

RATIONALITY OF TERRORIST ACTS, COUNTERTERRORISM AND RISK ANALYSIS

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Abstract. *The aim of this article is to consider, from various theoretical perspectives, the correlations between rationality of terrorism and other key elements that make the phenomenology of terrorism. Starting from the premise that understanding of the aspect of rationality determines the assessment of the risks of terrorism and affects counter-terrorism policy, the author first analyzes the viewpoint of Pavličević (2015) and the insights of several theoretical sources for the sake of attaining a complete and deeper understanding of these relationships. The author emphasizes the significance of analytical models and points out that in the assessment and risk analysis it is of primary importance to take into account different concepts of terrorist motivations and levels of rationality, as well as the character of the terrorist goals. The author supports the conclusions of researchers that only comprehensive understanding of rationality from different scientific perspectives may generate the basis for building an efficient counter-terrorism strategy. Yet, in understanding the phenomenon of terrorism, it must be noted that the political motive, goals and the instrumental rationality of terrorism remain in the forefront.*

Key words: *risk assessment, rational choice, beliefs, motivation, psychopathology.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism can only be analyzed by taking into account the multidisciplinary approach – with outstanding theoretical pluralism. Rationality of terrorist acts is comparable to the processes in other social fields, but it is also specific and complex in many aspects (Pavličević, 2015: 52)¹. As Nalbandov (2013: 92) writes: “There have been several attempts

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¹ Crenshaw (1981, 2012: 103) notes: “Significant campaigns of terrorism depend on rational political choice. As purposeful activity, terrorism is the result of an organization’s decision that it is a politically useful means to oppose a government. The argument that terrorist behavior should be analyzed as “rational” is based on the assumption that terrorist organizations possess internally consistent sets of values, beliefs, and images of the environment... The terrorist organization engages in decision-making calculation that an analyst can approximate”.

to compartmentalize terrorism within the rational frameworks... With all those multiple approaches to studies of terrorism there is a remarkable lack of the coherent and parsimonious theory of rationality that would bring it different forms under a uniform theoretical framework". Hereof, counterterrorism concepts depend on the understanding of the aspect of rationality, which also determines the assessment of the risks of terrorism. Hence, Roberts and Horgan (2008: 3, 7) argue that "a greater consideration of the role of psychology in the development of risk assessment procedures may well be a useful tool", and "risk assessment needs to be the first stage in the development of risk management strategies".

The author of this paper analyzes in the first place the political dimension of terrorism, i.e. the teleological element of terrorist act. Teleological here means rational, but not only rational. Just in the phenomenon of terrorism rationality can show forms that cannot be reduced to defining the most optimal way to achieve the defined (political) goal². Only a more comprehensive understanding of rationality from different scientific perspectives, with links to other key elements that make phenomenology of terrorism, generates the basis for building an adequate strategy of combating terrorism. Thus, the author touches on the security perspective and some security aspects of the considered problems, including counterterrorism strategy and policy. The author first analyzes the viewpoint of Pavlićević (2015) and insights from several theoretical sources for the sake of attaining complete and deeper understanding of these relationships. In order to make a solid foundation for conclusions, the author re-conceptualizes previous assumptions into four clusters.

2. ASSUMPTIONS: RATIONALITY OF THE TERRORIST ACTS

2.1. Cluster I

*We can understand terrorism as a method of action which is perceived and accepted as a sole means of defending identity by certain groups and organizations (Pavlićević, 2015: 46)*³.

Atran (2008: 3-4) specifies: "Humans... need to socially organize, lead and be led; however, notions of "charismatic leaders" going out or sending recruiters to "brainwash" unwitting minds into joining well-structured organizations with command and control is grossly exaggerated. Standard counterterrorism notions of "cells" and "recruitment"... often reflect more the psychology and organization of people analyzing terrorist groups than terrorist groups themselves. Such "bureaucratic mirroring" is also evident in misguided policies grounded in the premise that simply presenting people with rational arguments and material incentives will lead them down the correct or better path. Most human beings are more interested in persuading themselves that they are right, whatever the evidence against them, than in finding out that they are wrong. They are more interested in victory than truth. And when was the last time that rational argument or a buy-off offer convinced anyone you know to select the right (boy or girl) friend?"

² Van Um (2009: 5) emphasizes: "Besides the concentration upon political motives, scholars of terrorism studies have often come to characterize the behavior of terrorists as *rational*... For further use in this work, terrorism based on instrumentally rational action and linked to political objectives is referred to as *instrumentally rational and politically motivated* terrorism or *politically rational* terrorism... The concept... has increasingly been questioned in the last few years (see for instance: Hafez, 2006; Caplan, 2006; Abrahms, 2008; Miller, 2009; Pittel and Rübhelke, 2009). Recent publications have cast heavy doubt on the universal applicability of the concept of *politically rational* terrorism, or even rejected the usefulness of this concept as a whole. What if terrorists in actual fact strive for objectives other than political change? What if terrorists do not always act in instrumentally rational way? Suicide bombers... If terrorists indeed act according to an alternative logic, other than instrumentally rational calculation, or if objectives other than political change are primarily reflected within their agenda, this highly affects counter-terrorism policy".

