



LOW-COST ATTACKS, UNNOTICEABLE PLOTS? OVERVIEW ON THE ECONOMICAL CHARACTER OF CURRENT TERRORISM

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„Kill one, frighten ten thousand”.

Sun Tzu¹

Counterterrorism efforts have seen an increasing demand all over the world. Given the increasingly sophisticated detection equipment, terrorists chose between two options: surpass authorities at technological level or revert to simple techniques that outwit detection abilities. Tendencies show that they incline to choose the second option. It is not only cheaper to produce “bombs in the kitchen of one’s mum”, but when taking into account the accessibility, detectability and transportability of conventional military equipment, it is the only “logical” way to a global jihad. While counterterrorist authorities are thinking about the next phase of “arms race”, a similarly important question is the increased use of the simple equipment on a global level. In the field of prevention, the simpler a weapon, the harder it is to detect. In this article, my aim is not to give ideas to future fighters, but to highlight the issue of low-cost attacks.

Keywords: terrorism, terror attacks, bombings, knife-attack, Al-Qaeda, IS.

Introduction

In the 1990s and early 2000s, jihadist fighters in Europe operated in groups and planned bomb attacks with certain types of explosives. Their ideological link to the “mother cell” was strong, they mostly had prior incidents in connection with their beliefs and their incompatibility with the mainstream social norms. Financing and preparing the past decade’s incidents were mostly long-planned, in recent years, however, more terrorists have worked as a “lone wolf”, separated geographically and logistically from the organisations’ main area of operation. Moreover, it can be seen, that they frequently used a broader repertoire of weapons besides bombs, including knives, axes and handguns as well². As it is written in the first publication of Al Qaeda’s *Inspire*

¹ Defence Viewpoints, *Terrorism from Sun Tzu onwards – Part 1*, 2009, available at <http://www.defenceviewpoints.co.uk/articles-and-analysis/terrorism-from-sun-tzu-onwards-part-1>, accessed on 20.03.2017.

² Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen, *The Modus Operandi of Jihadi Terrorists in Europe, Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2014, available at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/388/html>, accessed on 07.02.2017.

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magazine in 2010, terrorist organizations aim to broaden the apparatus of applicable weapons, in order to reduce the dependence of individuals to the main logistics system.

In 2010, Al Qaeda inspired its followers with the following sentences: “Can I make an effective bomb that causes damage to the enemy from ingredients available in any kitchen in the world? The answer is yes”³. Followingly, it teaches various methods for making an explosive device. The instructions are clear, the ingredients cost next to nothing. Facing the issue of these hardly controllable processes, both counterterror agencies and leaders expressed their concern for the poor detectability of future terror plots.

Former President Barack Obama addressed the nation in 2015 on domestic and international terrorism, claiming: “Over the last few years, however, the terrorist threat has evolved into a new phase. As we have become better at preventing complex, multifaceted attacks like 9/11, terrorists turn to less complicated acts of violence like the mass shootings that are all too common in our society. It is this type of attack that we saw at Fort Hood in 2009, in Chattanooga earlier this year and now in San Bernardino. As groups like IS grew stronger amidst the chaos of war in Iraq and then Syria, and as the Internet erases the distance between countries, we see growing effort by terrorists to poison the minds of people like the Boston Marathon bombers and the San Bernardino killers”⁴.

Al-Qaeda has been instrumental in shaping the threat from Jihadi terrorism in Europe, but as of 2014, new and powerful actors were on the rise. At the same year with the Obama speech, in 2015, FBI Director James Comey added, that “it’s not the al Qaeda of old. The al Qaeda of old was interested in the multipronged, national landmark-based, careful, long-planned attack with carefully vetted operatives. We still face

that challenge, but the Al Qaeda of old was very different of what we see today. (...) IS thinks about their territory in a different way. They’re not focused on landmark multipronged, long tail event. He want people to be killed in their name”⁵.

The editors of a special edition of the al Qaeda’s on-line magazine, *Inspire*, boast that what they call “Operation Hemorrhage”⁶ was cheap and easy. “Two Nokia phones, \$150 each, two HP printers, \$300 each, plus shipping, transportation and other miscellaneous expenses add up to a total bill of \$4,200. That is all what Operation Hemorrhage cost us. (...) On the other hand this supposedly ‘foiled plot’, as some of our enemies would like to call [it], will without a doubt cost America and other Western countries billions of dollars in new security measures”. The magazine warned that future attacks will be “smaller, but more frequent”⁷.

Based on the trends Petter Nesser and Anne Stenersen identified early in 2014, besides bomb attacks and armed assaults the most likely tactical innovation is a combination of several crude methods such as arson and small bomb attacks in the future operation of the organisation. This assumption was proven to be right. Moreover, there were also new tactics, which could not be seen in the repertoire of terrorism in Europe before. These tactics for instance include the vehicle-ramming, which was represented in the 2015 Graz, and 2016 Nice and Berlin attacks. Such method was previously frequently implemented in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, vehicles were also used in another context (suicide car bombs) during the Afghan and Iraqi operations as well. Such attacks could be used to target locations where large numbers of people congregate,

³ Al Qaeda, *Inspire*, Issue 1, 2010, p. 33. available at <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/aqap-inspire-magazine-volume-1-uncorrupted.pdf>, accessed on 09.02.2017.

⁴ Youtube, *Obama Addresses Nation On Terrorism - Full Speech*, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r88oQkL0Ocg>, accessed on 09.02.2017.

⁵ James Comey, *Politics and Public Policy Today*, July 30, 2015, available at https://archive.org/details/CSPAN3_20150730_190000_Politics_and_Public_Policy_Today/start/0/end/60, accessed on 09.03.2017.

⁶ In October 2010, jihadists were able to sneak bombs hidden in printer cartridges onto two cargo planes. Due to strong intelligence efforts, authorities disabled both bombs before they were set to explode.

⁷ Al Qaeda, *Inspire*, Issue 3. 2011, pp. 4-17, available at <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/inspire-magazine-3.pdf>, accessed on 09.02.2017.



while ramming offers terrorists with limited access to explosives or weapons an opportunity to conduct an attack with minimal prior training or experience⁸.

The simpler the attack, the harder to detect. Law enforcement forces and military units face the challenge of hardly identifiable targets and unpredictable places of attacks. Although, we might assume some kind of “primary” of those individuals with symbolic value or cultural institutes, that represents the main strategic locations in the Christian (or Western) culture, but when considering the prior motivations behind terrorist attacks, defining the targets become a difficult question. Jihadist individuals, following the radical ideology of organizations in Europe will prefer attacking sub-national communities rather than societies at large, in order to generate discomfort and instability⁹. Choosing the best location for a strike is still an important part of the tactical planning of radical organizations, but since the means and nature of global terrorism changed, the only basic assumptions we may stick to when trying to counter and prevent an incident are the motivations of radical attacks. These are:

- Disseminating fear in the targeted population, and in those who are neutral to the cause.
- Assuring that the targeted groups reach mass confusion.
 - Creating negative financial effect.
 - Generating political discomfort and forcing government to change the policy.
 - Enhancing publicity, using the elements of media.
 - Psychological effects: the “good cause” versus the “bad”, legitimising ideas on conspiracy, acting in absence of remorse, “the herd instinct”¹⁰.

