

MEDIA REPORTING OF TERRORISM A SENSE OF SECURITY

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Abstract: Acts of terrorism are commonplace in the media. This situation makes the public increasingly feels the state of anxiety and insecurity. For media such state of affairs is clearly beneficial. But this raises the question of the impact of such activities to the public.

Keywords: terrorism, media, security.

MEDIALNY PRZEKAZ TERRORYZMU A POCZUCIE BEZPIECZEŃSTWA

Streszczenie: Akty terroryzmu są powszechne w mediach. Taka sytuacja sprawia, że opinia publiczna coraz częściej odczuwa stan niepokoju i niepewności. Dla mediów taki stan rzeczy jest oczywiście korzystny. Ale to rodzi pytanie o wpływ takich działań na społeczeństwo.

Słowa kluczowe: terroryzm, media, bezpieczeństwo.

1. Introduction

The ongoing political and structural changes in the world cause increasing needs and social expectations regarding the security of states and, consequently, changes in services counteracting threats. They are forced to look for ways to adapt the policy to the new situation. The development of such strategies includes a long-term plan of internal and external co-operation with the social environment. Not only the sense of border security, but also the ability to feel it on a daily basis is important to society. An important role in this task is fulfilled by the media that inform the public about real and potential threats. The consequence of the media operation is the existence of services that can develop and modernize their material and non-material resources in the name of increasing the citizens' sense of security.

The article adopted a qualitative research strategy. The aim of this study is to show the correlation between the image of the terrorist acts presented in the Polish media and the sense of security in Polish society. The subject of research is the phenomenon of security among Polish citizens. The fundamental research problem the author asked herself was the answer to the question how much the phenomenon of terrorism is shown in the media affects the postal security in the country of Polish citizens and, as a result, the institutions responsible for ensuring security are assessed.

The result of considerations is the conclusion that mass media not only inform about threats, but I can also drive and intensify them. *The media exert enormous influence on the individual's experience and shaping public opinion and social attitudes. It is a means of access to knowledge that is the backbone of many activities* (Goban-Klas, and Lipnik, 1999). The conviction about the growing threat affects the increase of public acceptance for the tasks undertaken by the state through the services.

The mass media have undoubtedly played an important role in many wars. They are able to attract nations for war or discourage them. They have an equally great influence on soldiers and officers. They can shape their morale, but also affect the actions of allied services, stimulating their psychological, emotional and physical readiness to carry out tasks, and at the same time acting destructively on the opponent. The role of the media in military operations increases with technological development. Jamie Shea – NATO spokesperson during the operation in Kosovo, said: the media is not an addition, it is not only a key to the way of reporting the war, but also to winning it more and more (Anonim, 21.11.2011).

It seems that ensuring the multiplicity and diversity of information sources that constitute our knowledge about the contemporary world is – so far – the only method of dealing with internal contradictions that characterize this property of modern democratic societies. The words of Winston Churchill can be quoted here: *Free media is the worst way to inform society, but all others are even worse* (Liedel, 30.10.2012).

2. The influence of the media on the perception of social threats

The use of social impact tools, such as mass media, makes it necessary to know their methods of operation, as well as the impact on recipients. Currently, theories are rejected that speak about the unequivocal and unavoidable influence of the media on the recipients, noting that the manner of receiving the message depends on many factors and the selectivity of attention. However, it is worth noting the existence of so-called the institutional paradigm, which says that the process of media communication takes place in political systems, and the media themselves are part of this system. The media, therefore, tell the public what it is supposed to think about, but they do it under the guise of the information they provide, eg by setting a hierarchy of events' importance in information services, leaving the recipient freedom