³ Van Um (2009: 16-18): "As an alternative to challenging the rationality of terrorists, terrorists may also be thought of as being instrumentally rational actors who are motivated by something other than political goals..., economically motivated terrorism can also be a means to...making money. Instead of striving for political objectives, terrorists – no

De la Corte (2007) established the **principle** that “every terrorist campaign involves strategic goals but the rationality which terrorists apply to their violence is imperfect“ He asserts that, according to *Rational Choice Theory*, individuals, organizations and social movements consistently choose acts that they consider to be the most effective methods to fulfill objectives according to the situation within which they act, where human rationality tends to be almost perfect. Therefore, terrorists perceive themselves as rational actors. Meanwhile, “many investigations have showed that the rationality which guides human behaviour is rather limited and imperfect“, whereas people are not able to anticipate perfectly or realize all the consequences of their actions; consequently, terrorist assessments cannot be completely accurate. De la Corte also emphasizes that “the emotions (anger, desire for revenge, hatred, etc.), ideological motives, and other psychological elements could influence the terrorist’s subjective perspective in the sense to distort their expectancies and their reflections about the result of their violent actions; ...terrorists tend to overestimate their chances of success and sometimes have problems recognizing the ineffectiveness of their actions” (De la Corte, 2007: 5-6). Moreover, terrorists sometimes underestimate the negative reaction of their actual or potential supporters to their most brutal attacks. *The rationality of individual actors’ is limited, but the rationality of collective actors is a greater problem. Rationality of terrorist acts is limited by their individual psychological attributes and characteristics, by group dynamic within terrorist organisations that effect decision-making processes, and by the fact that “human groups tend to polarize attitudes and decisions to a greater extent than individuals”* (De la Corte, 2007: 7)⁴. Kruglanski and Fishman (2009: 16-17) point out to close determinants⁵. In conclusion, operationalizing the prerequisites and mechanisms of group opinion is of key importance for the analysis of process in terrorist groups⁶.

matter what their official statements say – may pursue terrorist means to enrich themselves... With terrorists and criminals converging, they turn into hybrid organizations, merging political and economic motives and objectives (Dishman, 2005:247; Shelley *et al.*, 2005: 6). This convergence makes it more difficult to apply the classical criteria of terrorism and criminality, and to distinguish between the apparently separable phenomena. In the following, terrorism approaching criminal activities and following a motive of self-enrichment is referred to as *instrumentally rational and self-enriching terrorism or rationally self-enriching terrorism*“.

⁴ De la Corte (2007:7) writes: “Sometimes this group polarization effect promotes highly risky actions (Myers, 1978). Terrorist cells exhibit the same conditions which facilitate group polarization. For instance, during certain periods, terrorists tend to reduce drastically their contact with people who do not embrace their similar extremist ideology. Furthermore, terrorists are frequently subject to strong discipline. Both factors also could promote ‘groupthink’. The social psychologist Ervin Janis (1972) coined that expression to define the dynamic of interactions which have caused some serious decision-making mistakes made by important political or military committees during the last century. Several researchers have applied the concept of groupthink to their explanations of different cases of terrorism. Other group aspects that facilitate terrorist activities concern: the norms and roles to which terrorists use to adjust their behaviour; the influence exerted by group leaders; and the material benefits and psychological rewards associated with the terrorist’s militancy. Finally, research... show that reasons which people use to justify some of their actions are actually developed only after such actions have taken place”.

⁵ Kruglanski and Fishman (2009: 16-17): “Membership in a terrorist group may expose individuals to a unique *social reality* that condones violence, remove the anticipatory anxiety and guilt restraining one from harming innocents (Bandura, 1990/1998), and stemming from societal norms that prohibit such behaviors... Asch (1954)... observed that when individuals’ perceptual judgments deviated uniquely from the majority’s judgments, these persons typically succumbed to the majority’s influence and conformed to the majority opinions... Groups provide social support for members’ pursuits and ground them in shared (ideological) construals of reality”.

⁶ As Crenshaw (1992, 2012: 254, 256) emphasizes, “Jeanne Knutson (1980) effectively described the relationship between group pressures and rigid but subjective belief systems: ‘Doubts are muted and are continuously attacked by the group which employs great psychological pressure toward conformity... There is no real debate over primary assumptions’... She quoted one of her interviewees as admitting that ‘we were increasingly losing our

2.2. Cluster II

According to Møller (2007/3: 31-36, 40) terrorism can be understood through consideration of advantages and disadvantages (costs and benefits) of specific actions, based on more or less available information; therefore, *terrorism is a phenomenon of instrumental rationality*⁷. Cost-benefit analysis is constantly present⁸.

Sri Bhashyam and Montibeller (2016: 668) point out: “Can terrorists be considered as rational decision-makers, or *homo economicus*? Terrorists’ rationality may be questioned from an economic point of view for several reasons. Their choice of actions may not always be directed to achieving the best outcome in terms of their long-term objectives, that is, political benefits. Furthermore, their chosen targets may not always be those providing the optimal outcome given terrorists’ set of objectives. Such inconsistencies in decision making have led people to think that terrorists might be irrational in their choice of actions, but research has argued otherwise”⁹.

Terrorists’ rationality is always contextual rationality and it is related to their immediate base of support, political and international environment. Therefore, the aspect of rationality in the terrorist phenomenon can be comprehended in a different way¹⁰, for example that covers conceptual frame of *the achievable* (Pavličević, 2015: 55)¹¹.

grip on reality’ and that cutting off contacts with the outside world led to a ‘group personality’ with its own deadly internal momentum... Because internal conflict threatens group cohesion and identity, leaders may try to deflect aggression onto external targets”.

⁷ According to Møller, the question of whether terrorism will become a choice depends on personal preferences, the range of options or strategies to achieve the goals, the probability of success of the given option, expectations and comparative costs of alternative options, as well as the positive and negative side effects of different strategies. *Terrorism is a reflection of rational choice*; it may be an opportunity for lucrative activities, a way to reach “slave”, the thrill some people derive from rape, torture and killing civilians. Møller emphasizes that on micro-social level it is possible to *explain terrorism as more emotional than rationally motivated* (based on rational choice theory that can reconstruct the choice of targets, tactics and instruments for their fulfillment). He explains motivational processes via polyvalent links and (mutual) influences of *rational, emotions, values and beliefs, psychology, aggressiveness and other incentives that lead to a terrorist act*, as an act of a normal person.