⁸ USA Department of Homeland Security (*U//FOUO*) *DHS-FBI Warning: Terrorist Use of Vehicle Ramming Tactics*, 2010, available at <https://publicintelligence.net/ufouo-dhs-fbi-warning-terrorist-use-of-vehicle-ramming-tactics/>, accessed on 09.02.2017.

⁹ Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen, *op.cit.*, 2014.

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, Chapter IX. The Herd Instinct*, 1922, available at <http://www.bartleby.com/290/9.html>, accessed on 08.03.2017 and Maj. Guy Berry, “A Question of Sanity,

Returnees may also bring new technologies and tactics to the European sphere, thereby the limitation and check of arriving individuals is a must. Since no good solution had been found to the prevention of the infiltration of radicals, in the conclusion, I aim to propose some countering steps for preventing their possibly to execute actions. In the light of the stability of the current societal structure and environment, we also have to concentrate on the problematics of the arriving individuals’ sectarian dimension of the attacks, targeting mostly Shias or Kurds. The most dangerous scenario is that IS or like-minded groups launch and execute a sporadic but intense campaign of international terrorism as a response to Western military involvement in the conflict¹¹.

1. The Declining Cost of Recruiting

Realising the efforts and achievements of modern terrorist propaganda, we have to evaluate our countering-radicalisation mechanisms. Although radicalism is not equal to terrorism, it is a preliminary step towards fundamentally motivated acts or preaches against targeted groups. To be effective in combating radicalisation and terrorism, it is needed to recognize that the nature and cost of inspiring and radicalising individuals changed in parallel with the modernisation of telecommunication and travel opportunities.

Modern day preachers are not only found in safe heavens of the Balkans or the “no-go-zones” of France. They are able to take advantage of the reduced (or no) cost of internet, as well as the possibility to reach and instruct people by words from thousand kilometers.

The costs of propaganda increase in line with the improvement of the chosen future terrorist’s determination. During the first steps, online propaganda and personal contacts are satisfactory to strenghten the basic ideology in the individual. Concentrating on the costs of terrorism, we have to add that the basic needs for attracting and

Invalidating Terrorism” available at https://www.academia.edu/11050576/The_Sanity_of_Terrorism, accessed on 08.02.2017.

¹¹ Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen, *op.cit.*, 2014.



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recruiting young individuals or those who should provide sufficient resupply for the act of the organisations became inexpensive through the free modern media, internet and the cheap pieces of electronic equipment. On the other hand, it is clear that maintaining the extensive propaganda requires financial support. It is not the ways of transporting ideology, but the experts hired, the professional work and institutions set up that cost a fortune in this relevancy.

In November 2014, a short film showing the beheading of 22 Syrian prisoners was published. Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC), and the Quilliam Foundation think tank launched an investigation on the costs of the film and the results pointed out that since it was professionally recorded, including many hours of filming and professional editing, the cost of producing was about USD 200,000¹². But as soon as military success decline, the organisation needs to adapt the changing financial structure and cut back on its expenditures. Thus, since August 2015, sums spent on propaganda are in sharp decline as well¹³.

While choosing vulnerable groups, experts determine risk factors that include psychological, social and economic details. Although, in terms of vulnerability, no general pattern clearly categorises their characteristics – supporters of radical organizations come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds¹⁴ –, some basic risk factors might be in favour of terrorist organisations’ “HR specialists”.

According to Fathali M. Moghaddam, radicalisation is a process with five stages (levels). Those at the lowest level experience relative

poverty and limited social mobility, which is associated with pressure from the hostility and oppression of society mainstream. Stepping upwards on the phases, perception of exclusion is further strengthened. It is followed by the support of the radical ideology, the categorization of enemies and ultimately the execution of terrorist act. The author points out that individuals rarely reach the fifth (actual execution of terrorist acts) phase^{15, 16}.

When reaching higher levels of radicalisation, terrorist organisations are forced to attract supporters by materialistic means. Although economic motivation is just one of the long list of reasons that may inspire individuals for joining radical organisations it is a key element when it comes to maintaining the human power of the radical forces. Thereby, radical organisations – such as al Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS) – have millions of monthly salary expenditures.

According to the estimates of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), in 2015, the IS reportedly payed its fighters on average 350-500 USD per month determined by several factors, including their particular skills and nationality. Multiplied with the estimated number of fighters in its employ (20-30 thousand), this alone would represent a monthly 10 million USD expenditure. Of course, we also have to take into account those suicide bombers whose deep commitment towards terrorist actions make specific operations (relatively) free. In addition to the salary, IS is also reported to provide stipend for each family member of a fighter and regular payments to the families of members killed or captured¹⁷. Since the operational territory shrank and the number

¹² Gabi Siboni, Daniel Cohen, Tal Koren, “The Islamic State’s Strategy in Cyberspace” in *Military and Strategic Affairs*, Volume 7, No. 1, p. 132. Available at http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/7_Siboni_Cohen_Koren.pdf, accessed on 08.03.2017.

¹³ Scott Shane, “IS Media Output Drops as Military Pressure Rises, Report Says”, 2016, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/11/world/middleeast/islamic-state-media-propaganda-IS.html?_r=0, accessed on 08.03.2017.

¹⁴ Randy Borum, “Assessing Risk for Terrorism Involvement” in *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, American Psychological Association, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 63–87, available at <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/features/tam-tam0000043.pdf>, accessed on 08.03.2017.

¹⁵ Nóra Pákozdi, György Nógrádi, “The significance of family connections during the process of radicalisation” in *Honvédségi Szemle* 2016/4.

¹⁶ Fathali M., Moghaddam, “The Staircase to Terrorism – A Psychological Exploration” in Randy Borum (ed.): *Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research*, *Journal of Strategic Security*, Volume 4, Winter 2011, p. 40, available at <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1140&context=jss>, accessed on 08.03.2017.

¹⁷ FATF, *Financing of the terrorist organisation Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (IS)*, 2015, pp. 29-30. available at <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/Financing-of-the-terrorist-organisation-IS.pdf>, accessed on 08.03.2017.



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of the fighters reduced significantly, IS gradually reduced its payment for “employees”¹⁸.

