

# Terrorist Attacks in Europe and Options of Terrorism Prevention

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## Abstract

The terrorism can be considered as the political or security problem, but it is also the kind of crime, although it is very specific crime. However, considering it as the crime, we can also think about it in the connection with criminological categories as the prevention, for example. When we look at latest terrorist attacks, we can name their several common features. For example, tools, which were used for commitment of these crime, were very simple, because perpetrators attacked by firearms, stabbing weapons or vehicles. That means that perpetrators cannot have more sophisticated skills to commit terrorist attacks by these tools. This article is also focused on some other features like places, where terrorist attacks were committed, the age of perpetrators or their religion, because all of them were Muslims. All of these features are opposed to the views of some experts, who predict that the cyber terrorism or nuclear terrorism will become serious threats in the future. Therefore, the paper contains the short analysis of latest terrorist attacks, which were committed in Europe, analysis of the information, which are available in the media, and comparison of selective features of terrorist attacks. Taking into account the newest trends of the commitment of terrorist attacks, the method of analyze and method of comparison are used with the aim to express the need of terrorism prevention and formulate possible proposals of measures that could contribute to the terrorism prevention.

**Keywords:** The Terrorism; Islamic State; The Religious Extremism; Terrorist Attacks; The Way of Commitment of Terrorist Attacks; The Terrorism Prevention.

## 1. Introduction

The characteristics of terrorism depends on various points of view. For example, Samuel P. Huntington wrote in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* that the terrorism is historically the weapon of weak ones that means those, who have not a conventional military force. In the past, terrorists were able to use only the limited violence. They could kill a few of people or destroy some factory, because the massive military force was needed for massive violence. However, he predicted that one day they will be able to reach the tremendous level of violence and cause the mass destruction. <sup>[1]</sup>

His book was published in 1997, but his prophetic words were fulfilled four years later, when terrorists attacked World Trade Centre in New York and Pentagon in Washington. However, looking at activities of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), it could be said that his prediction is fulfilling even today.

This is also evidenced by the book called *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, whose authors are Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan. They wrote that when ISIS invaded Mosul, the capital city of Ninive province, the world was shocked and reacted confusedly. Terrorist conquered the part of the Middle East like the territory of Great Britain. Only a thousand of them conquered the city that was defended by thirty thousands of soldiers and police officers. Despite of that they were trained by Americans, they resigned and left terrain vehicles as Humvee and tanks of Abrams class to terrorists. Therefore, authors ask, what terrorists are they, if they drive tanks or armored vehicles? Is ISIS a terrorist organization or does it rather resemble an army? <sup>[2]</sup>

Despite of that ISIS is the most serious terrorist threat of the present day, this organization – similarly like al-Qaida in the past – has not fulfilled Huntington's worst concerns of a combination of terrorism and nuclear weapons. He wrote that considering them separately, the terrorism without nuclear weapons is the weapon of nonwestern weak ones, but if they connect, nonwestern weak ones become strong ones. <sup>[3]</sup>

Fortunately, these fears are still only predictions, but the other feature is interesting. Huntington predicted that terrorist attacks could be committed in very sophisticated way – he even admitted the using of nuclear weapons. However, when we look at latest terrorist attacks, which were committed in Europe, we can see completely opposite trend, because those attacks had at least one common feature – a relatively simple way of their commitment. This trend has been observable since September 11, 2001, because telling it simplistically, the piloting an airplane is far more complicated than the driving a car or using a firearm or stabbing weapon.

This fact directly influences several circumstances, including the investigation or prevention, because means, which were used for committing of these attacks, are simply available and their use does not require

professional skills. Focusing on this and some other features of terrorist attacks, next parts of this paper contain the short analysis of recent terrorist attacks and some proposals of possible options of the terrorism prevention.

