

ALBANIJA IN IZZIVI BOJA PROTI TERORIZMU

ALBANIA AND CHALLENGES AGAINST TERRORISM

Professional article

Povzetek Države iz naše regije so si pod komunističnim režimom, ki je v Vzhodni Evropi vladal več desetletij, delile podobno preteklost. Po zlomu komunizma so preživljale gospodarsko in politično tranzicijo, ki je, čeprav različna glede trajanja in oblik, imela nekaj skupnega. Trajala je dlje in bila je težja, kot je bilo mogoče predvidevati v začetku devetdesetih let. Spremembe, ki so vključevale države komunističnega bloka v Vzhodni in Jugovzhodni Evropi, so bile večinoma spodbujene z željo po demokraciji v naših družbah, po gospodarskem razvoju ter integraciji v evropsko in evroatlantsko skupnost. V globalizacijskem obdobju integracij in odprtih meja je mednarodni terorizem sorazmerno nov, vendar skrajno ogrožajoč pojav za regijo. Tragediji 11. septembra v Združenih državah in pokol 11. marca v Španiji sta dokaz terorizma brez meja in brez jasnih ciljev, ki ima za posledico stotine žrtev med civilnim prebivalstvom. Pomanjkanje izkušenj v boju proti terorizmu je razlog, da je naša regija še bolj ranljiva zaradi mogočih terorističnih napadov. Še več, teroristične organizacije lahko prek dejavnosti, ki se zdijo zakonite, našo regijo izkoristijo zase kot izhodišče za logistično podporo in financiranje.

Ključne besede *Mednarodni terorizem, sodelovanje, pomanjkanje izkušenj.*

Abstract The countries of our region shared a similar past under the communist regime that ruled over the Eastern Europe for decades. After the communist collapse, our countries have undergone an economic and political transition, which although different in timeline and features had something in common: it took a longer period and it was harder then perceived at the beginning of '90s. The changes involving the countries of communist block in the Eastern and Southeastern countries were inspired mostly from eagerness for democracy of our societies, for economic development, integration within the European and Euro-Atlantic society. In the globalization era of integration and open borders, the international terrorism presents a

relatively new but extremely threatening phenomenon for the region. The tragedies of September 11 in the United States of America, the massacre of March 11 in Spain, are evidences of terrorism without borders, without distinguished goals, resulting in hundreds of casualties among civilian population. The lack of experience in fighting terrorism makes our region vulnerable to the potential terrorist attacks. Moreover, terrorist organizations, through activities seemingly legal, may exploit our region as a basis for their logistic support and financing.

Key words *International terrorism, cooperation, lack of experience.*

**The
Common
Challenge
Against
Terrorism**

The challenge that the Southeastern Europe encounters is the religion-motivated terrorism, based on fundamentalism, bigotry and absence of religious tolerance. A dangerous factor is Islamic fundamentalism, the goal of which is the fusion of religion, state, politics, modern technologies and terrorism. In this context it implies the imposing of Islam belief by the fundamentalist unions.

The fight against this phenomenon can not be won within a short time and requires a multi-directional commitment. Deployment of military troops within NATO coalition, to nib this in the bud and to rebuild failed states is not enough, neither is entirely sufficient the fight against the terrorism limited to state borders. The challenge against terrorism needs the necessary cooperation among counterpart state institutions within the region and the work co-ordination with common planes.

Nowadays, it is obvious that our responsibility as citizens and institutions is not solely an undisputed obligation for us, being consumers of security (even of the regional one), but also producers and contributors of such security. The obligation regarding the fight against organized crime and terrorism is primarily a national obligation. But this obligation is extended in the international domain as well, for the simple reason that international contribution and cooperation are absolutely inevitable, especially when dealing with effective prevention and uncompromised fight against the organized crime, terrorism, international narcotics smuggling, human trafficking, money laundering and other similar phenomena.

We are well aware that the organized crime and terrorism constitute nowadays a serious threat, not only for the regular economic-social development and the welfare of the citizens of a certain country, but also for those of every country in the world. These trends are becoming increasingly dangerous, should we take into account that some of these criminal organizations, operating in international level, are being involved into activities of organized crime and terrorism.

From this perspective, the fight against the organized crime and international terrorism requires:

1. Strengthening of intelligence services at national level and the reinforcement of cooperation and activity coordination among them.