2. Choosing the Target

Planning and executing a terrorist plot requires deep knowledge about the to-be-attacked environment. By focusing on discriminate targets, organisations could not only specify their interest, gain supporters and shed light on the preferred and available methods, but also a “well chosen” target may reduce the costs of an attack. Such an approach was mentioned in

move towards activities designed to boost the group’s legitimacy¹⁹.

Financial assets of a given terrorist group should assign some indicators on preferred types of targets. Al Qaeda and its affiliates have the ability to mobilize a huge group of financial donors, besides, the amount of their income is still higher than younger militias or other terror organisations.

After the 9/11 attack on the United States, international community’s efforts against “traditional” terror plots inspired radical groups to implement a change of attitude. Targeting

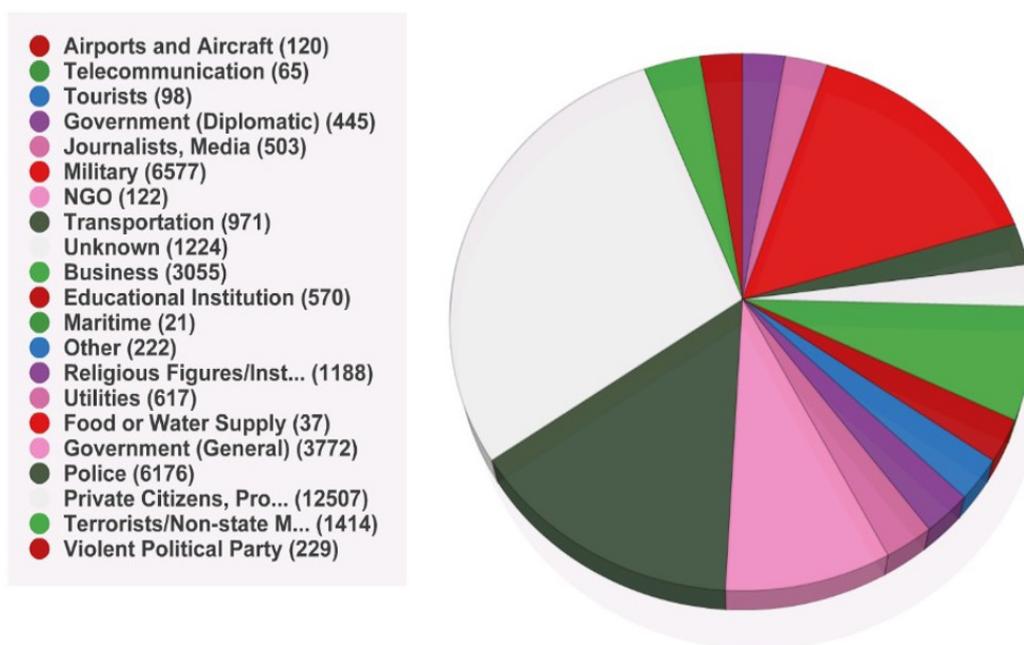


Figure no. 1: Target types of terrorist incidents in the MENA region and Europe in-between 2001-2015²⁰

connection with the al Qaeda’s shift towards directed, ‘strategic terrorism’ in a publication by Peter R. Neumann and M. L. R. Smith in the *Journal of Strategic Studies*, which implies that terrorist groups will eventually shift away from indiscriminate violence with mass-casualties and

military or police forces were frequent, but the amount of soft target attacks were still the most common (see: Figure no.1 and no. 2) in Europe and the MENA region.

¹⁸ Agence-France Presse and Reuters, “Islamic State to halve fighters’ salaries as cost of waging terror starts to bite”, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/20/islamic-state-to-halve-fighters-salaries-as-cost-of-waging-terror-starts-to-bite>, accessed on 08.03.2017. and Josie Ensor, “IS stops paying Mosul fighters’ salaries in hint at funding shortage”, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/05/IS-stops-mosul-fighters-salaries-just-battle-city-intensifies/>, accessed on 08.03.2017.

¹⁹ Peter R. Neumann, M. L. R. Smith, “Strategic terrorism: The framework and its fallacies” in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28: 4, pp. 571-595, 2012, available at <https://reassessingcounterinsurgency.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/rainsborough-strategy-of-terrorism-its-framework-and-its-fallacies.pdf>, accessed on 13.03.2017

²⁰ Data from the Global Terrorism Database, Search criteria: between 2001-2015, all incidents regardless of doubt, region: Western Europe; Eastern Europe; Middle East & North Africa.



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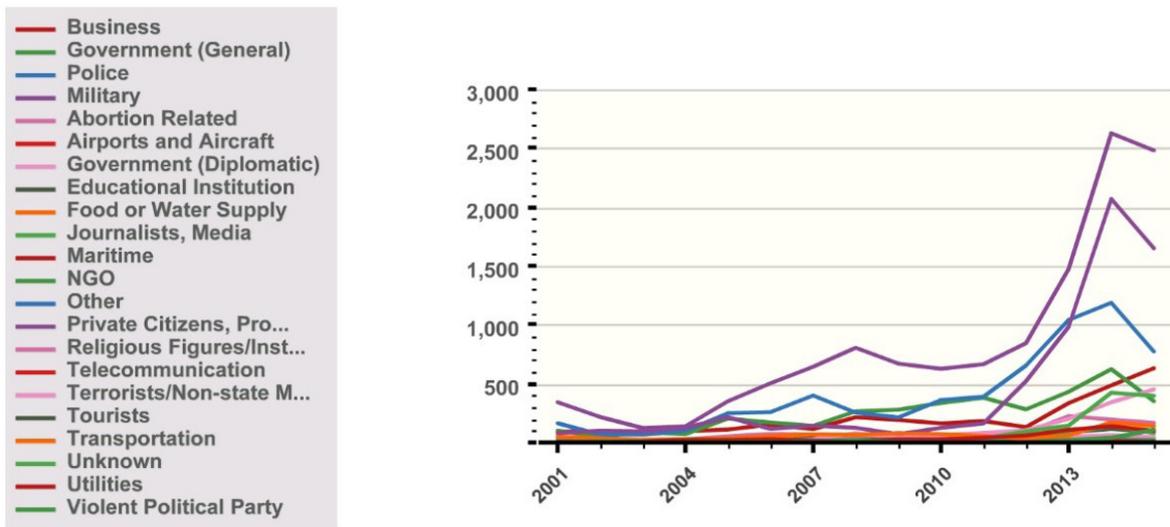


Figure no. 2: Frequency of terror attacks in the MENA region and Europe, by target in-between 2001-2015²¹