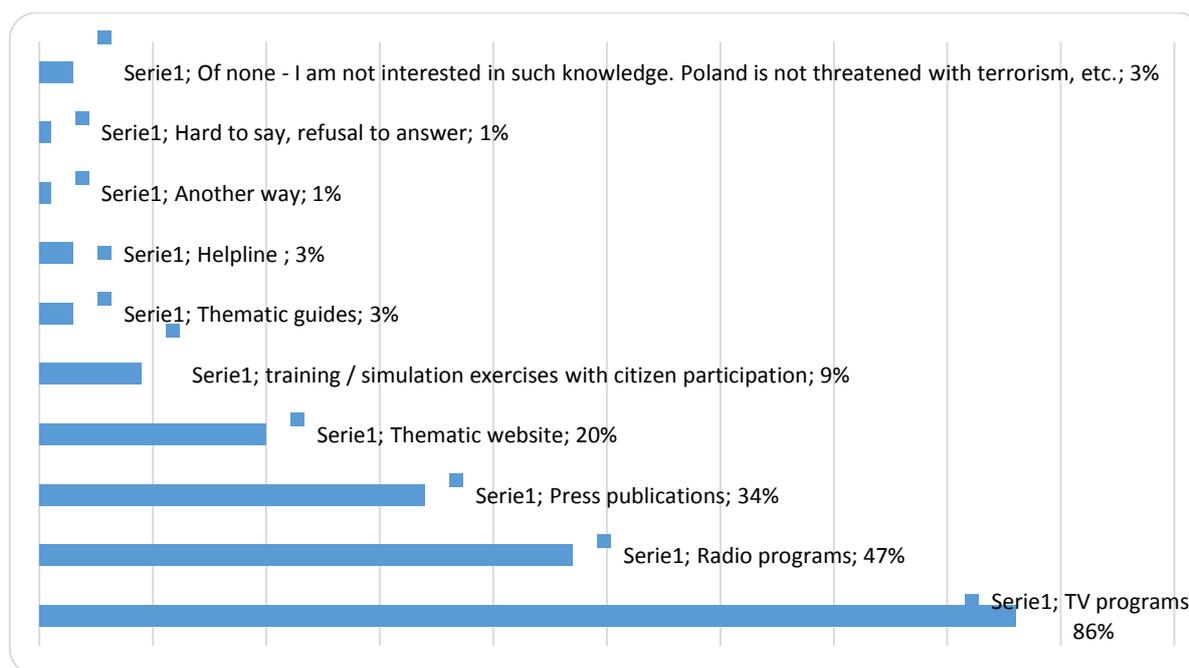
of choice (Griffin, 2003). However, it raises the danger of manipulation, because our attention is focused on events that are currently exposed in the media, which we consider them to be important (Griffin, 31.10.2012). Media thus unconsciously contribute to the implementation of two conflicting goals. First of all, they justify the need for the public to fight external and internal threats manifesting themselves in the form of terrorism, and secondly, they help terrorists reach their public to their ideas and, in turn, intimidate the public by enforcing their goals. However, the problem of media influence on the actions of governments fighting terrorists seems more serious. It takes place thanks to the speed of transmission, which is the hallmark of modern mass communication. According to B. Hoffman, it is this feature *that makes television not so much an opinion leader, but a "drive of politics", its presenters and commentators are outdistancing in determining options available to the government or in interpreting possible reactions of public opinion and their repercussions* (Hoffman, 1999).

Mass media are a tool for influencing the public. Today, they give a mandate in the form of support for the activities of state institutions. It is a force to be reckoned with, and should strive to understand and use it, especially for purposes related to universal security.

The picture of war in television media is one of the examples of their impact on society. The critical phenomenon of recent years, however, is terrorism, which is used to increase the viewership of TV stations. The terrorists themselves also use it. Brian Jenkins, an expert on terrorism and security at RAND Corporation, said in 1974 *that terrorism is a theater*, and terrorist attacks are often carefully planned in such a way as to attract media attention (Hoffman, 30.05.2009). An important feature of terrorism is that its activities are most often directed at groups or people who have no direct impact on the accomplishment of the objectives posed by terrorists. Terrorist activities must be characterized by a significant psychological effect and a high social and media response – only then can a given terrorist act be effective (Otlowski, 31.10.2012). Therefore, it can be stated that without observers and without those who report events from around the world to observers, terrorism would not exist. The condition for the existence of terrorism is fear. To arouse fear is to communicate to people that they have something to be afraid of. Terrorism is based on a theatrical approach to the events taking place. Direct reports from "places of events", photos of victims of terrorist attacks and the hysteria caused by journalists to increase viewership are the best "allies" of terrorism (Liedel, 30.10.2012).