## **2. The short analysis of terrorist attacks**

The easier way of commitment of terrorist attacks was used in France, Germany or Great Britain, where people suffered because of three attacks in last three months. First of them happened on Westminster Bridge near the Parliament. The perpetrator came out on the sidewalk by a car and knocked down a few people. Then he stepped out of the car and attacked by knife; he killed one of police officers, who were watching over the Parliament. The perpetrator was shot down by police officers shortly after the incident. <sup>[4]</sup> The perpetrator was Chalid Massod, fifty-two years old soldier of ISIS that was responsible for this attack. <sup>[5]</sup> According to Jana Shemeh, the correspondent of Slovak newspaper *Denník N*, the attack has also confirmed several current trends in terrorism and its ability to transform itself very quickly and adapt to new circumstances. The London incident confirmed that sophisticated weapons or pedant plans are not required for killing, mutilation and stressing the people. It is enough to use everyday items like a knife. The perpetrator can get to the crime scene by an ordinary car and he cannot be specially trained. The radicalization, fanaticism, and the belief that killing people is a “message” is enough for knocking down the people by a car and attacking by a knife. <sup>[6]</sup>

ISIS was also responsible for another terrorist attack that was committed in Manchester. At the end of American pop-singer Ariana Grande, the perpetrator, who was twenty-two years old Salman Abedi, detonated the explosion in the entrance hall of Manchester Arena and killed twenty-two people, including children. The perpetrator chose the place with a lot of people, because twenty thousand fans were at the concert. Children were also among them, because Ariana Grande is very popular among teenagers. When parents were waiting for their children after the concert and the entrance hall was filled with people, who were leaving the performance, the perpetrator took his attack. <sup>[7]</sup>

Similarly, to the attack that was committed on Westminster Bridge, the latest attack on London Bridge was committed by a car. Three perpetrators came out on the sidewalk by a car and knocked down the people. This attack had also the continuation, because perpetrators stepped out of the car and attack the people by knives near Borough Market. They also entered some cafes and restaurants, fought with visitors and stabbed them with knives. Seven people were killed and other forty-eight were injured. All of perpetrators were finally shot down by police officers. <sup>[8]</sup>

Several terrorist attacks were committed also in France. The terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo office was committed as a revenge for cartoons of prophet Mohamed that Muslims deemed as the shame and insult. They had very good information, because they committed the attack at the time, when the office was full of employees and journalists that had a meeting. Their attack brought the death for twelve victims that were shot down by machineguns. The attack committed two brothers, the French citizens with Algerian origin, 32-years-old Cherif Kouachi and 34-years-old Said Kouachi. This attack – its preparation, direction, financing and logistic – was under the control of al-Qaida in Yemen. They lived in the same Parisian district and were involved in recruiting of jihadists in Iraq. <sup>[9]</sup>

But much greater drama was still waiting for Paris. The terrorists simultaneously attacked at several places in November of 2015, including Bataclan theatre and some other places like restaurants or fast-foods. One of these places was nearby Stade de France, where France and Germany played the friendly football match.

The biggest attack was committed in Bataclan. The terrorists entered the concert hall and started to shoot into the people that were enjoying the concert of the American Musicians Eagles of Death Metal. They did not have the intention to take the hostages and negotiate about some requirements, they just wanted to kill, and they used bombs after two hours of shooting. Over 120 people died by hands of terrorists at that night. But the number of victims is not the one, what is shocking to the attacks of the Friday night in Paris. The shocking is, how easy can be realized the act with such serious and complicated consequences. The conspiracy behind these attacks could be complicated, but a few young men with fanatic mind and machineguns were enough for their commitment. The simultaneity they provide just by mobiles or even watches. <sup>[10]</sup>

The latest big terrorist attack happened during the celebration of Bastille Day in Nice, where the armed truck driver killed more than 80 people at Promenade des Anglais. He was crashing and shooting into the crowd during two kilometers long drive. Finally, the assassin was killed by police. The crazy attack by a truck into the crowd in Nice is the confirmation of trend, how terrorist attacks are committed in present Western Europe. The perpetrators can be small groups or even individuals, whose connection with fundamentalist organizations can be weak and for the police units is very complicated to detect and prevent their activities and preparation for attack. <sup>[11]</sup>

Latest terrorist attack, which happened in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, nearby Rouen in Normandy, indicated that he is right. Two armed young men, who sympathized with ISIS, entered the Christian church during the mass and took a few hostages that included a Christian priest and two nuns. Unfortunately, the priest was killed and one nun seriously wounded before the police has arrived. They were shouting “Allahu agbar!” and

