THE CHALLENGE OF TERRORISM – CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE POST POST – COLD WAR ERA

Olesea TARANU[1]
[1]Post-PhD Fellow, SOP HRD/159/1.5/S/133675 Project, Romanian Academy, Iaşi Branch, olesea.taranu@yahoo.com

Abstract: Considered by some as the meta-event of the XXIst century, the 9/11 terrorist attacks have brought to the center of debate a phenomenon with ancient origins which has undergone a significant change since the end of the Cold War. With the destruction of the twin towers, we have seen a major shift of political terrorism in a new form, irrational, unpredictable and difficult to control and this trend was reconfirmed by the attacks in Madrid, London, Beslan, Domodedovo, Chicago or Paris to name just a few. The major impact of the terrorist attacks was threefold: they eliminated the confidence, affirmed at the end of the Cold War by the liberals, in the peaceful future of the international system, they shocked the international public opinion by destroying the image of the invincibility of the U.S., and they highlighted the vulnerability of Western states, showing, among other things, the perverse effects of globalization. Also, we cannot ignore the renewal and development, within this context, of the discussion regarding the changing nature of warfare, the profile of the new asymmetric combatant and the states` decisions to adopt controversial policies or reorientation of national security strategies and international actors` (states and organizations) decisions to move the terrorist threat from the periphery to the center of the security agendas. Asserting new terrorism as a severe threat to international security generated a major impact on academics, among theorists that contribute to the development of security studies discipline. Whether they assumed a traditional perspective, state centered and militarized, or they militated for the extending/deepening of security, all considered terrorism as a challenge that requires a thorough analysis of the new realities. This article aims to identify the elements of continuity and change in the new international order, highlighting a number of paradoxes that seem to shape the post post - Cold War security environment.
Keywords: Terrorism, assimetric threat, security studies, post post-Cold War

Introduction

The disappearance of the Soviet Union from the international arena has led to the dismantling of the bipolar order based on the rivalry of the superpowers which dominated the international relations since the end of the second world conflagration. The period that followed the end of the Cold War until September 11th, 2001, the date of the terrorist attacks against the United States of America, may be considered a transition era from the bipolar system specific to the Cold War to the unipolar system inevitably dominated by the United States of America. This post-Cold War era began in an atmosphere of hope, confidence and optimism under the auspices of the liberal democratic precepts which regained the attention of analysts and politicians. While Francis Fukuyama stated the famous thesis of the „end of history" (Fukuyama 1992), in an address in front of the Congress on September 11th, 1990, the American president George Bush expressed his confidence in a new era liberated from the threat of terror, powerful in seeking justice and peace, an era in which the nations of the world could prosper, in which the rule of law replaces the law of the jungle, a world in which nations share the responsibility for ensuring freedom and justice, in which the powerful respects the right of the weak (Clark 2001, 636). Nevertheless, the great expectations and hopes regarding the security of the international system in the conditions of the victory of democracy and capitalism in the confrontation with the communist system and the centralised and planned economy were rapidly dispelled by the concrete evolutions on the international scene. The wars in the ex-Yugoslavia have shocked an Europe which hadn't been confronted with the cruelties of armed conflicts since the end of the Second World War, the tribal wars of an extreme violence carried out in Rwanda and Somalia at the beginning and at mid 1990s or the series of conflicts burst in the ex-Soviet region have managed to shatter, forever, the illusion of peace and stability of the global system. The relative stability of the bipolar system was replaced by the instability of the unipolarity. The agenda of the international security also registered significant transformations: the central place of the threat related to the mutual assured destruction (MAD), concept emerged from the duality specific to the Cold War, is seized by ethnic, local and civil conflicts, economic instability, the widening gap between the rich North and the poor South, the threat of the conflicts burst among the great civilisation layers (see Samuel Huntington with his „Clash of Civilisations") etc. This is the period when the globalisation has given a new momentum to the neoliberal economic order, placing a considerable power in the hands of the multinational corporations, which has led to a significant reduction of the states' role as key actors in International Relations.

The terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 against the United States of America marked the end of this transition period since the Cold War and led to the beginning of a new era in which terrorism has become the main threat to the international security. A group of individuals not associated to a national army, not wearing the official marks of a state and armed with non-conventional weapons managed to transform three civil flights in projectiles that targeted the American symbols World Trade Centre and Pentagon and their action, as well as the subsequent consequences, represented a clear evidence that the world entered into a new era – a post post-Cold War era.