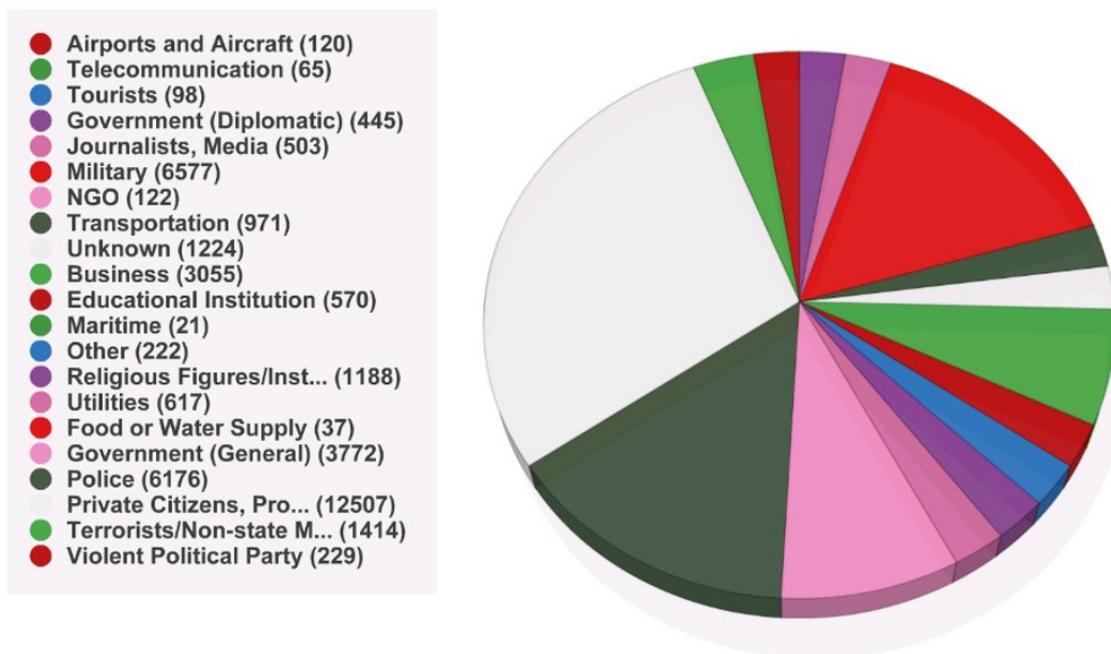


Figure no. 3: Target types of terrorist incidents in the MENA region and Europe between 2001-2015²²

²¹ *Ibidem.*

²² Data from the Global Terrorism Database, Search



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On 21 May 2016, IS-linked al-Furqan Media released a speech by Abu Muhammed al-Adnani, in which he called on Muslims to dedicate holy month of Ramadan (6 June – 5 July 2016) to jihad, to kill unbelievers by any means available to them in their place of residence, should they be prevented by the ‘tyrannical system’ (Western governments) from joining IS in the territory under its control. He further highlighted the importance of civilian targets since, according to him, even the smallest acts to terrorise unbelievers in the West have a big impact, the aim is to fill the

Kosovar Arid Uka’s attack against a shuttle bus carrying U.S. soldiers at Frankfurt international airport in March 2011, followed by Mohammed Merah’s killing spree in France in March 2012, and the soldier stabbings in the U.K. and France in 2013²⁵. In February, 2017, Abdullah Reda Refaei al-Hamamy took arms (a machete) against France’s soldiers and police officers²⁶.

The advantage of soft targets can be found in many aspects. Jihadi are still interested in targeting crowded areas, even if they do not seem to target public transportation and airplanes as

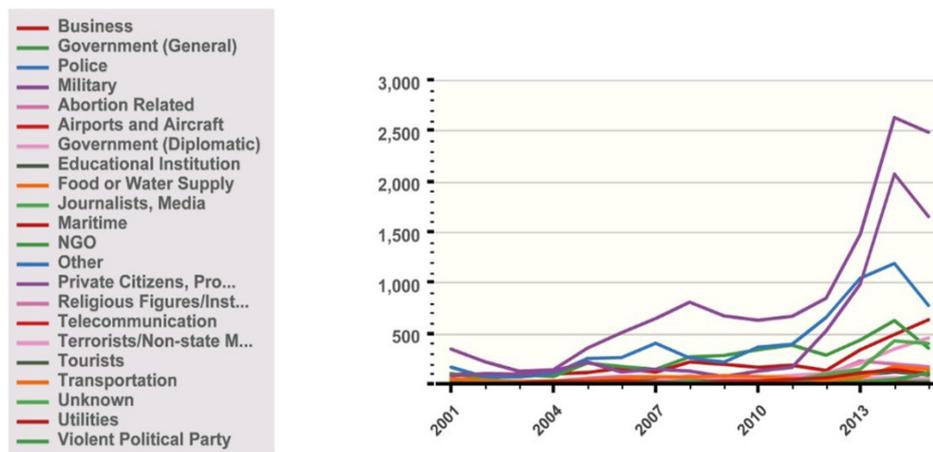


Figure no. 4: Frequency of terror attacks in the MENA region and Europe, by target between 2001-2015²⁷

lives of Westerners with terror so ‘the neighbour fears his neighbour’²³. Similarly, according to the evaluation of the FBI, civilian targets were primarily aimed by terrorist attacks in the United States as well²⁴.

Threats and hoaxes against military personnel and facilities remained frequent. Moreover, there has been an increased tendency to target military personnel after 2008. Such incidents were the

criteria: between 2001-2015, all incidents regardless of doubt, region: Western Europe; Eastern Europe; Middle East & North Africa.

²³ Paul Kamolnick, “Abu Muhammad al-Adnani’s May 21, 2016 Speech”, *Small Wars Journal*, 2016, available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/abu-muhammad-al-adnani%E2%80%99s-may-21-2016-speech>, accessed on 17.03.2017.

²⁴ FBI, *Increase in Number and Diversity of Terrorist Plots Against the United States Since 9/11*, 2011, available at https://leb.fbi.gov/2011/september/image/terrorist-plot-diversity-chart/image_view_fullscreen, accessed on 23.02.2017.

often as before²⁸. While reducing costs, terrorist organisations must count on the additional costs of countering security personnel and security equipment systems as well. Soft targets are easily accessible, which also mean that the number of casualties could be higher than in a separated area.

3. Cost of Preparations

Although the cost of recruitment and planning were reduced significantly by the informational revolution and the modern technology of the 21st century, stable financial background is still a

²⁵ Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen, 2014.

²⁶ The Local France, “Louvre machete attack just latest to target soldiers and police in France”, 2017, available at <https://www.thelocal.fr/20170203/islamist-attacks-against-police-and-soldiers-in-france>, accessed on 13.03.2017.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen, 2014.