⁸ Stohl (2008: 6) emphasizes: “The underlying argument was that state decision makers pursued what Weiner (1972) refers to as an ‘Expectancy X Value’ theory, or expected utility theory of motivation, in which ‘the direction and intensity of behavior is a function of the expectation that certain actions will lead to the goal, and the incentive value of the goal object’. The argument assumes that an actor behaves in accordance with a basic calculation which consists of three main elements: (1) the benefits that the actor would receive from some desired state of affairs; (2) the actor’s beliefs about the probability with which the desired state of affairs would be brought about if the actor were to engage in a particular action; and (3) the actor’s beliefs about the probable costs, or negative consequences that he would have to bear as a result of its engaging in that action. It assumes therefore that the greater the relative expected utility of terrorist action for an actor as compared to other forms of governance, the greater is the probability that the actor will engage in terrorist action”.

⁹ See other interesting discourses in Bhashyam and Montibeller (2016: 669, 671, 673).

¹⁰ For more, see: van Um (2009: 9-14): *2.1 Rationality and Rational Choice, 2.2 Criticizing the concept of instrumental rationality and discussing alternatives, 2.3 Setting up a spectrum of rationality*.

¹¹ Møller (2007:12: 20) considers the *interaction of options of terrorists and counterterrorism measures*: “... it is entirely conceivable that terrorists may come up with an idea so diabolical that nobody else has envisioned it, and for which no active counters have therefore been planned. It is... possible to prepare for any finite number of different contingencies, thereby forcing prospective terrorists to abandon plan A in favour of plan B, for which a defence should then also be prepared, etc. ad infinitum. However, there will always remain the “n+1 problem,” i.e. the contingency for which no defence is in place and the likelihood that the terrorists will then seek to exploit this loophole. This does not mean that solving the “n problem” has been in vain as the aggregate and cumulative effect may be to reduce the total number of successful terrorist attacks which is surely also a meaningful objective, depending... on the costs”.

Rationality of decision-making at terrorists is limited by their beliefs (Pavličević, 2015: 62)¹². As claimed by Borum *et al.* (2004: 427): “Different preincident behaviors or contextual factors may be more readily apparent in some cases than in others. For example, a terrorist target may appear to be drawn directly from the al-Qaeda training manual, while another may not. But the common behavioral element may have been that all potential targets of a particular type or in a particular region were surveilled and assessed prior to selection”. *Rationality of decision-making at terrorists is also determined by psychological mechanisms that determine the ways of their materialization*¹³, *expressed by volume and quality of information that terrorist(s) operate(s)* (Pavličević, 2015: 62). *The factor of rationality is also made of existing options*, i.e. whether the terrorists have been offered certain solution as the only possible solution (Pavličević, 2015: 63)¹⁴. Counterterrorism modus is defined by understanding these circumstances¹⁵, and *vice versa*¹⁶. But, can terrorists always assume the end of the game or predict benefits of their activities, depending of changeable or unchangeable variables in the political environment and in the

¹² Crenshaw (1981, 2012: 104) notes: “Saying that extremist groups resort to terrorism in order to acquire political influence does not mean that all groups have equally precise objectives or that relationship between means and ends is perfectly clear to an outside observer. Some groups are less realistic about the logic of means and ends than others... The degree of skill in relating means to ends seems to have little to do with the overall sophistication of the terrorist ideology”.

¹³ Crenshaw (1992, 2012: 254) writes: “... individual beliefs are likely to be stable rather than volatile. Even greater stability should characterize collective attitudes that are constantly reinforced by group interaction. Theories of cognitive consistency indicate that individuals absorb only information that supports their beliefs, ignore disconfirming evidence, fail to recognize value conflicts, and neglect to reconsider decisions once they are reached... Furthermore, the nature of a belief system itself may preclude change. The least systematic beliefs are the most resilient, and the least empirically relevant are the most incontrovertible because they cannot be tested. Vague and distant long-term goals can be an advantage. ‘True believers’ are not by nature skeptical...”.

¹⁴ It is important how the terrorist understands the offered options, or perceives and considers other options; the assumption that the *Man* always acts completely rationally is hardly plausible. Human rationality is limited, not only in terms of the incomplete and fragmented nature of knowledge.

¹⁵ It is obvious when we read Stern (2004: 176-177): “The traditional response to the threats, risks and uncertainties is the following: to convince opponents that it is better not to go on with the attack, as they will get hurt ... Such a strategy requires to have information about the opponent’s motivation and about his abilities... It is difficult to act preventively or deter an opponent who does not behave rationally... Motivated terrorists are not rational participants in the political arena... Terrorists are motivated by something other than the desire to have a good calculation between cost and benefits... Individual motivation of each individual as a terrorist, and the dynamics of the group, can lead to specific acts of violence that are consistent with their declared objectives... Deterrence requires us to understand what is precious to the opponent and, in particular, what is most precious to the opponent’s leader, personally... The best answer is to threaten very strong response, but without specifying the measures”. (*Note*: The quotes are translated from the Serbian edition of the monograph.)

Kruglanski and Fishman (2009: 25): “The organizational rationality of terrorist activities has implications for the concept of deterrence as a strategy in counterterrorism. The concept of deterrence denotes the threat of an aggressive strike against a political actor, should the latter carry out some undesirable activity (Schelling, 1960/2007). The feasibility of deterrence as a counterterrorist strategy is a positive function of the size of the terrorist organization. The larger the organization, the greater its needs: for example, in terms of territorial niche, training grounds and infrastructures. These can be threatened and targeted, thus making continued terrorist activities potentially costly for the organization”.