The contemporary terrorism – a new form of an old phenomenon

The terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 were considered by certain analysts as the meta-event of the beginning of the 21st century. Beyond the number of victims (relatively small, compared to a conventional war), the impact of this event has had the value of a veritable political-military seism. Thus, these attacks have eliminated the confidence in a peaceful future, they have produced a major shock both in the USA and at the level of the international public opinion, they have destroyed the invulnerability image of the United States proving that the world's first military power also may be a target, even on its own territory, they have highlighted the changing nature of conflicts and the potential of the asymmetrical enemies of obtaining surprising victories over apparently more powerful rivals, they have determined states to adopt a series of controversial measures and policies, reorienting the security strategies and moving the terrorist threat on top of the political and security agendas. Irrespective of being or not being the target of some terrorist attacks, the majority of states and international organisations adopted in the following years new security strategies or programmatic documents which kept terrorism on top of the list as a major threat requiring special measures. And while the answer adopted by the USA to the terrorist attacks, the Global War against Terror (GWT) surprises less, it is worth mentioning the fact that even the European Union, an international actor recognised for its role as soft power, expresses its concern and places the new threat on top of potential threats to the security of the community area. Thus, for example, in 2003, the member states of the European Union adopted a programmatic document that aimed at the security of the community area, known as „A secure Europe in a better world". Recognising the fact that large-scale aggression against member states was unlikely at that

moment, the document noted nevertheless that Europe was confronted with more diverse threats, less visible and less predictable[1] such as terrorism, Europe being a target as well as a basis for such a type of terrorism (logistical bases of Al Qaeda were discovered in the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Spain and Belgium), and that their concerted action at European level was essential. This phenomenon was seen as the result of certain complex causes which included the pressure of modernisation, the cultural, social and political crises as well as the alienation of young people living in foreign societies.

The evolution of the contemporary terrorism contributed to the relaunch and development of the discussions on the asymmetrical war and the explanation constitutes the belief of some authors according to which the terrorist represents the archetype of the asymmetrical warrior (Thornton 2007, 25). As in the case of terrorism, the asymmetrical war is not a 20th century product. Even from the beginning of the history, the protagonists of wars adopted what is known as the asymmetrical approach, found even in the oldest writings on war under the form of principles on identifying and targeting the vulnerable points of the adversary adopting a different and surprising behaviour[2]. The asymmetrical tactics were efficiently used by the Germanic tribes against the Roman legions, by the English infantry against a much more numerous French force at Agincourt in 1415, by the irregular Spanish troops in the Napoleonic wars, by the Vietcong against the American opponents, by the Afghans in their fight against Soviet people. Today they have become the main tactic of some smaller and weaker sub-state actors such as terrorist groups, guerrilla and insurgents movements, etc. In order to understand what differentiates the asymmetrical war from the previous fight forms we must note first the fact that asymmetrical does not mean uneven. While the symmetry supposes a mirror image which can be bigger or smaller, asymmetry does not imply resemblance anymore. There are numerous definitions given to the asymmetrical type of war, from those extremely general which understand this phenomenon as a strategy, tactic or war or conflict method (Thornton 2007, 19), to others, much more comprehensive such as that offered by Steven Metz and Douglas Johnson, according to which the asymmetrical war supposes acting, organizing yourself and thinking differently from your opponent with the aim of maximising your own advantages, exploiting your opponent's weaknesses, undertaking initiative or obtaining a much more significant freedom of movement. This war may take a strategic-military, strategic-political or an operational form or a combination of these forms, including different methods, technologies, values, organizations, temporal perspectives (Thornton 2007, 20) etc. In order to facilitate the understanding of the concept and of the process, Rod Thornton simplifies this definition, considering the asymmetrical war a violent action undertaken by the weak, by state or sub-state actors, against the more powerful seeking to generate in-depth effects at all levels, from the tactic level to the strategic level, by using their own relative advantages against the vulnerabilities of a much more powerful opponent, often implying the use of some methods unacceptable under the international rules on conduct of war, methods which are radically different (Thornton 2007, 1-2). The algoritm used by the asymmetrical combatants to develop their actions may be expressed as follows: "Impact = Shock x Destruction x Visibility", the success of all actions undertaken being correlated to the attainment of an impact as significant as possible. In this respect, it should be noted the essential transformation suffered by the contemporary terrorism, different