2. The further consolidation of border control, via comprehensive measures in the cross-check points, and through the reinforcement of the mutual cooperation, in order to have safeguard borders and to make them impenetrable by the criminal activities in the field of organized crime and terrorism (Ibraj, 2005).
3. The enlargement of the tracking and investigative capacities of the law enforcement agencies, to guarantee results during the implementation of special investigation techniques. This would require not only the equipment and means and the continuous training of the personnel, but also the inter-regional experience exchange and planning of mutual operations.
4. The establishing of a common network, the base of which would be a server, supplied and provided with the data about individuals, groups, associations or foreign and local organizations identified as extremist and fundamentalist.

The shaping base of terrorism can define the phenomenon of global terrorism as a well organized and dangerous informal power. Furthermore, the invigoration of terrorism promotes and establishes conditions for all the current informal phenomena. The biggest challenge against it is the one between the state institution formality and institutionalized informality accomplished by the groups and organization that sponsor and provide terrorism.

While the formal institutions are official and organized, the informal institutionalization is organized, but possesses a pyramidal hierarchy.

Official institutions have military capacities and high technology, intelligent services and specialized interception network, but unofficial institutions have people who sacrifice themselves for the cause, possess means, certainly in a smaller quantity and limited potential (Kabo, 2008).

The official institutions have financial sources and media means with a massive use against extremism and terrorism, the informal entities have money, a lot of money and media means. The difference is that the state allocates the money carefully and according to a rigid bureaucracy, whereas the informal entities allocate and transfer the money faster on emergency casual grounds. The state institutions may regain superiority by monitoring carefully the bank transfers or suspicious trade transactions.

1 ALBANIAN EFFORTS AGAINST TERRORISM INFRASTRUCTURE

During a meeting with Albanian authorities Patrick O'Brien stated: "Albania has shown an enhancement of capacities in the fight against terrorism financing, but the issues of informal activities are large in Albania, starting from the use of 'cash'. Terrorism, being a venture that requires continuous financing for recruitment, training, armament and movement, certainly has to find a way for money transfers. The enhancement of international endeavor to stop the terrorist financing through the normal bank channels has forced the terrorist to look for alternative ways for the money transfer in cash. In such a context, the informal economy, by making legal the

circulation of money in cash form, creates an attractive environment for the organizations which sponsor terrorism” (O’Brien, 2007).

Truth be told, official Tirana is assessed to abide regularly to the requirements of UN in the fight against terrorism. Albania has thwarted (frozen) over 40 bank accounts, and buildings, land, wealth of people who are listed by the UN as suspected terrorists. The confiscation of Foundation assets ‘Global Relief Foundation’ (GRF), established in October 22, 2002; the expropriation of Foundation assets ‘Ringjallja e Trashesgimise Islame’, known as ‘Revival Of Islamic Heritage Society’, RIHS, established in January 22, 2003; the forfeiture of the foundation ‘Al Haramania’, established in June 6, 2004; the confiscation of the foundation assets ‘Taibah of Islamic’, established in March 10, 2005, also known as the International Association of Aid, are some of the operations of Albanian institutions in fulfilling the requirements of UN.¹

During the last years, promoted and assisted by our Euroatlantic partners, Albanian state have intensified the efforts to establish the necessary infrastructure to fight the terrorist financing and prevent money laundering stemming from crime. Part of these efforts are the approval of specific laws concerning the fight against these phenomena; the necessary amendments in the Criminal Code and Penal Procedure and the establishment of efficient structure in the courts, prosecution offices and law-enforcement agencies as well.

Terrorist criminals use different financial routes to provide (secure) and transfer the money. Some groups are supported by usual criminal activities. Others receive support by trade enterprises, donations and funds provided by the charity organizations in order to finance their activities and to transfer materials and personnel. Using charity as shell organization to secure funds, the supporters of terrorist groups establish businesses and transfer funds to each other. They also attempt to corrupt or establish partnership with the legal companies to invest, collect or transfer funds of their own.

The case of cell of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, busted in Albania some years ago and deported to Egypt, showed that the aforementioned methods were used to be settled in Albania. This cell has infiltrated his members in some charity organizations such as: ‘Global Relief Foundation’ (GRF); ‘Revival of Islamic Inheritance’; the foundation ‘Al Haramaina’; the foundation ‘Taibah of Islamic’ etc. These organizations sponsored the *salafi* movement in our country. The departure of this organization from Albania does not mean that the tracks of their activity are swept away. Some of them are legitimized under Albanian names. The people who worked within these associations have started their own businesses and continue to self-sponsor their activities. According to Patrick O’Brien during his visit in Tirana “[...] it results that a small part of these business have been used or are currently used to collect money

¹ *Statistics from the Albanian Financial Intelligence Unit (Ministry of Finance), reference <http://www.fint.gov.al>, <http://www.fint.gov.al/doc/u7.pdf>.*

which later finance terrorism. The recommendation for Albania would be to establish strong checking authorities, keeping record and regulate these organizations”.