“Daesh!” what means ISIS. However, the slitting of old priest’s throat cannot be an act of religious belief, only the terrible crime and only the sick mind can take the responsibility for that. <sup>[12]</sup>

Terrorist attacks in Germany had the similar characteristics like these ones – terrorist used firearms, stabbing weapons or a vehicle; an explosive was also used in one case. The eighteen years old teenager with the Iranian origin shot down nine and wounded thirty-five people in Olympia Shopping Centre in Munich. In the past, he was cured of computer games, therefore, it was not obvious, if it was a terrorist attack. <sup>[13]</sup> But other incidents, which were happened in Germany, were qualified as terrorist attacks. This applies to attacks in Ansbach, Würzburg or Berlin.

In Ansbach, twenty-seven years old perpetrator with Syrian origin committed the attack by explosive that he had in his backpack. He attacked in front of the entrance to the arena, where the musical festival Ansbach Open were happened. Fortunately, nobody was killed (fifteen fans were injured), but experts estimated that the result of that attack would be much more tragic, if the perpetrator had the ticket to the event and entered the area. The perpetrator promised the fidelity to the ISIS that was responsible for the attack. <sup>[14]</sup>

The crime that happened in Bavarian Würzburg was also qualified as a terrorist attack. The perpetrator was seventeen years old Afghan, who attacked travelers in train. Nobody was killed, but four people were injured by a knife and ax. Striking on those people, he was shouting “Allahu agbar!”. According to the available information, the flag of ISIS was found in his flat; this terrorist organization was also responsible for the attack. <sup>[15]</sup>

The latest terrorist attack was committed in Berlin during the Christmas market. The truck entered the Christmas market at the square Breitscheidplatz and knocked down the people in a high speed. Twelve people were killed and other forty-eight were injured. Finally, after the fifty or eighty meters long drive, the truck was stopped at Budapest Street. <sup>[16]</sup>

### **3. Possible measures of the terrorism prevention**

Analyzing these attack, several features of them should be taken into account. Primarily, the way of their commitment that were changed in the comparison with some attacks, which were committed in the past. Perpetrators used simple tools as firearms, stabbing weapons, vehicles or simple homemade bombs. Perpetrators were individuals or small groups, whose connection to a terrorist organization were weak or even none. Their age was various, but mostly they were thirty or even younger; perpetrators of attacks in Munich and Würzburg were teenagers. Considering places, where attacks were committed, there is also the obvious change, because attacks are not committed only at airports, train stations or underground stations,

but many other places are threatened. Considering analyzed attacks, terrorists were striking at streets or bridges, squares, restaurants, shopping centers, places, where cultural or sport events were happening, or even in a church. Finally, all of perpetrators were Muslims that means that the question of religion plays also the significant role.

According to these facts, the terrorism prevention could be considered from various point of view. Focusing on religious aspects, the one of main question is, how to prevent the radicalization of young people with Islamic religion. For example, Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, said after the latest attack in London that the religion was abused and religious writings were distorted to apologize the violence. Furthermore, he said that religious leaders have to take the responsibility for fighting against atrocities, which are apologized by religious reasons. <sup>[17]</sup> Following his message, it could be said that people should understand the true meaning of their religion and do not listen to radicals, who abuse it for political purposes. This could be applied especially to the young people that are more suggestible by radicals or religious extremists.

When we look at places, which became targets of terrorist attacks, it is obvious that terrorists do not strike only on railway stations or underground stations, but also on places, which are currently full of tourists or visitors, like restaurants, bars, entertainment clubs, promenades or sport fields. Therefore, in the case of getting the information about the possible terrorist threats, it is necessary to strengthen the protection those places, where are organized various cultural or sport events, for example, by the strengthening or extending of security zones around them. Furthermore, in the case of getting this information, the officials could closely cooperate with organizers of events like these or with owners or managers of various entertainment clubs, bars or restaurants and sharing with them the information that they obtained. It cannot be possible that some mad truck driver reaches the promenade, which is full of people at that time, and kills over than eighty of them. If there was created wider and better controlled security zones around the Promenade des Anglais or Breitscheidplatz, that disaster could be avoided. For example, after attack in Berlin, the police of several cities as Prague or Cologne established scruples or barriers around squares, where Christmas markets or New Year's Day celebrations were organized. <sup>[18]</sup>