from the old type of terrorism, the political one. If political terrorists avoided significant civil human losses, their preferred targets being politicians, heads of state, officials of central administration (such as in the case of ETA or IRA attacks), following Sun Tzu's principle "Kill one, terrify a thousand", the new terrorists seek the attainment of an impact as significant as possible, attacking their enemy anywhere, anytime, targeting the enemy's national symbols, generating panic and chaos, exacerbating an acute feeling of insecurity and uncertainty, using weapons and training gained in the West while the techniques seem taken from the teachings of Sun Tzu or Mao Tze-Dun, demonstrating their efficiency precisely because of the distinctive and surprise element in front of military forces which still largely rely on the experience of the Cold War, when they were trained for a conventional conflict, against a known enemy - USSR, on a specific, familiar ground – the plains of West Germany. Nowadays, the new enemy can take any form, from a 12-year old child armed with a machine-gun to a woman carrying an explosive device blowing it up in front of an institution or in a crowded airport, to a former graduate of an American university armed with a cutter on board of an airplane transforming it in a destructive projectile. It should be noted that the old principle followed by the political terrorists has registered an important transformation so that the current asymmetrical enemies prefer to "kill a thousand civilians in order to terrify a million". It becomes evident to everyone that the challenge represented by the asymmetrical war is a huge one. And, although the phenomenon is not a new one, being used for thousands of years by the weaker combatants against a stronger opponent, there have been important changes in its manner of conduct, from the irrationality of certain actions to the specific targeting of civilians, the use of techniques and weapons produced and marketed in the West which turn against their own citizens, the diversification of the combatants while the rampant rhythm of globalisation does nothing but to favour the development of this phenomenon. The capacity of adaptation and transformation of the practices, techniques and asymmetrical combatants is high. At a time when the military supremacy of the United States is undisputed, with no rival able to defeat America today in a conventional war, it has become evident for those trying to challenge the West that only the asymmetrical tactics could succeed against major powers benefitting from advantages on military, logistical, financial and organizational levels (Frunzeti 2006, 99-100). And if the asymmetrical war becomes the great challenge to security in the 21st century and the determination of the new combatants of engaging themselves in an endless war against the West is undisputed (Dunne 2005, 265), the security of the international environment will mostly depend on the capacity of the West of demonstrating adaptability, abandoning the narrow, rigid and outdated way of action and planning, the old pyramid organizational culture replacing it with a network one (Frunzeti 2006, 112), increasing in turn the flexibility, the reaction force and the efficiency of the new missions and troops engaged in a different fight which does not respect the international rules of war, in a foreign and hostile environment.

The contemporary terrorism – continuity and change in the field of Security Studies

The terrorist attacks from 2001 represent, beyond doubt, a turning point in the evolution of Security Studies as a discipline, the terrorist phenomenon representing a major challenge, both for professionals and academics. The transformation of the political terrorism into a new, irrational, unpredictable form, extremely difficult to control, the manifestation of this phenomenon and the scale of the consequences triggered by the actions of the terrorist groups in a complex environment have determined prompt political reactions from state actors, seeming to bring to the fore the topic related to national security and the reaffirmation of the importance of the military resources challenging at the same time the great theoretical movements outlining this discipline. Some authors hastened to declare the

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[1] "A secure Europe in a better world. European Security Strategy" available online at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf, accessed on 29.03. 2015

[2] These asymmetrical principles result from the works of Thucydides, Sun Tzu, Sun Bin or Niccolo Machiavelli

September 11th attacks as the meta-event of the 21st century, with an impact similar to the USSR collapse predicting the fact the Global War against Terror will mark the evolution of the Security Studies in the same way the Cold War marked the evolution of this discipline during the previous century. Although the interest given to terrorism does not represent a novelty element, with a vast literature analysing the appearance, the development or the consequences of this phenomenon, it should be noted, after the events from September 2001, the transfer from bottom to the top of the issues on the security agenda, aspect confirmed by the security strategies of the states and international organizations as well as by the significant volume of works on this topic. The transformation of terrorism from a marginal issue into a central one has represented a major challenge both for the adepts of the traditional perspective on security and for the representatives of the theories questioning the traditional assumptions, asking and militating for the extension and/or the deepening of the Security Studies. In the following, we shall try to briefly present the way in which the Security Studies, as an academic discipline, have adapted in a new context and have reflected the evolution of terrorism on security agendas.