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need for executing a terrorist attack on European soil. Tendencies show that in parallel with the increase in attacks on civilian targets, jihadists tend to use cheaper tactics, while maintaining (or even aggregating) the amount of victims with the well-chosen time and place. This tendency raises the question of the controllability and detectability of terrorist plans, since monitoring the national or international flow of conventional weaponry only contributes to the reduction of possible attempts. Due to the increased usage of home-made or non-conventional equipment, a new era of counter-terrorism operations began.

In the following paragraphs, we shall concentrate on the changes in methods of attacks, while in the next section.

Considering the unplannable scenarios, operatives of terrorist groups must be backed with additional reserves while preparing and implementing actions. One of the July 2005 suicide bombers in London, a 22-year-old part-time worker at a fish-and-chips shop left an estate worth \$240,000 after he blew up a subway train. Neither his family nor authorities could explain from where he got the money. We also have to take into account those previously donor individuals who got enough financial resources not to be dependent only on the central logistics system. For example, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the Belgian-Moroccan radical who took part in the Paris terror attack, was relatively well-off, lived and studied in an upper-middle class environment.

Many of the terrorist plots were primarily planned to be cheap, others happened to be executed cheaper than planned. In Spain, the cell responsible for the March 2004 train bombings in Madrid needed \$80,000 to finance the plot, according to Spanish court documents. But they had access to more than \$2,3 million worth of hashish and other illegal drugs that they could have sold to raise more money, the documents showed²⁹.

Similarly, many of the al-Qaeda's executed attacks were over-budgeted, sourcing from

²⁹ Craig Whitlock, "Al-Qaeda Masters Terrorism On the Cheap", *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 2008, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/23/AR2008082301962.html>, accessed on 07.03.2017

Islamic charities and the use of well-placed financial facilitators who gathered money from donors, primarily in the Gulf region. In the Analysis of John Roth, Douglas Greenburg and Serena Wille is claimed, that prior to 9/11 the largest single al Qaeda expense was support for the Taliban, besides Bin Laden also used money to train operatives in camps in Afghanistan, create terrorist networks and alliances and support the jihadists and their families. Finally, a relatively small amount of money was used to finance operations, including the approximately \$400,000–500,000 spent on the September 11 attacks, \$10,000 for the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Africa; and approximately \$20,000 for the 2002 Bali bombings^{30, 31}. An NBC analysis of the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 showed it similarly cost just \$20,000³².

Terrorist networks and embeddedness play a crucial role in expenses of a terrorist organisation. In a 2002 interview Salah Shehada, the founder of Hamas's Qassam Brigades claimed that a terrorist operation could cost \$3,500. A Hezbollah member has noted that it cost between \$665 and \$1,105 to conduct a terrorist attack. Other estimates for the cost of Palestinian terrorist attacks range from \$150 to \$50,000³³.

4. Precedents for Low-Budget Attacks

4.1. Bombings

Methods changed from precision to effectiveness, from detailed plans to relatively cheap execution. Bombings are still common type

³⁰ Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen, *op. cit.*, 2014.

³¹ John Roth, Douglas Greenburg, Serena Wille, *Monograph on Terrorist Financing, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, available at http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/staff_statements/911_TerrFin_Monograph.pdf, accessed on 23.02.2017.

³² Robert Windrem, "IS Is the World's Richest Terror Group, But Spending Money Fast", *CNBC*, 2015, available at <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/03/20/IS-the-worlds-richest-terror-group-is-spending-money-fast.html>, accessed on 23.02.2017.

³³ Joshua Prober, *Accounting for Terror: Debunking the Paradigm of Inexpensive Terrorism, Policy #1041*, 2005, available at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/accounting-for-terror-debunking-the-paradigm-of-inexpensive-terrorism>, accessed on 07.03.2017.



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Table no. 1: Estimated cost of a fragmentation bomb. The estimates above are enough for approximately four suicide vest³⁸

	Amount	Cost (dollars) ⁴¹
Nails	100 pieces	0.79
Gun powder	5 kgs	100
Switch	1 piece	1.56
Mercury thermometer	1 piece	21.99
Acetone	8 liters	16.32
Sum		140.66

of terrorist act, including typically, improvised explosive devices, which are inexpensive and easy to make. This shift towards homemade weaponry for terrorist activity on European territory already began at the July 7, 2005, London transit bombings, when the ABC News aired photographs of bombs found in one attacker's car, made from glass bottles packed with explosives and nails. Components that were – according to the al-Qaeda's initiative – made from household materials³⁴. Home-Made Explosives have become more common after 2008, considering the “Nicky Reilly” (2008), “Mohammed Game” (2009), “Underwear bomber” (2009), “Doukajev” (2010), “Abdulwahab Stockholm” (2010), “Kosher Supermarket” (2012) executed attacks³⁵.

Few days after the London bombings in July 2005, terror hit the UK's capital again, but the plot to detonate four bombs was foiled. Quoting *The Economist*, “The young men who tried but failed to detonate homemade bombs on London's transport system on July 21 packed explosives into cheap plastic containers...

³⁴ Jeff Edwards, Ryan Parry, “16 more bombs”, *Mirror*, 2005, available at <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/16-more-bombs-551710>, accessed on 14.03.2017.

³⁵ Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen, 2014.

the sort of things that housewives use to store leftover curry”³⁶. The most frequently used types of bombs are TATP (Triacetate Triperoxide), ANFO (ammonium nitrate and fuel oil), TNT, HMTD (C₆H₁₂N₄, hydrogen peroxide, citric acid), and C-4 based explosives.

According to a Palestinian official, the following elements are needed for an effective attack: a young, healthy man/woman, nails, gun powder (explosive), a switch, mercury (accessible from thermometers) and acetone³⁷.

Although it seems easy to collect, thermometers with mercury were banned from commercial market of the EU in 2011 and restricted in other parts of the world (Philippines, Australia, and the USA) as well³⁹. According to

³⁶ *The Economist*, *Looking in the wrong places*, 2005, available at <http://www.economist.com/node/5053373>, accessed on 14.03.2017.

³⁷ S. Atran, “The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism” in *The Washington Quarterly*, 29, no. 2:69, p. 1537. 2003.

³⁸ Counter Terrorism Guide, *Methods & Tactics*, available at <https://www.nctc.gov/site/methods.html#sarin>, accessed on 07.03.2017

³⁹ European Chemicals Agency, *Background document to the opinions on the Annex XV dossier proposing restrictions on Mercury in measuring devices*, available at <https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/20f4ee0a-6bcf-4ed0-a271-6674cd333710>, accessed on 16.03.2017.