3. Terrorism on television

In the surveys conducted by CBOS in 2010, respondents were asked, among others question: where would you personally want to learn about potential terrorist threats? A summary of the answers obtained is shown in Figure 1.



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100, because subjects could indicate more than one answer.

Figure 1. Sources of knowledge about potential terrorist threats. Adapted from: “The role of general government institutions in the field of informing citizens about terrorist threats”, CBOS, 2010, p. 9.

In the first place in terms of the frequency of indications, there are television programs (86%), which are preferred by all socio-demographic groups. Second place radio programs (47%) were more frequently mentioned by farmers. The supporters of press publications are, first of all, representatives of the management and specialists with higher education, as well as middle personnel and technicians. The frequency of indications on the Internet increases with the education of the respondents, and decreases with age - the majority of supporters of using thematic websites are among people with higher education and students, as well as people under 25 years of age.

That's why it's not surprising that the media is showing terrorist acts on TV so often and willingly. For example, there are broadcasts from the following events:

- the massacre of Israeli athletes at the Olympics in Munich in 1972. It was watched by 500 million viewers,
- events from 1975 – a meeting of ministers of oil producing countries at the OPEC headquarters in Vienna. The terrorists led by Ilich Ramirez Sanchez (known as "Carlos" or "Jackal") stormed into the room and demanded an airplane. The request has been met. Carlos escaped with the hostages from the building only when television and journalists arrived (Hoffman, 1999);
- detention of 52 hostages at the American Embassy in Tehran in 1979;
- events from 1980 in Italy. The Red Brigades have achieved a significant propaganda victory by negotiating the abducted judge Giovanna D'Urso through newspapers, radio and television;

- the abduction of the TWA aircraft by Lebanese terrorists in 1985 (Hoffman, 1999);
- interviewing the leader of one of the terrorist organizations. This is an extreme example of an incident that occurred in the mid-1980s, when NBC station reporters found Abu Abbas, sought after by the US security authorities from the Palestine Liberation Front, the organizer of the kidnapping of the Italian passenger ship, "AchilleLauro" (Białek, 2005);
- events from September 11, 2001. Photographs of Boeing 767 hitting the WTC towers found themselves in all major newspapers (Białek, 2005);
- action carried out on October 23, 2002 in the theater hall at Dubrovka;
- action carried out on 1 September 2004 at the school in Beslan.

Terrorism on the Internet

In the 1990s, the third information revolution began, due to the launch of the Internet. Report of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, pt. Internet usage for terrorist purposes (Internet as a tool for terrorist intentions) was created in cooperation with the Task Force for Combating Terrorism. The authors define the growing use of the Internet by terrorists as a rapidly growing phenomenon. The authors of the report, bearing in mind the global reach of the Internet, exchange various possibilities of using it by terrorists, including down:

- propaganda,
- financing of terrorism,
- training,
- communication,
- carrying out attacks, including cyber-terrorist ones (United Nations, 2012).

For example, some events can be cited here, published via terrorist-based internet broadcasts (Anonim, 30.10.2012):

- February 2002 – execution of Daniel Pearl, a journalist with dual US-Israeli citizenship. Shown in the OGRISH.COM service. This is the first movie related to the subject of terrorism,
- May 2004 – the first publicized execution of Nick Berg in Iraq. He was an American businessman,
- the case of Paul Johnson, an American engineer living in Arabia. The video of Johnson's death was posted on an Islamic website on June 15, 2004, killed by a group that is part of Al Qaeda. The group was led by Abdel Aziz al-Muqrin,
- June 2004 – chopping off the head of Kim Sun Il, a South Korean citizen. Other victims were: Egyptians, Bulgarians, Turks, as well as Iraqis cooperating with the coalition forces. In addition, they often died and die from the hands of terrorists: soldiers, government employees, intelligence agents, as well as businessmen and employees of technical sectors. Very few kidnapped manages to survive,

- On October 28, 2004, Teresa Borcz, a Polish citizen who had an Iraqi passport, was kidnapped. An unknown group kidnapped her near her home in Baghdad. The situation ended with the release of the hostage. In Poland, a discussion on the withdrawal of troops from the country over the Tigris and the Euphrates began at that time.