The adepts of the traditional perspective on security, of realist/neorealist origin, have given special weight to the new challenges and events determined by the terrorist phenomenon in general and by the terrorist attacks from 2001, respectively the Global War against Terror initiated as subsequent response, in particular. The fervour of these analysts seems to be explained by the fact that, at least at first sight, the new events seemed to confirm older scenarios on the instability of the unipolar order presenting a huge conflictual potential (see John Mearsheimer' thesis on "return in the future"), the emergence of new threats of military or civilisation nature, the realist traditional agenda providing a solid basis for discussions. Although the post-Cold War era seemed to give justice to the traditional assumptions on security, marking the active return of the war issue, the September events took by surprise even the traditionalists who didn't foresee the possibility of an attack on the territory of the USA, nor the consequences of such an attack (the involvement of the USA and the allies in two wars). Two major challenges to the traditionalist theories can be found (Buzan and Hansen 2009, 230-231) – on one hand, the initiation of the GWT emphasizes the interest for using force and war in general and, on the other hand, the new era has determined the questioning of the state-centric assumptions and of those related to the actors' rationality. In the first case, certain questions arise on the changing nature of war in the new context, when the state is challenged by non-state opponents, the researchers' concerns being to determine whether this new type of conflict represents a dark side of globalization or a clash of civilizations, what is the face of the new enemy, what are his weaknesses and strong points, how could be obtained the victory against this enemy, what kind of alliances, tactics or strategies are necessary in this war (Buzan and Hansen 2009, 230-231). In the second case, the surprising element was the fact that the terrorist attacks on the territory of the USA represented the action of 19 individuals not of an army created and organized to fight on behalf of a state. Although the American administration made significant efforts at discourse level immediately after this event in view of establishing a connection between the individuals responsible for the attacks and a certain state, the issue related to the new non-state combatants has not disappeared. Another interesting aspect that can be noted in the new context is the questioning of the neo-realistic assumptions on actors' rationality. If for the neo-realist Kenneth Waltz and for those sharing his point of view, the state is always an actor seeking to maximise its own benefits and interests, being essentially preoccupied by its own survival (see Waltz 2006), in the post post-Cold War the thesis relating to the actors' rationality does not seem to apply anymore to the new combatants.

The terrorist attacks from September 2001 and the subsequent GWT have had a different impact on the theories that required and militated for the extension and/or the deepening of the security agenda. While some authors preferred to continue the development of the same topics, considering that the new events do not have the capacity of essentially modifying the evolution of the discipline, other authors, representing mostly the discursive theories such as Post-structuralism, Critical Constructivism and the Copenhagen School have given a special attention to the new realities (Buzan and Hansen 2009, 243). Starting from the idea that the security is a discursive process shaping threats and identities, the adepts of these theories analysed in numerous studies the way in which the identities of the authors of the terrorist attacks have been shaped in the western discourses or the way in which the military actions that followed in the framework of the GWT were legitimised at discourse level, through the mobilisation of some universal positive categories such as civilization, democracy, human rights, development or reconstruction in the fight against the "Other". In order to outline the portrait of the terrorist actor, the constructivist and post-structuralist researchers reemphasize elements such as emotions, passion and feelings, elements that diminish the importance of the assumptions on actors' rationality. The images of the prisoners tortured by the American guards from Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib as well as the crisis of the Danish caricatures have represented an interest element for the critical theories that have brought to the fore of their discussions phenomena such as the visual securitization, the role of the new media techniques in the contemporary conflicts and their impact on politics and discourses. The Feminist Security Studies authors gave a special attention to the GWT analysing the discursive practices aiming at legitimising war, analysing the way this war is fought, the representation of soldiers and civilians or the post-conflict reconstruction process. The great majority of the authors pertaining to Constructivism, Feminism and Post-structuralism expressed their interest and concern on the impact of the development of technology, global supervision, communication networks, smart weapons, on the importance of cyberspace for the essential infrastructure – all these being analysed in relation to the discursive processes. For the adepts of the Critical Studies and the Copenhagen School, a topic of interest was represented by the way in which "the securitization of terrorism" was performed by way of practices that enhanced the tension between security and freedom and the difficulty of reconciling the need of ensuring citizens' security and the belief in the individual freedom. The Critical Studies theorists have analysed the changes from the new security environment from the combatants' perspective, noting the discrepancy between the old enemy of the Cold War – state actor, easy to identify, vulnerable to classic military threats and the new enemy, the terrorist, an unknown face until he commits the attack. The nature of the new enemy increases the importance and the necessity of developing "profiling" actions and the effect of such profiling and supervision actions creates what could be known as an "insecurity society" in which each individual is warned to be attentive and alert to any other individual, group, activity or work, the human body being considered a potential carrier of insecurity. These findings reaffirm the importance of the topic related to bio-security and infectious diseases (HIV/AIDS, avian influenza or any other virus possessing the capacity of globally expanding itself), they reaffirm the interest given to the aspects correlated with the policies adopted to ensure frontiers through visas and the introduction of the biometric passports or the excessive increase of threats and risk factors in the contemporary society, favouring "daily risk management" practices, as Ulrik Beck expressed it (Buzan and Hansen 2009, 249-250).