¹⁶ As Crenshaw (1981, 2012:105) states, “...terrorism is the strategy of a minority that by its own judgment lacks other means. When the group perceives its options are limited, terrorism is attractive because it is a relatively inexpensive and simple alternative, and because its potential reward is high... In addition to weakness, an important rationale in the decision to adopt a strategy of terrorism is impatience. Action becomes imperative... Given a perception of limited means, the group often sees the choice as between action as survival and action as the death of resistance”.

system, the shape/number of countermeasures and their stability, character and intensity of the reaction of the state (Pavlićević, 2015: 64)¹⁷.

2.3. Cluster III

Keeney and Winterfeldt (2010: 1803) state: “A better understanding of the motivation of terrorists and their reasons for selecting certain modes and targets of attack can help improve the decisions to allocate resources in the fight against terrorism. The fundamental question... is: “What do terrorists want?” We take the view that terrorists’ preferences for actions are based on their values and beliefs”. These authors *classify terrorist objectives into three categories: strategic objectives, fundamental objectives and means objectives*.¹⁸

Anyhow, terrorism *always strives to achieve the defined goals, and it can be expressed as an effective strategy that allows the achievement of political goals. Terrorist activities can have positive effects for the terrorist actors, and can even create preconditions for reaching long-term goals—at least reformulated, close or correspondent goals*¹⁹. Therefore, the rationality of terrorist activity is evaluated *via factors of political time, changed circumstances and power relations, and open perspectives* – a practice that indicates the effectiveness of such a strategy (Pavlićević, 2015: 65-66)²⁰.

¹⁷ Stohl (2008: 6-7): “When governments consider the costs of engaging in terrorist behaviors, two kinds of costs can be distinguished... *Response costs* are those costs which might be imposed by the target group and/or sympathetic or offended bystanders... What others likely will do in reaction affects the utility of a particular strategy. Most relevant to a consideration of terrorism are what might be called punitive or retributive costs imposed by the target group and/or sympathetic or offended bystanders... *Production costs* are the costs of taking the action regardless of the reactions of others. In addition to the economic cost... there is the psychological cost of behaving in a manner which most individuals, under normal conditions, would characterize as unacceptable”.

¹⁸ Keeney and Winterfeldt (2010: 1804): “Objectives are usually expressed as preferred directions of achievement or desired end states... *Strategic objectives* provide guidance for all decisions. They serve as the mechanism by which leaders can guide decisions made by different individuals and groups within an organization... If strategic objectives are not carefully defined and communicated, the guidance is minimal and some separate decisions simply won’t make sense in the larger context of the organization’s affairs. *Fundamental objectives* provide guidance for specific decisions that are usually carried out over the medium to long term. If fundamental objectives are routinely accomplished, this will lead to the eventual achievement of the strategic objectives. *Means objectives* are the short-term, day-to-day actions that promote the achievement of fundamental and strategic objectives. Some means objectives pertain directly to strategic objectives, but most are a direct means to achieve fundamental objectives”.

¹⁹ It is obvious when we read Levi and Pajović (2002: 82): „Today, when the vast majority of Latin America’s countries definitely stabilized and successfully develop its democratic institutions almost all former revolutionary guerrilla groups or movements opted for the political struggle within the system against which they recently fought using terrorist methods. The first who opted for this step was the Venezuelan communists and guerrilla of Castroian orientation led by Teodor Petkoff who founded the Movement for Socialism... Legendary Uruguayan ‘Tupamaros’ joined the political coalition Broad Front (Frente Amplio) and today have their representatives in the parliament of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay. Similar phenomena have occurred in Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and other Latin American countries”.

²⁰ For more, see: Pavlićević, 2015: 65-66. Otherwise, according to *Transnational terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law* (Dec. 2008: 33), Fernando Lopez-Alves (1989) conducted analysis of the Tupamaros (in Uruguay) on an assumption of (high) rationality of their acts (not as a sign of weakness) in accepting terrorism as a strategy „with a clear awareness that it must ultimately be abandoned afterwards“. He argues that “terror, as used by the Tupamaros, expressed a clear response to governmental actions, was geared to cause changes in the environment, and, when the cost was too high, was abandoned for what seemed a more sustainable strategy“. The Tupamaros recognized that they lacked the support of the wider population which preferred non-violent methods of solving problems because “the political system has not yet exhausted its capacity to absorb and channel the citizens demands“. From the perspective of counterterrorism, it is of importance that the movement, when the cost-benefit ratio changed (in favour of costs), was divided into groups of urban guerrillas and terrorists, orientated toward guerrilla war; hence, the army was able to easily suppress it. Notably, the government measures were a combination of “carrot and stick” measures.

As Kruglanski and Fishman (2009: 23-25) highlight: “The organizational level of analysis is of considerable importance for understanding terrorism... In this sense, terrorism may be thought of as a tactic, a means of warfare utilized where the circumstances imply its efficacy... Many terrorist undertakings require painstaking planning, detailed coordination, communication among participating operatives, and considerable financing... On the organization level at least, terrorism may be thought of as means to an end, a tool employed for a specific purpose... Psychological analyses of goal pursuit... suggest that terrorism may be relinquished or suspended when alternative means to the organization’s goal became apparent... The means-ends analysis... suggests that organizations may have different goals that may be activated at different times and appropriately affect organizational decisions concerning the use of terror”.

2.4. Cluster IV

Having in mind some researcher's warnings, we can state that reducing the terrorist personality profiles and their activities to mental health, mental problems and disorders, i.e. understanding terrorism as a form of psychopathology, is the ultimate simplification²¹. We can support the standpoint “that psychopathological states, personality profiles, and social context-based conditions, though unlikely to represent the direct causes (sufficient and/or necessary conditions) of terrorism, could well contribute to engendering the motivation for terrorism under the right conditions” (Kruglanski and Fishman, 2009: 8-9).