On the other hand, the possibility of using the Internet for counterterrorism activities is underlined. It can be them, among others monitoring of discussion groups run by jihad fighters and their websites and other communication channels. The global network makes it easier for the services to collect information about people suspected of terrorist activity and their surveillance. At the same time, the necessity of using the legal methods in this way, respecting human rights, is also marked. According to the authors of the report, this should be done through consistent legal solutions, adopted by UN members, leading to a fuller or more effective monitoring of the Internet (United Nations, 2012).

4. A sense of threat from terrorist attacks among Poles

In September 2005, after the attacks in London and Egypt, Poles were asked if they felt threatened by terrorist attacks. The conviction that Poland may become the target of terrorist attacks on the part of Muslim fundamentalists is still almost universal (83%). However, the social intensity of these fears has changed – currently, 1/3 of respondents express their concerns (34%), whereas in October 2004 it was almost half (48%). Threats are not felt by 13% of respondents, of which 2% are not afraid of attacks at all (Table 1).

Table 1.

Opinion on the state of threat to Poland by terrorist attacks on the part of Muslim fundamentalists

Do you agree with the opinion that Poland may become the target of terrorist attacks on the part of Muslim fundamentalists?	Indications of respondents according to research dates															
	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	II	IV	V	VI	VII	VII	IX	X	VIII
	2003							3004							2005	
	in percents															
I definitely agree	13	24	18	15	26	37	26	50	48	47	41	44	45	49	48	34
I rather agree	40	44	44	43	44	38	45	37	38	39	40	39	36	34	34	49
I AGREE	53	68	62	58	70	75	71	87	86	86	81	83	81	83	82	83
I do not agree	30	18	23	25	16	14	17	7	8	8	11	10	9	9	10	11
I definitely disagree	9	5	4	8	6	4	4	2	3	2	3	3	4	4	3	2
I DO NOT AGREE	39	23	27	33	22	18	21	9	11	10	14	13	13	13	13	13
Hard to say	9	8	11	9	9	6	8	4	4	4	5	4	6	4	5	4

Note: Centrum Badań Społecznych, BS/144/2005, p. 2.

Since April 2004, the percentage of respondents personally experiencing the threat of terrorist attacks has decreased slightly (by 5%). Such concerns were expressed by 56% of the respondents, 18% of whom said they were afraid of them, while slightly above 42% did not feel a direct threat (Table 2).

Table 2.
The level of Poles' concerns about attacks

Do you personally fear terrorist attacks or not?	Indications of respondents according to research dates						
	XI 2001	XII 2001	VI 2002	XII 2003	III 2004	IV 2004	VIII 2005
	in percents						
Yes, I'm afraid	12	11	11	15	29	22	18
Yes, I'm rather afraid	27	28	27	37	35	39	38
I'M AFRAID	39	39	38	52	64	61	56
No, I'm not really afraid	38	36	37	30	24	27	29
No, I'm not afraid at all	22	21	20	10	10	11	13
I DO NOT FEAR	60	57	57	40	34	38	42
Hard to say	2	4	5	8	2	1	2

Note: Centrum Badań Społecznych, BS/144/2005, p. 2.

The feeling of a personal threat of terrorism was much more often declared by women (64%) than men (48%). Less vulnerable were also the youngest respondents (58%), students (54%), those with higher education (55%) and people with the highest income (58%). Both concerns are strongly related to each other. Almost 2/3 (62%) of Poles were convinced that our country could become the target of terrorist attacks and fear them personally. However, 3/4 of the respondents (74%) did not notice such a threat and personally felt safe (Table 3).

Table 3.
Opinions on the potential threat of terrorist attacks by Muslim fundamentalists

Do you agree with the opinion that Poland may become the target of terrorist acts on the part of Muslim fundamentalists?	Do you personally fear terrorist attacks or not?		
	I'm afraid	I'm not afraid	Hard to say
I AGREE	62	36	1
NIE ZGADZAM SIĘ	26	74	0
I do not agree	31	46	23

Note: Centrum Badań Społecznych, BS / 144/2005, p. 1.