In the conclusion of this study, we notice that the events from September 2001 and the Global War against Terror have represented a special challenge not only for the political factors involved in the process of drafting security policies but also for the representatives of the academic environment. It must be

recognised that the Security Studies researchers have assumed their intellectual obligation of analysing the new events and of adapting the discourses and analyses to the new realities, offering thus an answer to the challenges of the post post-Cold War era depending on the intellectual background and the theories to which they adhered. The presence of the continuity elements on the security agenda was doubled by the development of new processes or phenomena, noticing sometimes a series of paradoxes that outline the contemporary security environment. To this end, we shall mention the fact that, although the terrorist actions question the conception according to which the state is the main reference object of security, the answers adopted in terms of security policies clearly reaffirm the importance and role of the state, placing the national security at the heart of the discussions. As regards the relation between internal and external threats, the aspects that can be noted are, on one hand, the capacity and even the specificity of the terrorist phenomenon of manifesting itself and acting at transnational level, beyond the classic frontiers, and on the other hand, the states' intention and decision of ensuring the security of physical as well as of biometric and digital frontiers. In respect of the prevailing types of threats in the new international environment, it is noticed the reaffirmation of the importance of the traditional military threats but, at the same time, we observe the continuous presence of certain issues supported mostly by the new approaches concerned about the environmental threats, societal security, gender-based security, the relation between religion and security, etc.

Conclusions
The terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 have marked the beginning of a new post post-Cold War era. From a marginal topic, considered mostly by those nations confronting themselves with a series of political-identity conflicts, terrorism occupies nowadays a central place on the security agendas of the states and main international organisations. The terrorist threat has contributed to the transformation of security strategies and politics, has favoured the reconsideration of the state's role in the new global order and has emphasized the pervert side of globalization, generating an environment marked by uncertainty and insecurity. This form of asymmetric war, adopted by terrorists, has affected the international security, has transformed civilians into favourite targets, has generated a new type of combatant who does not fight in the name of a country or for a country, has emphasised the limited efficiency of the classical traditional fight tactics of the West and has demonstrated the enhanced adaptability, the flexibility and the innovative character of the terrorists. Certainly, the war is no longer what it was and the world cannot be today as it was before September 11th (Olson 2011, 3)
Irrespective of the group to which we adhere - the traditionalists or the adepts of extension and/or deepening of security, terrorism represents a major challenge for the contemporary international environment. For the traditionalists, the importance of the phenomenon is due to questioning the state's role in the new environment as well as to the possible consequences of the use of mass destruction weapons in case the terrorists would manage to take possession of them. For the adepts of the extension and/or deepening of security, the importance of the new phenomenon is explained by the ability of the illegitimate actors of generating, in response to their destructive activities, discourses powerful enough to reduce or even to override the legitimacy of the liberal order. However, nowadays there is no unanimous agreement among the Security Studies analysts on the clear directions of evolution of the international security environment. When asked about the significance of the French revolution, the Chinese Prime-Minister Chou En Lai declared that it was too early to give an opinion on it (White, Little, Smith, 2005, 1). It is more than evident the fact that the difficulty to which we are confronted today, namely that of creating scenarios on the future of the current order, still in an ongoing process of configuration, is huge and the futurology exercises are not covered by such an approach.

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