In an EU security study (*Transnational terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law*, 2008), it is concluded that the creators of politics have overly focused on discovering causes of radicalization in external factors, such as political and economic conditions, and that such an evaluation is valid also for the EU because its *Strategy for Combating Radicalization and Recruitment to Terrorism* nearly does not mention addressing causes of radicalization on an individual level. The study states that psychological causes of radicalization are not treated with the anti-radicalization measures. The same is stated on *Rationality*: “Individuals radicalize for different reasons, of which some are more conscious than others. Examples of intentions why people join a radical group include adventurous reasons, obtaining a specific identity, or ideological motivations. Therefore, the question arises whether radicalism is a product of rational choice... Radicalization is usually a gradual

²¹ Kruglanski and Fishman (2009: 6-7): “Silke (2003) commented that “in the early 1970s... it was widely believed that terrorists suffered from personality disorders and that there would be an exceptionally high number of clinical psychopaths, narcissists and paranoids in the ranks of the average terrorist group” (p. 30)... Walter Laqueur wrote that “all terrorists believe in conspiracies by the powerful, hostile forces and suffer from some form of delusion and persecution mania... Nonetheless, the systematic quest for a terrorist psychopathology or for a unique terrorist personality profile has yielded disappointing results. Painstaking empirical studies... found nothing particularly unique about the psychological makeup of members of terrorist organizations (for a review, see Victoroff, 2005). To the contrary, the majority of such research points to the normality of individuals involved in terrorist organizations. In this vein, Horgan (2003) commented that “despite their attractiveness... personality traits are useless as predictors for understanding why people become terrorists” (p. 114)”. Van Um (2009: 15-16) writes: “Psychological analyses were formerly thought of as providing an adequate answer to the roots of terrorism, based on the idea that terrorists were mentally abnormal or disturbed... There is good reason to believe that “the outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality” (Crenshaw, 1981: 390) and that “terrorists, by and large, are not insane at all” (Richardson, 2006: 32). These findings suggest terrorists to be rational actors. Still, it should not be left unmentioned that a great deal of studies which finds terrorists to be mentally normal is based on a small number of empirical cases... Recent research indicates an above average rate of psychological disturbances of terrorists (COT, 2007)... The analysis, nevertheless, suggests considering the findings of mentally sane terrorists with caution”. See also: Borum et al., 2004: 424-425.

process and thus a state of mind, rather than a tool that is employed to achieve a goal. In its strategies, the EU indicates that an individual must take ‘practical steps’ to become involved in terrorism, and that ‘the decision to become involved in terrorism is an individual one’ (2005). However, despite the emphasis that is laid on the role of the individual in radicalization and terrorism, no mention is made of rational choice being a reason for radicalism in the strategies” (*Transnational terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law*, 2008:23). We must know that “analyses differed in the kind and variety of motivational factors identified as critical to terrorism”²².

*The pathology of terrorism may not be primarily of individual nature but of social*²³, but we should understand it as if the terrorists dreams have come true – their experience of truth and good, ideas of beauty, justice and happiness. Clearly, it is the way to make their dreams come true, which is not only criminogenic but also unacceptable for civilization because it does not have respect for life, and it destroys beauty, justice and happiness of others (Pavlićević, 2015: 54)²⁴.

Aggression cannot be excluded from the analysis that supports reflections on destructive impulses and deepest psychological mechanisms inherent to *Man* which, in certain social conditions, give rise to or produce almost incomprehensible forms of inhuman treatment and violence of man over man that is marked as irrational. This causes tight coupling of functional mechanisms of terrorism with an ethical perspective, in turn associated with counterterrorism strategy²⁵. We must not leave out of focus that with socialization we adopt

²² In particular: “ideological reasons and personal causes”, “cocktail of feeling” or single crucial motivation - quest for emotional and social support, resistance to foreign occupation, religion as main motivation, “humiliation, exposure to violence, occupation, lack of alternative prospects, modernization, displacement, restoration of the glory of Islam, poverty, moral obligation, need to belong, desire to enter heaven, simplification of life, inspirational leadership, friendship, status, glamour, money, and support for one’s family”, “personal experience,... pain, trauma, and redemption of lost honor”. For more, see: Kruglanski and Fishman 2009: 9.

²³ It is obvious when we read Van Um (2009: 18): “As an alternative explanatory concept, it has been suggested that people do not become terrorists for political but for social reasons. Ideology and political objectives might play a less important role than expected but the “desire to belong to a group and gain the material and psychological rewards provided by membership” (Moore, 2005: 9)... Terrorist acts of socially motivated terrorists might not primarily aim at accomplishing political concessions. Instead, they could reflect an intention to develop and intensify social linkages between members of a terrorist group and to keep the group as a social unit alive (Wintrobe: 2003: 2; Moore, 2005: 8; Abrahms, 2008: 96). This concept of terrorist rationality is referred to as instrumentally rational and socially motivated or socially rational in the following. Under the assumption that terrorists indeed are primarily socially motivated, one would expect their actions to aim at maintaining the group’s existence and developing strong ties between the individuals but not on the pursuit of a stated political objective. “The survival of the group is no longer a means to an end but an end in itself [...]” (McCormick, 2003: 490)”.

²⁴ As Crenshaw (1992, 2012: 253) recalls, “The self-image of the terrorist is ambivalent, even contradictory. Terrorists need to see themselves as doing good, to justify their actions, and to maintain morale. Consequently, ‘auto-propaganda’ may be more critical to group survival than are attempts to persuade external audiences, whether governments, constituencies, or like-minded groups (Cordes, 1988). The users of terrorism often see themselves as victims, but also as an avant-garde acting on behalf of victims of injustice”.