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Table no. 2: Estimated cost of an ANFO bomb

	Amount	Cost (dollars) ⁴²
Nitrogen-based fertilizer	50 kgs	16.75
Gasoline	10 liters	13
Sum		29.75

Table no. 3: Estimated cost of a home-made “napalm-B” bomb

	Amount	Cost (dollars) ⁴³
Benzene	10 liters	12.9
Gasoline	25 liters	38.4
Polystyrol	100 liters	6.89
Sum		58.09

the estimates of Marie-Helen Maras, preparing a bomb costs no more than \$150⁴⁰. Taking into account the ingredients, this low sum can be accepted. Below there are represented some estimates about three types of explosives.⁴¹

We also have to add that in countries without current war environment, additional costs should be added to the preparation. Testing the perfect amount of mixtures, the reaction of these unstable materials to natural changes (for example heat) is needed, thereby a testing facility or territory is also a must for a bomb attack.

Quoting the manual on Latin-American guerilla warfare of the Brazilian Marxist, Carlos Marighella, we should agree that modern

⁴⁰ Marie-Helen Maras, *A terrorizmus elmélete és gyakorlata*, Antall József Tudásközpont Tankönyvműhely, Budapest. 2016, p. 399.

⁴¹ Estimates of the author, based on prices of ingredients, costs available on the internet.

strategies of terrorism have a long history both on precedents and ideologies, all over the world. According to Marighella, “Terrorism is an action, usually involving the placement of an explosive or firebomb of great destructive power, which is capable of effecting irreparable loss against the enemy. Terrorism requires that the urban guerrilla should have adequate theoretical and practical knowledge of how to make explosives. (...) Terrorism is a weapon the revolutionary can never relinquish”⁴⁴.

⁴² Estimates of the author, based on prices of ingredients, costs available on the internet (Gasoline price estimate - Hungary – 1,29 USD/liter).

⁴³ Estimates of the author, based on prices of ingredients, costs available on the internet.

⁴⁴ Carlos Marighella, *Terrorism*, Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla, 1969, available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marighella-carlos/1969/06/minimanual-urban-guerrilla/ch30.htm>, accessed on 15.02.2017.



In the recent years, the al-Qaeda had already prepared several free documents and know-how-s on the preparation of an explosive, and the internet also decreases the cost of training future bombers⁴⁵. Unlike guerilla warfare, the Palestinian radical organizations claim that suicide attacks were much more effective. According to a survey conducted in May 2002 among the Palestinian population, the second Intifada had more results for them than the previous years' diplomatic negotiations⁴⁶.

The Paris (November 13, 2015) and Brussels (March 22, 2016) suicide bomb attacks⁴⁷ have shown that terrorists are able to plan relatively complex attacks quickly, cheaply and effectively. In both series of attacks, international victims were aimed to be attacked (football stadium, metro station, an airport), thereby a multiplier effect generated worldwide media attention⁴⁸. In addition to the human cost it paralyzed tourism, economy and social morale.

As jihadis continue to operate in conflict zones, it is likely that the repertoire of bomb-making techniques will widen further. It is also likely that sophisticated internet sites will provide online learning techniques. However, in the short to medium-term, the innovations in bomb-making techniques in Europe will come as a result of training abroad, rather than online courses.⁴⁹ While home-made explosives (HMEs) remain the most commonly used explosives in IEDs, explosive remnants of war (ERW) and illicit trafficking in explosives from former conflict areas present a significant threat to the EU⁵⁰.

⁴⁵ Benedek József Kis, *Dzsihadizmus, radikalizmus, terrorizmus – A globális terrorizmus*, Zrínyi Kiadó, Budapest, 2017, p.148.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 178.

⁴⁷ The explosives used in the Paris and Brussels attacks were TATP (Triacetone Triperoxide).

⁴⁸ Europol, "Changes in Modus Operandi of Islamic State – revised", Europol Public Information, 2016, p.6. Available at https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/modus_operandi_is_revisited.pdf, accessed on 17.03.2017.

⁴⁹ Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen, *op.cit.*, 2014.

⁵⁰ Europol, 2016. p.13.

4.2. Knife and firearm attacks

Besides explosives, there has been a relative increase in knives and firearms attacks in recent years. Such terrorist attacks were represented in 7.3% of plots during 2001–2007, and in 33% of plots after 2008. The number of plots involving knives and handguns increased by 26% after 2008, while the number of bomb plots decreased by only 13% in the same period⁵¹.

The rise in knife and firearm plots is part of a more general trend towards diversification of attack types and choice of weapons among jihadis in Europe. Supporters of radical Islamist groups (considering mainly lone wolves) are more likely to prepare their attacks on a lower budget. The first call for such attacks was made by Abu Mohammed al-Adnani (the IS's official spokesperson) in 2014 to kill Westerners in every possible ways. He ordered supporters to kill "non-believers" in Western countries, saying: "If you can kill a non-believing American or European – especially the (...) French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other non-believer from the non-believers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. If you are not able to find an IED or a bullet, then single out the disbelieving American, Frenchman, or any of his allies. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car, or throw him down from a high place, or choke him, or poison him"⁵².

In addition to the speech of Al-Adnani, supporters of IS were also given written help on the best ways for knife attacks. In the IS's *Rumiyah magazine's* 2nd issue, the author writes: "Knives, though certainly not the only weapon for inflicting harm upon the kuffar, are widely available in every land and thus readily accessible. They are extremely easy to conceal and highly lethal, especially in the hands of someone who knows how to use them effectively. Also, due

⁵¹ Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen, *op.cit.*, 2014.

⁵² Counter Extremism Project, *Abu Muhammad al-Adnani*, available at <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/abu-muhammad-al-adnani>, accessed on 07.03.2017



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to their accessibility, were a person to conduct a campaign of knife attacks, he could dispose of his weapon after each use, finding no difficulty in acquiring another one”⁵³.

The first precedent for knife attacks was executed in 2010, when a Danish-Somali jihadi attempted to kill the cartoonist Kurt Westergaard with an axe (coded as knife in the dataset). Four years later, in the name of the IS, the 18 year-old Abdul Numan Haider stabbed two police officers in Melbourne (Australia) on 23 September 2014. In 2015 and 2016, knife attacks became increasingly “popular”. In June 2016, Larossi Aballa Moroccan-born French migrant stabbed a policemen and his wife to death. One month later, in Würzburg, the 17 years old Afghan Muhammad Riyad attacked train passengers with an axe. On the 26th of July, in Normandia, Adel Kermiche and Abdel Malik Petitjean took hostages and killed the priest with a knife. The line of the 2016 knife attacks were continued by the Charleroi attacker, who killed two policemen with a machete. Besides, killings also took place in Reutlingen, where attacker wounded and killed a woman.

Al-Qaeda’s strategic leadership in the al-Sahab video “You are only responsible for yourself”, issued in June 2011, specifically encouraged Muslims in the West to carry out such attacks: “You can go down to a gun show at the local convention center and come away with a fully automatic assault rifle, without a background check and, most likely, without having to show an identification card.”⁵⁴ Moussa Coulibaly took arms against French soldiers in front of a Jewish shop in Nice, wounding two officers. He later tried to travel to Syria, but had been turned back at the Istanbul airport⁵⁵.