In Poland, the threat of terrorism at the end of 2016 was less felt than it was in the first half of 2016 (especially after the March attack in Brussels) and in 2015. On this sense, the threats were influenced by a series of attacks in Western Europe, which initiated the attack on the French weekly "Charlie Hebdo" in January 2015. Currently, almost half of Poles (49%) consider real threats of terrorism in Poland. Quite peculiar is that there are more and more people who are convinced that this problem is exaggerated (increase from 21% to 27%), and – to a lesser extent – completely questioning the existence of such a threat in Poland (from 13% to 17%) (Figure 1).

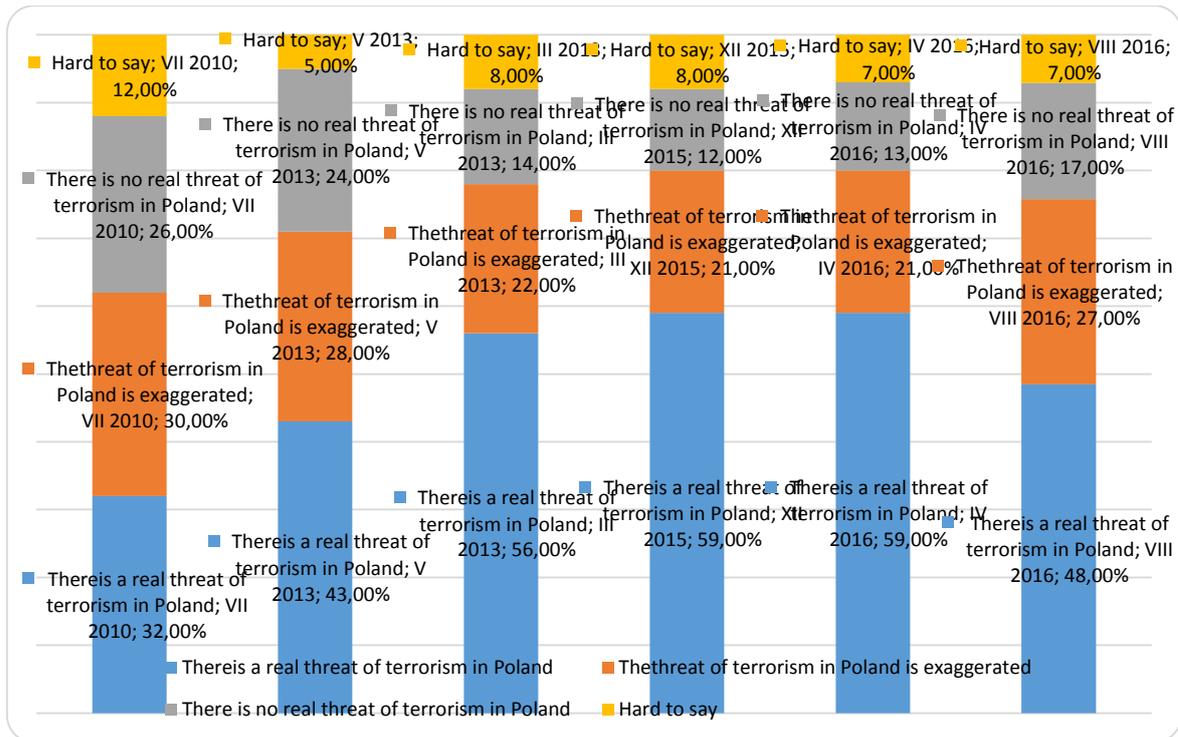


Figure 2. Changes in the perception of a terrorist threat among Poles in 2010-2016. Adapted from: “Centrum Badań Społecznych”, No 127/2016, p. 1.

Over two fifths of respondents (43%) believe that there is a real threat of terrorism in Poland. It is worth noting that since the measurement from less than three years ago, this percentage has increased by 11 points, which means that the possibility of a coup seems to Poles now more likely than at that time. The conviction that the threat of terrorism is exaggerated is expressed by over a quarter of respondents (28%), while slightly fewer people (24%) do not see it at all.