²⁵ As Stohl (2008:7-8) states, “The psychological costs that an actor can expect from perpetrating violence on an incidental, instrumental victim involves two conjoining factors. The first factor is the extent to which human life is valued (or conversely, the strength of internalized prohibitions against violence in general). The second is the extent to which the victim can be or has been dehumanized in the mind of the violent actor. Where moral/normative prohibitions are weak and especially where victims can be viewed in other than human terms, the self-imposed costs of terrorist actions are apt to be low and hence the choice of terrorist actions more frequent (Duvall and Stohl, 1983, p. 209). The extent to which victims and potential victims can be dehumanized is affected by two important variables... The first is the perceived social distance between the government and the victim population. The second is the extent to which action is routinely and bureaucratically authorized, so that personal responsibility is perceived, by all actors in the decisional chain, to be lower for governments (I) in a conflict situation with those they define as “inferior” and/or (II) with a highly bureaucratized coercive machinery”.

a normative system that defines acceptable options of social action²⁶. Norms rest on values - which are, in turn, defined as referential within a broader conceptual context connected with the structural determinants. Our understanding of reality, based on narrow experience and interests, is basically determined by the underlying understanding of normality. Therefore, our understanding of rational action can be insufficiently capable of understanding the deepest reasons that determine the behavior of others, as well as the objectives of their acts. Avoiding limitations of our own view, we need to be able to interpret fanaticism of others - which is usually irrational from the standpoint of our principles and, at the same time, perfectly rational in value system of the other. It is the way to define adequate countermeasures (Pavličević, 2015: 42-43).

3. SEPARATION OF SOME KEY JUDGMENTS: RISKS OF TERRORISM AND COUNTERTERRORISM

Roberts and Horgan (2008: 3) recall that “the term *risk* is generally associated with the likelihood of danger or harm. In the context of offense, harm may incorporate physical, sexual and psychological damage inflicted upon an individual or group of individuals by a particular event or events... A *risk assessment* is a projection of the likelihood that a hazard, i.e. a harmful behaviour, or event, will occur”. These authors point to several elements that need to be borne in mind in the process of risk assessment: that a scope of risk assessment may show a great deal of variety depending of the goals of its realization and the character of the threat²⁷; that a risk assessment needs to consider both static and dynamic risk factors” (Roberts and Horgan (2008: 5-6)²⁸. They correctly remind that “all too often in risk assessment the focus is upon factors that raise a hazard’s risk whilst neglecting factors that reduce risk” (Roberts and Horgan, 2008: 5)²⁹, and emphasize that “the most successful... risk assessment tools are evidence-based, derived from empirical research that has

²⁶ As Kruglanski and Fishman (2009: 10) recall: “Ironically then, the willingness to die in an act of suicidal terrorism may be motivated by the *desire to live forever*”. Ibidem (2009: 22): “To say that ideological commitment is critical for the terrorist group hardly means that every terrorist “foot-soldier” has broad expertise and deep understanding of ideological arguments (whether political or religious). More likely, the “rank and file” bomber puts his/her trust in specific “epistemic authorities” who tell him/her what the ideology requires at any given time”.

²⁷ Roberts and Horgan (2008: 3): “Terrorism can encompass extortion, bombing, activities associated with the preparation of bombs, shooting, arson, and a variety of other diverse behaviour... We might for example seek to examine factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of terror group *membership*. At another level, we might also be interested in the hazard a terrorist group or an individual member of a terror group presents in terms of the likelihood of a terrorist *attack*. At another level still, we might be concerned about the risk of occurrence of *particular* expressions of terrorist violence, for example, whether we are likely to see shootings or suicide bombings by a particular group”.

²⁸ Roberts and Horgan (2008: 5-6): “Static risk factors are factors that do not change over time. These are typically historical or categorical factors, for example, the gender of an individual, features of their childhood... Roberts, Horgan (2008: 6): Dynamic risk factors, by nature, change over time. This means that that the risk may rise or fall with changes in an individual’s behaviour, circumstances and the specific risk management strategies being employed... As a very simple example, a terrorist group may present a lower risk of carrying out an attack in the absence of explosives; however, the risk that they pose will change should they somehow acquire them. It is important to acknowledge here also the possibility that the absence of certain types of weapons may be influential in the development of other forms of threat by the terrorist group. The need to obtain funds with which to purchase explosives or weapons, for example, may increase the risk of the group carrying out the supporting criminal activity... The difficulty with on-going risk assessment is of course identifying when to carry out each assessment - should this be hourly, daily, weekly, monthly etc? Unmistakably, the regularity of a risk assessment needs to be determined by the particular circumstances of the group or individual of interest”.

²⁹ See also: Roberts and Horgan, 2008: 7-8.

identified significant risk factors and the relationship that they have with the particular hazard” and stressed that “to date there has been little systematic study of the specific relationship between these risk factors and aspects of terrorism” (Roberts and Horgan, 2008: 7)³⁰. However, via several theoretical sources we will show that science nevertheless defines tools and methods capable of classifying, establishing links, and providing a basis for terrorism risk analysis, and for action in the field of counterterrorism. To emphasize, in this paper we adopt the following definition: “Willis *et al.* (2005) defined terrorism risk as a function of threat, vulnerability, and consequences. These definitions, which are reviewed below, are similar to others proposed in risk literature” (Willis, 2007: 598)³¹ Willis also emphasizes: “The risk estimates used are derived from a single model. By using a single model, this analysis is subject to all of the limitations and assumptions of the model. For example, as discussed in descriptions of the RMS Terrorism Risk Model (Willis *et al.*, 2005; RMS, 2004), the RMS analysis may not capture the interdependencies between attack modes or targets. This could lead to an underestimation of risk”³². Or, one can read: “A recent trend in counterterrorism risk analysis is to model the terrorists’ judgments, as these will guide their choices of such actions. The standard assumptions in most of these models are that terrorists are fully rational, following all the normative desiderata required for rational choices, such as having a set of constant and ordered preferences, being able to perform a cost-benefit analysis of their alternatives, among many others” (Sri Bhashyam and Montibeller, 2016: 666)³³.

