to result in violence, terrorism and other radical attitudes, but they can be efficiently stimulated by them.[33]

C. Various psychological processes and factors. In many cases we encounter terrorism when a given individual or group considers a certain attitude or idea to be of the utmost importance, one which all other matters should unquestionably be subordinated to. Another significant factor is the distinction between "us" and "them," which is frequently based on the following assumptions:

- maintaining that "my" group is always the most important and the best;
- seeking the sources of the said distinction not in reality but in the subjective perception of this reality;
- admitting the necessity for antagonisms and oppositions between "my" group and the "alien" group (e.g. between the so-called West and Islam).

In the analysis of psychological factors that may influence terrorism the following should also be mentioned: a sense of "void" as regards one's worldview, a sense of injustice or oppression, hostility, post-traumatic syndrome, susceptibility to aggression, depression, and so on. It is, of course, impossible to present all the possible factors in such a brief study, nor is this its purpose. The essential purpose

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32 *Global Terrorism Index 2015*, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, available at http://www.economicandpeace.org, accessed 15 February 2016.

33 Other socio-economic issues include: high unemployment, illiteracy, demography, famine, insufficient health care, etc. More: World Bank data; F. Llussáand, J. Tavares, *Economic and Terrorism. What we Know, What we Should Know, and The Data we Need*, in: *Terrorism, Economic and Political Openness* P. Keefer, N. Loayza (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, pp. 233–254.

of this part of the book is to emphasize that, according to the concept of hybridity, some psychological determinants can constitute significant sources of terrorism.

Despite the multitude and diversity of the above theories, none of them comprehensively explains the emergence and escalation of terrorism. They point, however, to how numerous and different the potential factors are. These theories are frequently interdisciplinary and combine elements of psychology, as well as sociology, pedagogy, economics or philosophy.

5. Conclusion

It should be emphasized that the hybrid concept of reasons for terrorism (its five main assumptions) presented in the present study is not a complex model. It should be viewed as the author's attempt to analyze the complex research issue of the reasons for terrorism. Thus it is only a starting point for further considerations that may concern the following issues, among other things:

5.1. In the analysis of the sources of terrorism the mechanism of the **"fuel of terrorism"** is worth taking into consideration. This notion signifies the entirety of key factors that escalate terrorism. In the hybrid concept of reasons for terrorism presented in this paper these factors fall into three groups: radical ideologies and the attempts to implement them, the consequences of selected socio-economic problems, and specified destructive psychological processes. This is not to mean that the above factors fully exhaust the range of reasons for terrorism. Therefore, one may speak about the so-called complementarity of the reasons for terrorism, which means that its sources are typically varied and consist of several parallel factors.

5.2. Another interesting research issue is posed by contradictions or misconceptions concerning the reasons for terrorism. One example is the assumption that increased financial income (for example from the extraction of oil) in some states has increased social disparities and consequently intensified radical sentiments, including terrorist attitudes.[34] A different example concerns the scenario in which the number of educated people and members of the middle class has rapidly increased in some Muslim countries as a result of a modernization or liberalization processes. Paradoxically, this has actually won supporters for the fundamentalists,

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34 J. Esposito, *Un holy War. Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford University Press, New York 2003.

since a part of this group supports their views.[35] In another example, unexpected situations result in terrorism. One such instance involves the attempt to detonate explosives in the USA in early 2011, which was explained by the perpetrator, who had been detained, by his dissatisfaction with the markings of local highways. A misconception regarding the sources of terrorism is illustrated by the relatively common opinion that one of the main reasons for terrorism in the European Union is religious fundamentalism.[36]

This, however, finds no confirmation in the detailed statistics of e.g. Europol, which point to the clear prevalence of ethnic (separatist) motives.

Table 1: Failed, foiled and completed attacks in 2014 per member state and per affiliation

Member State	Religiously inspired	Left-wing	Not specified	Separatist	Single issue	Total
Belgium	1	0	0	0	0	1
France	1	0	1	50	0	52
Greece	0	6	1	0	0	7
Italy	0	6	5	0	1	12
Spain	0	1	0	17	0	18
UK	-	-	109	-	-	109
Total	2	13	116	67	1	**199**

Source: TE–SAT 2015, EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report, Europol, available at, www.europol. europa.eu, accessed 1 February 2016.

5.3. It is also important to perceive the reasons for terrorism in a broader perspective, that is, in terms of factors that influence also other disintegration tendencies (such as fundamentalism or separatism). A question arises here of whether there is a "repertoire" of sources common for all disintegration phenomena, or at least for the majority of them. Do individual factors (e.g. a religious or ethnic factor) influence terrorism in a different manner than fundamentalism or separatism? Are the mechanisms of their emergence similar? Is it then possible to work out a single, universal model of the reasons shaping the above trends, where certain factors will predominate depending on the situation? For example, the role of

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35 R. Paz, *Islamists and Anti-Americanism*, "Middle East Review of International Affairs" no. 4, 2003.

36 In 2015 the number of islamic-rooted terrorist attacks in the EU rose. In previous years, their level was low, for instance: in 2012: 6, 2013: 0, 2014 – 2, available at http://www. europol.europol.eu.

ethnic factors would be larger in nationalism while the role of religious ones is more important in fundamentalism.

5.4. It is impossible to eliminate the sources of terrorism entirely. The primary objective should therefore not only be to confine them to the maximum extent possible, but also to get to know them better in order to minimize the terrorist threat. A good example is financing of terrorist organizations, which very often poses significant fundings. ISIS is the clear leader in this category, which makes this organization especially dangerous.

Table 2: Financing assets of some terrorist organizations

Subject	mln $
Al Qaeda	15–50
Hamas	70
FARC	300
Hezbollah	200–500
Taliban	560
ISIS	2000–4000

Source: International Business Times, MoneyJihad, CNN, The Guardian.

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