Since 2001, approximately 140 million dollars have been frozen over the world. This has caused hardship to the terrorists for the financing through the regular bank channels, which generally leave paper trail behind. By international cooperation and communication, the law-enforcement agencies have been capable to track some of this paper trail, thus discovering terrorist organizations and their supporters. Therefore, terrorists are looking for new financing and fund transfer forms. They have started to use alternative ways, the money transfer in cash.

Hence, the criminal groups prefer places where the border check does not constitute an issue for them, where the most of the money circulate outside the banks and where the monitoring systems do not work properly. Such environment is suitable for these groups whose goal is to finance terrorism or money laundering of the illegal activities profits. Stephen Cristina, the special representative in the United States embassy in Tirana, stated that: “Albania has a lot of to do in order to control the money”.

Informal economy and the circulation of the money outside the bank channels are quite serious concerns in Albania. The current situation, the high scale of informal economy, the climate in Albania is a favorable per groups which aim to finance terrorism and money laundering.

In order to hinder the terrorist capability to finance the operation, the efforts must focus not only on the regular bank sectors, but also on the alternative financing means and especially on the fight against informal economy. To fight informal economy means to create a suffocating climate for the sponsors of terrorism and money laundering originating from criminal activities.

2 THE INDISPENSABLE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE STATE AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

In Albanian case, although the legal framework since the communist collapse has sanctioned the freedom of religion, a real guarantee of this freedom can not be stated as the local religious communities, in most of the cases, have no financial means and material resources to enable their free activity. More than half of their budget is supplied by foreign sources. The freedom of religious activity for each community, in this case, depends on the outer aid, rarely unconditioned, aid provided by the community itself.

Recently, Albanian state has signed an agreement between the state and religious community, thus giving room to compilation and approval of a legal set which will fulfill the existing legal vacuum in the country regarding the financing of religious communities, religious education system and the return and indemnity of the properties to these communities (Shala, 2008). This constitutes a serious investment for our national security.

The agreement with the Albanian Muslim Community is of a special importance, as the state is in charge for the protection of this community from every rival and usurpation attempt. The article 5 of the agreement states that: “The state respect the Albanian Muslim Community and recognize as its representative only the individuals authorized by the Albanian Muslim Community and guarantee the protection of the Albanian Muslim Community from any person or group that claims its name, ritual objects, properties, symbols and stamp”.

Also, the agreement states clear-cut that will be protected the traditional religious version of Albanian Islam, thus interrupting every attempt for the wahabist extremist movement. Article 2 of the agreement defines “Albanian Muslim Community is an organization of Muslim believers who express and/or exercise the convictions, principles and religious rituals determined by the Islam legislation sources, Legal Religious School ‘Hanefi’ and the statute of Muslim Community of Albania”.

The aforementioned agreement is a clear evidence of the twofold persistence of state and Muslim Community, against every deformation and extremist trends.

Hence, the article 3 states clearly that this agreement purpose is to “[r]ecognize and guarantee the reactions and actions of the Albanian Muslim Community itself against the deformation, extremist trends or any other signals of austerity among its believers. The Albanian Muslim Community notifies the respective authorities for any case of that kind.”

Conclusion As a conclusion, nowadays, the Southeastern Europe is facing a wide range of issues, challenges and serious threats concerning security and threat stemming from religious extremism and terrorism. The aforementioned factors, twined with the criminal net of organized crimes constitute an emergent concern, especially for the Balkan countries, where the state institution power and the law enforcement is still fragile and incomplete. There is a symbiosis between the terrorism and high unemployment, unstable economy, high level of organized crime and corruption. Once these forces extent undisturbed, strengthen and twine, then preconditions are formed for the lack of stability not only internally but also regionally. In times when religious belonging may supersede the national identity and replace inter-religious tolerance in search of another extremist identity which is not part of a Balkan culture, a series of issues and extremist tendencies can only be prevented from erupting in the region in the near future by strengthening the national institutions, with the support of international community and a close regional collaboration, to establish a quiet coexistence and a complete integration of the region in the European Community.

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