³⁰ Roberts and Horgan (2008: 8) conclude: “The design of risk assessment tools in counter-terrorism will need to be informed by relevant theory and empirical research. The research will necessarily require the collection and consideration of data describing various risk factors so that relevant factors and their precise relationship to the hazard in question can be derived. This is an area in which collaboration between psychologists skilled in forensic risk assessment and practitioners working within counter-terrorism can collaborate towards mutual benefit with the sharing of ideas, data and research methodology”.

³¹ Willis (2007: 598-599): “A person or organization represents a terrorist threat when they have the intent and capability to impose damage to a target. Threat only exists when intent and capability are manifested together in a person or organization. When the scope of threat is defined in terms of a specific set of targets, a specific set of attack types, and a specific time period, probability can be used as a measure of the likelihood that an attack will occur. Thus, a measure of threat is defined as: **Measure (Threat):** *The probability that a specific target is attacked in a specific way during a specified time period, or Threat = p (attack occurs).* Since this measure for threat is uncertain, one should keep in mind that it can also be represented by a probability distribution, not a point estimate... **Measure (Vulnerability):** *The probability that damage may occur (where damage may involve fatalities, injuries, property damage, or other consequences), given a specific attack type, at a specific time, on a given target, or Vulnerability = p (attack results in damage/attack)...* **Measure (Consequence):** *The expected magnitude of damage (e.g., deaths, injuries, or property damage), given a specific attack type, at a specific time, that results in damage to a specific target or, Consequence = E [damage | attack occurs and results in damage]”.*

³² For more see Willis, 2007: 604-605.

³³ Sri Bhashyam and Montibeller (2016: 666-667) note: “... we analyze the types of assumptions made across various counterterrorism analytical models that represent malicious agents’ judgments and discuss their suitability from a descriptive point of view. We then suggest how some of these assumptions could be modified to describe terrorists’ preferences more accurately, by drawing knowledge from the fields of behavioral decision research, politics, philosophy of choice, public choice, and conflict management in terrorism... we review the main approaches to modeling threats caused by terrorism and, subsequently, discuss the assumptions they make regarding the attacker’s judgments. These approaches can be broadly classified under two modeling categories: uncertainties (regarding an attacker’s decision, capability, and success, and defender’s success) and decisions (based on the preferences of the defender and attacker). Probabilistic risk analysis (PRA) relies heavily on modeling uncertainties, using expert elicitation to capture the probabilities associated with them. Game theory (GT), on the other hand, relies on modeling a situation based on the decisions of the players, making the assumptions that both actors are rational. As adversarial risk analysis (ARA) combines both approaches, it needs to make assumptions in both categories”.

We also need to keep in mind the following findings, statement and recommendations:

- “On the individual level, dealing with terrorists’ *motivation* appears of key importance. Without undermining motivation, reducing terrorists’ *ability* to launch a given terrorist tactic may often have but a temporary effect, lasting until the terrorists discover a way to restore their hurt capability, or until they find a new tactic free from prior limitations” (Kruglanski and Fishman, 2009: 27)³⁴;
- “Whether terrorists collectively suffer from paranoia or wallow in narcissism seems, however, to be of little operational significance to investigators, intelligence analysts, case officers, military operatives, or defense planners. The guiding principle for any behavioral research that seeks to inform questions of homeland or national security is not whether the study question is psychologically interesting or relevant, but whether it is operationally relevant” (Borum *et al.*, 2004: 423)³⁵;
- “The conception of terrorism as a tool, or means to an end, has implications for strategies to discourage terrorism. This may require persuading the organization that (a) this particular means is ineffectual given the organization’s objectives, (b) there exist alternative, more effective means to the organization’s ends, and (c) terrorism constitutes a hindrance to the attainment of other important objectives” (Kruglanski and Fishman, 2009: 36);
- “The main argument... is that while the “old” terrorism can be explained by the rational choice theory, its “new” version represents a substantial departure from rationality. The article ends with the premise that one-fit-all solution to terrorism cannot be found” (Nalbandov, 2013: 92-93)³⁶.

³⁴ Kruglanski and Fishman (2009: 33) also correctly estimate: “Whereas deradicalization processes are *reactive* by definition, it is important to initiate preventive processes to *immunize* individuals against radicalization. Community programs including workshops, summer camps, lectures, and seminars in which radical notions are exposed and discredited could be of considerable value. Beyond the intellectual process of counterarguing radical ideas, reduction of potential recruits’ motivation to embrace such ideas may be critical. This may require an alleviation of significance loss prompting circumstances that instill the motivation to accept terrorism as a means to desirable ends. Some such circumstances may be highly idiosyncratic and personal (e.g., infractions by an individual with respect to norms of her or his community)”.

³⁵ Borum *et al.* (2004: 425-426): “First... an investigator may need to know: “Does this person (or groups) pose a threat to U.S. assets or interests, and if so, what kind of threat?”... Similarly, the research plan should take into account the process of investigation and analysis typically applied to the problem, including what kinds and sources of data or information are available... Second, the study should maintain a behavior-based focus. When exploring the realm of terrorism or other violent behavior, speculating about the personality or internal dynamics of the actors may seem intriguing or even tempting. These questions, though perhaps having some theoretical or even scientific merit, are unlikely to produce operationally relevant findings, for at least two reasons: (1) Individual personality factors tend not to be the causes that best explain violent behavior, nor do they help reliably to distinguish “terrorists” from “non-terrorists”, and (2) This type of information tends not to be routinely known or “knowable” to investigators or analysts examining a potential threat... Maintaining a behavioral focus in the study, therefore, enhances operational utility and leads to more specific threat assessment indicators. Third, the interpretation or lessons from the study must derive from an analysis of incident-related behaviors. This means that facts should drive conclusions. Those designing and analyzing the research should recognize that preconceived notions, assumptions, or conventional wisdom may be wrong. A major objective of research is to submit ideas and hypotheses to critical scrutiny. Operational research should set aside preconceptions about what “causes” the behavior, and redirect interest to what behaviors precede the outcome”.