⁵³ IS, “Just Terror Tactics”, *Rumiyah*, 2016, p. 13, available at <https://clarionproject.org/factsheets-files/Rumiyah-IS-Magazine-2nd-issue.pdf>, accessed on 17.03.2017.

⁵⁴ Sudip Bhattacharya, *Al Qaeda video resurfaces claiming how easy it is to buy guns in U.S.*, *CNN*, 2013, available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/11/politics/al-qaeda-video/index.html>, accessed on 07.03.2017

⁵⁵ BBC, “French soldiers wounded in Nice Jewish centre attack”, 2015, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31118020>, date of download: 07.03.2017 and Global Terrorism Database, *The incident occurred at*

Moreover, despite the increase in diverse cheaper equipment, automatic firearms still seem to be the weapons of choice of terrorist cells committing large scale attacks, because of their relative ease of access (mainly from the near neighborhood of Europe), use and effectiveness. The first such attack was the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam in 2004. The assailant, Mohammed Bouyeri shot van Gogh numerous times with a semi-automatic pistol, and subsequently tried to decapitate him. Firearms nowadays can be obtained from criminal sources, in some cases from those the terrorists already know from their own criminal past. In addition, it is possible to obtain firearm parts legally via the internet, as well as de-activated firearms to be converted back later for operational use. The current situation concerning the availability of weapons in countries neighbouring the EU, particularly in Ukraine and the Western Balkans and the MENA, may lead to a significant increase in weapons on the black market, posing a significant threat in the near future⁵⁶.

4.3. Assassinations

Although, in modern times, assassination lost from its “reputation”, the tactic is still used by nearly all terrorist groups. Assassination is mainly centered on the will for change in political-military leadership, highlighted individuals such as public officials and religious or media representatives.

Historically, terrorists have assassinated specific individuals for psychological effect⁵⁷. Assassins were either near to the target individual, thus possessed a trustful environment where plots could easily be executed (for example concubines), or in the backstage, in order to distance themselves from the victim in every

Massena Square, available at <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=201502030092>, accessed on 07.03.2017.

⁵⁶ EUROPOL, *TE-SAT*, 2016, p.8, available at https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/europol_tesat_2016.pdf, accessed on 17.03.2017.

⁵⁷ Brian P. Bennett, *Understanding, Assessing, and Responding to Terrorism: Protecting Critical Infrastructure and Personnel*, 2007, p. 131, available at <https://goo.gl/jvSLn1> accessed on 28.04.2017.



possible ways. Assassination techniques were always diverse, including choking to death, poisoning or shooting.

Even though in Europe we didn't face such attacks in recent times, the possibility of assassination is still real. Modern-day famous assassinations' list includes high ranking political officials (USA President John F. Kennedy, Russian Ambassador to Ankara Andrey Karlov, Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov) and also, concurrent family members (Kim Jong-nam).

Terrorist units are rather in favour of causing social disruption, thereby one-to-one assassinations are not the main elements of their repertoire in the European region. However, we still face the challenge of the assassination or kidnapping of foreigners in crisis zones, mainly people of the media (for example Kayla Mueller) or charities. Besides, concerning returning jihadists, the EUROPOL warns: "From an IS perspective, the terrorist attacks carried out in Belgium and France in 2015 and 2016 were successful and effective. Given this fact and a general assumption that IS retains both the will and the capability to strike again, further attacks in the EU, both by lone actors and groups, are likely to take place in the near future". The EUROPOL also warns, that the modi operandi jihadists employ in Syria and Iraq, could be exported to the EU at some point. One example is the use of suicide bombings in the Paris and Brussels attacks in 2015 and 2016.⁵⁸

4.4. Arson and Firebombing

Arson and firebombing are also easily conducted by terrorist groups⁵⁹. Incendiary devices are as cheap as the knife-attacks, while ingredients can also be found "in everyone's kitchen". Between 1968 and 2005, 55 terrorist organizations can be named who, either solely or in combination with other devices, effectively applied fire during their attack. After 2005, in recent years, this tool earned a significantly growing importance in the arsenal of several

⁵⁸ Europol, *op.cit.*, 2016, pp.3-6.

⁵⁹ Terrorism Research, *Types of Terrorist Incidents*, available at <http://www.terrorism-research.com/incidents/>, accessed on 17.02.2017.

radical groups. Fire is an extremely powerful weapon that is hardly manageable, extinguishing it requires the involvement of high amount of personnel, and as long as flammable material is given, it is able to destroy everything. It does not require long-term training, it is relatively low-cost and can be carried out by a small number of people. In appropriate conditions (weather, wind, etc.) it has extremely high destructive ability since devices are given at the location, as well as extinguishing requires massive fire-fighter forces.

Examples on the combined use of fire in terrorism begins with the 2008 arson attempt against the *China Southern Airlines CZ 6901* plane, continues with the 2001, September 11 attacks against the New York *World Trade Center*, the November 2008 Mumbai *Taj Mahal Hotel* attack and the 2012 siege on US diplomatic office in Benghazi in Libya. The method, which relies on the conventional equipment (firearms) combined with the use of fire is primarily an improved version of what had been implemented during the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, thereby European precedents of wildfires and arson attacks across can be seen as advanced successors of Palestinian and Israeli tactics.

Concentrating on Europe, in 2014, the Palestinian Abbas C. brought arson as a method of terrorism to the high importance. The 27-year-old ambulance driver set fire to the Naouri kosher supermarket in Sarcelles, a heavily Jewish suburb of the French capital, on July 20th⁶⁰. Al-Qaeda has been blamed for a recent series of forest fires across Europe. Alexander Bortnikov, official of the Russia's Federal Security Service said, according to state news agency RIA Novosti, at a meeting of heads of security agencies⁶¹. Between January 1st and September 16th 2012, according to Spanish agriculture ministry, "more than 184,000 hectares of land in Spain alone were destroyed by

⁶⁰ Forward, *French Koshers Grocery Arsonist Gets 4 Years in Prison, 2014*, available at <http://forward.com/news/breaking-news/208515/french-koshers-grocery-arsonist-gets-4-years-in-pri/>, accessed on 17.03.2017

⁶¹ Meira Svirsky, "Al-Qaeda Claims Responsibility for Starting Israel Fires", *Clarion Project*, November 27, 2016, available at <https://clarionproject.org/al-qaeda-claims-responsibility-starting-israel-fires/>, accessed on 17.04.2017.



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fires between the highest amounts in a decade, forced authorities to evacuate around 2,000 people from their home⁶².