Although seven out of ten Poles consider the terrorist threat to be more or less likely, relatively few (26%, 9 points less than in 2011) personally are afraid of attacks. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents (72%, from 2011 an increase of 9 points) do not have such concerns. In 2013-2015, concerns related to terrorist attacks also increased considerably. Although most respondents (57%) are not afraid of them, however, since 2013, this group has decreased by 15 points. The level of concerns in 2015 was the highest in five years, but still lower than in the years 2003-2005 (Table 4).

Table 4. Opinions on concerns about terrorist attacks in 2001-2015

Do you personally fear terrorist attacks or not?	Indications of respondents according to research dates													
	2001		2002	2003	2004		2005	2010	2011	2013	2015		2016	
	IX	XII	VI	XII	III	IV	VIII	VII	V	V	III	XII I	IV	VII I
	in percents													
Yes, I'm afraid	12	11	11	15	29	22	18	6	7	5	9	14	13	10
Yes, I'm rather afraid	27	28	27	37	35	39	38	19	28	21	32	37	36	36
I'M AFRAID	39	39	38	52	64	61	56	25	35	26	41	51	49	46

Cont. table 4.

No, I'm not really afraid	38	36	37	30	24	28	29	43	40	41	41	35	37	37
No, I'm not afraid at all	22	21	20	10	10	11	13	29	23	31	16	12	12	15
IDO NOT FEAR	60	57	57	40	34	38	42	72	63	72	57	47	49	52
Hard to say	2	4	5	8	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2

Note: Centrum Badań Społecznych No 127/2016, p. 3.

In general, the preparation of Polish authorities and state institutions for the prevention of terrorist attacks is criticized. Earlier, most citizens by mid-2016 had negatively assessed their preparation for the prevention of terrorist attacks. At the end of 2016, more than two-fifths of respondents believe that Polish authorities and state institutions are well prepared to prevent terrorism, and a third (33%, a decrease by 30 points) is of the opposite opinion.