³⁶ There is a basis for this conclusion. Borum *et al.* (2004: 421) consider the threat of the “new terrorism” in a similar way: “Al-Qaeda and the transnational terrorist groups of the present, however, are motivated and operate much differently than the stereotypical groups of the past. There is a command structure for al-Qaeda’s small, but effective core, and a decentralized outer band, that is level and variant to control and autonomy. Unlike past terrorist groups, al-Qaeda has the strength of numbers, with cells represented in multiple countries worldwide, and their technical training and sophistication are far greater. Targets are selected with varying discrimination, from

Borum *et al.* (2004: 428) supports the view that “the best weapon against international terrorism is good intelligence”³⁷. We ought to firmly support the theoretical approach which states: “For the subsequent analysis, counter-terrorism measures are discussed for the various concepts of terrorist motivations and levels of rationality. Developing a spectrum or typology of concepts of terrorist rationality and derive adequate counter-terrorism measures seems to be a promising approach to deal with the various forms of terrorism” (Van Um, 2009: 7)³⁸. Namely, Van Um (2009: 6) “aims to critically determine the explanatory power of concepts of rationality for terrorism with a focus on instrumental rationality incorporating motivations beyond the political one... It is shown that the concept of *instrumentally rational and politically motivated* terrorism in fact is not capable of explaining all terrorist behavior. Counter-terrorism policies which aim at countering *politically rational* terrorists only may thus be ignoring the true motives of terrorists. It is further found that none of the alternative concepts, which are discussed in this thesis, account for all terrorist actions. Instead, all of the concepts proved capable of explaining certain aspects of terrorism only... The following question is derived: *Q3: How should counter-terrorism strategies be designed taking into account the explanatory power of the analyzed concepts of terrorist rationality?*” Yet, in understanding the phenomenon of terrorism, we must emphasize that the political motives, goals and the instrumental rationality of terrorism remain in the forefront.

symbolic to economic and opportunistic, and accessibility and tactics are chosen to increase the magnitude and scope of lethality. Al-Qaeda’s leadership has gone to great lengths to adopt the linear model of thinking and problem solving that is readily found in Western doctrine, and which counters their otherwise more natural associative thinking patterns. Killing is no longer the incidental outcome of an attack; it is the central purpose of the attack. Al-Qaeda’s objectives and ideologies remain much more elusive, in that there is less attributed connection between the chosen action and the stated cause”.

³⁷ Borum *et al.* (2004: 428) explains: “Information from operational research can best be used to inform the collection, analysis, and dissemination of protective intelligence, and the assessment and management of potentially threatening situations... A behavior-based, operational analysis of past attacks and attempts can identify mechanisms for target selection, surveillance, communication, intelligence gathering, subverting security, and acquiring and preparing weapons to help front-line data gatherers focus and organize their observations... As noted, an advantage of research -defined here as systematic observation across multiple cases - is that it can reveal patterns of activity and deviations from those patterns. By understanding the patterns and sequences of pre-attack activity, investigators will have a refined set of guiding questions that frame the analysis of threat-related information. Questions arising from research might include: How are targets selected? What information is gathered about potential targets prior to the attack? How is that information gathered? How are the means of the attack chosen? How are they acquired? How many people are involved? What are their roles? How do they communicate? In this way, analysts can interpret incoming information in relation to other information, patterns, and past events”.

³⁸ Van Um (2009: 7) also states: “The typology of terrorist motivations and levels of rationality is based on ideal types of concepts and does not allow for a mix of motives for pragmatic reasons. Consequently, this research does not claim to consider all gradual levels of rationality. In reality, terrorists might show a combination of motives and changing rationality over time (Stern, 2003a: 5), which is not reflected within this typology. Still, a typology based on ideal types of terrorist behavior has the advantage of structuring the diverse phenomena of terrorism and allowing for clear counter-terrorism measures to be developed. In this way, differences and similarities of counter-terrorism measures at hand can be identified”.

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RACIONALNOST TERORISTIČKIH AKTIVNOSTI, KONTRATERORIZAM I ANALIZA RIZIKA

Cilj članka je da, iz raznovrsnih teorijskih perspektiva, prikaže korelacije između racionalnosti terorističkih aktivnosti i drugih ključnih elemenata koji čine fenomenologiju terorizma – polazeći od stava da razumevanje aspekta racionalnosti određuje procenu rizika od terorizma i utiče na politiku borbe protiv terorizma. Autor počinje analiziranjem stanovišta Pavličevića (2015) i uvidom u više teorijskih izvora radi potpuneg i dubljeg razumevanja razmatranih relacija. Ističe se značaj analitičkih modela i postavki koje naglašavaju da je, pri proceni i analizi rizika, od prvorazrednog značaja imati u vidu različite koncepte terorističkih motivacija i nivoa racionalnosti, kao i karakter ciljeva terorista. Autor podržava zaključke istraživača da jedino sveobuhvatno razumevanje racionalnosti, iz različitih naučnih perspektiva stvara osnovu za izgradnju efikasne strategije borbe protiv terorizma. Mada moramo naglasiti da, u razumevanju fenomena terorizma, politički motiv, ciljevi i njegova instrumentalna racionalnost ostaju na prvom mestu.

Ključne reči: *procena rizika, racionalni izbor, verovanja, motivacija, psihopatologija.*