It is also an interesting addition to the possible use of the motivational issue towards fire arson, that it may help terrorist organisations back their actions and destroy evidence in an undetectable way. Last year (2016) in Belgium, Forensic Lab was set on fire by an individual, thereby the lab's entire cache of hair samples and thousands of other pieces of evidence critical to the prosecution of hundreds of criminal and terrorism suspects were burned down⁶³.

As the method seemed to be effective on the Palestinian scene, both Al-Qaeda and IS called on their supporters to join the jihad with the use of arson besides previously mentioned methods.⁶⁴

4.5. Vehicle Terror

Seemingly, vehicle terror is the most modern method in the repertoire of terror, however, we should again broaden our focus from Europe to the Palestinian-Israeli⁶⁵ and the Middle-Eastern⁶⁶ regions where driving into the crowd of civilians or military personnel is much more frequent.

One of the online magazines of IS, the *Rumiyah* (Arabic for Rome) has introduced a section "Just terror tactics", dedicated to training militants on how to launch cheap terror attacks. Previous edition (issue 3) have included a tutorial on how to launch the most effective truck

ramming attack.

When observing details of European attacks with a truck on civilians, we have to acknowledge the serious influence of media propaganda on foreign radicals. Every detail that have been written in the issue were more-or-less fulfilled in the attack. On the 14th July in Nice, an IS follower (Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel) left 85 dead and several hundreds wounded, showing the devastating potential of a lone-actor attack. A half year later, the Tunisian asylum-seeker Anis Amri, the attacker of the Berlin Christmas market left 12 people killed when rammed into the shopping street with a truck⁶⁷.

Vehicle terror is understandably a hardly noticeable way for law enforcement agencies, since trucks and vehicles are in daily use, hijacking them or renting a new one should not cost more than a several tens of dollars.

4.6. Cyberterrorism

In addition to the acts of violence presented above, there are also numerous other types of violence that emerged in the 21st century. Terrorist groups have increased their ability to extort modern technology, thereby besides the easy flow of online propaganda, cyberterrorism became a continuously renewable and hardly controllable asset of radical groups.

The cost of such an attack is relatively low, the basic needs involve an easily assembled PC and internet connection. Even though hacking skills require motivation and a previous high level knowledge about a series of hacking methods; in the modern world, these factors are easily accessible, through free online courses or by lectures from a professional.

Even though countries expand their counter-terrorism assets, the need to refresh cyber-defence is so acute, that unless sums are set aside directly for this aspect, keeping up the rhythm with the accelerated modernization of cyber terrorism is hardly possible. In this regard, cyberattacks mean an asymmetric challenge, where the cost of attacks are considerably smaller than countering

⁶² "Al-Qaeda blamed for Europe-wide forest fires", *The Telegraph*, 2012, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/al-qaeda/9585098/Al-Qaeda-blamed-for-Europe-wide-forest-fires.html>, accessed on 17.03.2017

⁶³ Milan Schreuer, *Arson at Belgian Forensic Lab May Set Back Terrorism Cases*, 2016, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/22/world/europe/belgium-arson-forensic-lab-terrorism.html>, accessed on 17.03.2017

⁶⁴ IS, *Rumiyah* – issue 5, 2017, pp.8-9. Available at <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/rome-magazine-5.pdf>, accessed on 17.03.2017.

⁶⁵ Source for example: "Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs", *Wave of terror 2015-2017*, 2017, available at <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Wave-of-terror-October-2015.aspx>, accessed on 17.03.2017.

⁶⁶ Source for example: Kevin Cooper, Emily Anagnostos, *Iraq Situation Report: November 9-17*, 2016, Institute for the Study of War, available at <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/iraq%20SITREP%202016-11-17%20PDF.pdf>, accessed on 17.03.2017.

⁶⁷ Kate Connolly, Chris Stephen, "Berlin attack suspect Anis Amri had been on watchlist since January", *The Guardian*, 2016, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/21/berlin-attack-suspect-anis-amri-under-monitoring-since-january>, accessed on 07.03.2017.



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them. This type of terrorism is not as high profile as other types of terrorist attacks, but its impact can be very destructive, considering that critical infrastructure, political and military communications, social services and other vital aspects of a state might be in risk.

Conclusion - Results of the Changed Nature of Terrorism

The number of terrorist attacks is in a global increase. Conflict zones and their effects on the near-surrounding and farther lying states shape the perception and presence of terrorism worldwide given the time, where internal conflicts' bursting balloons are combined with global fear, aggression and various interests.

We thereby in the defence industry may not stick to our well-established conventional way to solve crises; continuous adaptation to the current security challenges and environment is a must.

Countering conventional threats today have both the organizational background (e.g. NATO and national defence institutions) and the improving equipment capabilities. However, when we consider the modern tendencies, the intangible nature of terrorism became such an underlying problem, that law enforcement agencies and counter-terrorism units not only have to modernize their set of tools but also their thinking. Namely, because the use of methods that are detectable through existing policing systems are decreasing, while paralelly, undetectable, unconventional, hardly predictable methods are in rise. As a tendency, we may add, that the massive, well-planned strike on the European region has, largely, been replaced by a series of lone wolves-attacks on a minimal budget.

Although detection and monitoring of such attacks became more difficult for responsible agencies, our duty is to prevent and prepare. In this relevancy, we have to highlight the importance of preparatory trainings (for example, close combat trainings or the application of alarming systems) for civilians as well, such as the security guards of social institutions, critical infrastructure or basic

social meeting points (e.g. shopping malls).

In this analysis, I aimed to highlight the issue of easily accessible, not prohibited equipment for a possible strike on Europe, because the effects of low-budgeted preparations appear globally. We have to think about possible solutions for the problematics of such tendencies and in parallel, we should not forget the fight against global radicalization and the flow of terrorist ideologies. Although policing and counter-terrorism agencies' work in the past years were unable to prevent some attempts against countries – such as the Paris or Brussels bombing, or knife-attacks against civilians and police – we also have to take into account those foiled plots, that were less-spread in the media. A total of 211 failed, foiled or incompleated attacks were reported by six EU Member States in 2015, and almost half of them (103) by the UK⁶⁸.

At the end of my analysis, I would like to reach back to the proverb of Sun-Tzu, presented in the beginning of the analysis. While the terrorist strikes happen at a certain time, in a certain location, the hardships come with their butterfly-effects, such as disruption of social perception of stability and the rise of xenophobia. As Sun-Tzu years back described, with killing one, they frighten thousands. The nature of terrorism recent years infiltrated our perception of security. Keeping in mind that recent methods are a reflection of a mainly realist policy of terrorist groups and their leader individuals, we have to trust counter-terrorisim and intelligence units, develop the corresponding system of prevention and on our level accept, adapt and answer to the existing security challenges.

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⁶⁸ TE-SAT 2016.



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