But even if responsible authorities did not have such information, past experience tells us, which places were the targets of terrorist attacks, and therefore, it is necessary to take into account at least the basic level of the foresight, prudence and vigilance, and with the aim of the prevention, secure these places against possible attacks, because the behavior of "the lone wolves", for example, is very difficult to predicate, if it is even possible. <sup>[19]</sup>

Considering the weak connection of perpetrators to terrorist organizations, methods as the tracking, wiretapping or monitoring suspicious groups or individuals in the field or even at social networks could be provided in close cooperation of allied European states and their police forces or intelligence services. Their investigative or intelligence activities have to be focused on persons, who are responsible for planning and organization of attacks, persons, who are responsible for their commitment or persons, who call for the terrorist attacks, express the sympathy with terrorist organizations or provide the support for terrorists.

However, the terrorism is the problem that is too difficult to solve at national level, it is the European or the international problem and therefore it is needed the European effort for its solution. Therefore, the one of the options is to establish the European counter-terrorism center with rights to obtain the intelligence information from European intelligence services, analyze them and elaborate the cautions, security strategies and recommendations for the European security policy or security policies of member states of European Union. It could also provide the research at the area of security and policy.

Finally, considering tools, which were used for committing the attacks, they correspond to the propaganda of ISIS. This terrorist organization calls for committing terrorist attacks in any possible way. According to Peter Morvay, correspondent of *Denník N*, this propaganda includes following call: “Do not search for some specific target, do not try to find a hard target, kill anybody you can, everywhere you can”.<sup>[20]</sup> The press agency ČTK brought the information that terrorists also call: “Broke his head with a stone, murder him with a knife or car, throw him out of a highness or poison him”.<sup>[21]</sup>

It is very difficult to formulate any relevant proposal that could prevent the commitment of terrorist attack by these tools, because they are available very easily and their use do not require any specific skill; therefore, previous measures could be significant for terrorism prevention (tracking, wiretapping and monitoring of suspicious individuals or groups, securing places, where sport or cultural events are organized, or taking the responsibility for correct explanation of religions by religious authorities, for example).

#### **4. Conclusions**

Although some experts predict that terrorism could become the threat as the cyber terrorism or nuclear terrorism, now we are witnesses that terrorist attacks are committed in far more simple way. Terrorists use simple tools as firearms, knives or stabbing weapons, vehicles or simple explosives. That means that the using of these tools (weapons) underlines the newest trend in committing of terrorist attacks and corresponds to the propaganda of ISIS. It is also a completely opposite trend than predictions of sophisticated nuclear terrorism, for example. Furthermore, the easy use of these tools or weapons even allows teenagers to commit the terrorist attacks.

Besides that, terrorist used simple tools like these, terrorist attacks, which were committed in Europe, had also other common features. They were committed at places, where cultural events were happened, for example, that means that there are not only airports, underground stations or train stations, which are threatened because of terrorism; therefore, in the case of terrorist threat, police units or intelligence services could cooperate with organizers of these events, share necessary information with them and contribute to strengthen of protection these places. This could be also applied to various social events or celebration that are organized at squares or streets (various fests, Christmas markets, New Year Day celebrations, for example).

Religious aspects of terrorism are also relevant, because all perpetrators were Muslims. Therefore, according to archbishop of Canterbury, religious authority could take the responsibility for correct explanation of their religion and this way contribute to prevent the radicalization of people; this could be applied especially to the young people and teenagers.

Considering other options of the general prevention, police units and intelligence services could closely cooperate in tracking, wiretapping, monitoring of suspicious individuals or groups, which sympathize with terrorists, and sharing the information about them. Furthermore, the establish of European counter-terrorism centre with the right to obtain the intelligence information from European intelligence services, analyze them and elaborate the cautions, security strategies and recommendations for the European security policy or security policies of member states of European Union.

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