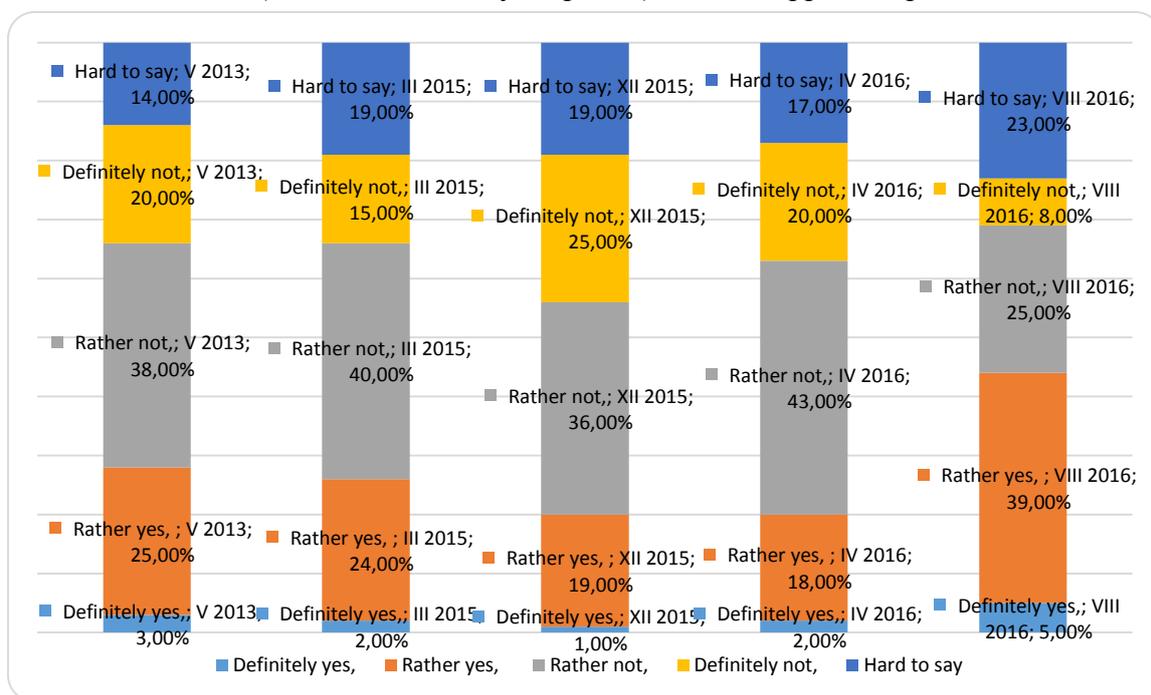


Figure 3. Opinions about the preparation of Polish authorities for terrorist attacks. From Centrum Badań Społecznych No 127/2016, p. 4.

Those convinced that state institutions are well prepared to prevent terrorist attacks are less likely to be afraid of such attacks than those criticized by the Polish authorities in this matter (Table 5).

Table 5.

A juxtaposition of the opinion of one's own sense of threat of terrorist attacks and the preparation of Polish authorities for them

Do you agree with the opinion that the Polish authorities, state institutions are well prepared to prevent terrorist attacks in Poland?	Do you personally fear terrorist attacks or not?		
	I'm afraid	I'm not afraid	Hard to say
YES	22	78	0
NOT	31	68	1

Note: Centrum Badań Społecznych, BS/78/2013, p. 3.

A comparison of the research results from 2010 and 2014 shows which of them currently arouse greater fears than previously and which are considered less real. As less real today than two years ago, the threat of a serious financial and economic crisis in Europe is perceived. The concerns about the threat to the country's energy security, the development of extreme political movements, the terrorist attack and the outbreak of the epidemic have also decreased. More than two years ago, the fall of the government and the loss of sovereignty by Poland seem to be more real today (Table 6).

Table 6.
Factors threatening the security of citizens in 2013

What do you think, what and to what extent can it presently and in the near future pose a real threat to the security of Poland?	XII 2011	XII 2013
	Medium on a scale from 0 to 10	
Growing poverty, bad living conditions of people	6,41	6,36
Demographic collapse, an aging population	-	6,33
Anxieties and social protests	5,87	5,63
Theft of confidential data from computers of state institutions, enterprises, banks	5,05	5,29
Crime growth in Poland	5,4	5,22
Strengthening of Russia's influence in the countries of former USSR		4,99
The development of organized crime, mafia activity	5,03	4,9
A serious financial and economic crisis in Europe, in the world	6,43	4,8
The development of the activity of political organizations that spread extreme views	4,92	4,52
Serious conflicts between various social groups in Poland	4,52	4,51
Permanent slowdown in the pace of economic growth in Poland	-	4,32
A serious armed conflict outside Poland, the consequences of which may also affect our country	-	4,24
Bankruptcy of the country, Poland's inability to pay its liabilities	-	3,98
Threat to the country's energy security – shortages in the supply of electricity and fuels	4,67	3,92
The fall of the government in Poland, political chaos	3,25	3,79
Ecological catastrophe, dangerous changes in the natural environment	3,76	3,76
Terrorist attack in Poland	3,5	3,14
The spread of an infectious disease, an epidemic	3,49	3,12
The breakup of the EU, conflicts between European countries	-	3,02
The weakening of the cooperation of countries belonging to NATO, the disintegration of NATO	-	2,5
Military attack on the territory of Poland	2,02	2,11
Loss of sovereignty, independence of Poland	1,47	1,92
Nuclear attack on the territory of Poland	1,67	1,56

Note: Centrum Badań Społecznych, No 18/2014, s. 3.

The respondents' opinions on Poland's preparations for action in emergency and unexpected situations are now slightly more crystallized than two years ago, but not much has changed in this respect. In the opinion of 2014, Poland is not well prepared to react in sudden, unexpected situations. Over half of the respondents express concerns about the preparation of our country for action in the event of a natural disaster (59%), ecological disaster (53%) or military attack (53%). The readiness to act in the situation of a terrorist attack is slightly less critical (47% negative ratings). Perhaps this is due to the conviction that today – in the age of combating

terrorism – the services responsible for the security of the country are particularly sensitive to such threats (Figure 4).

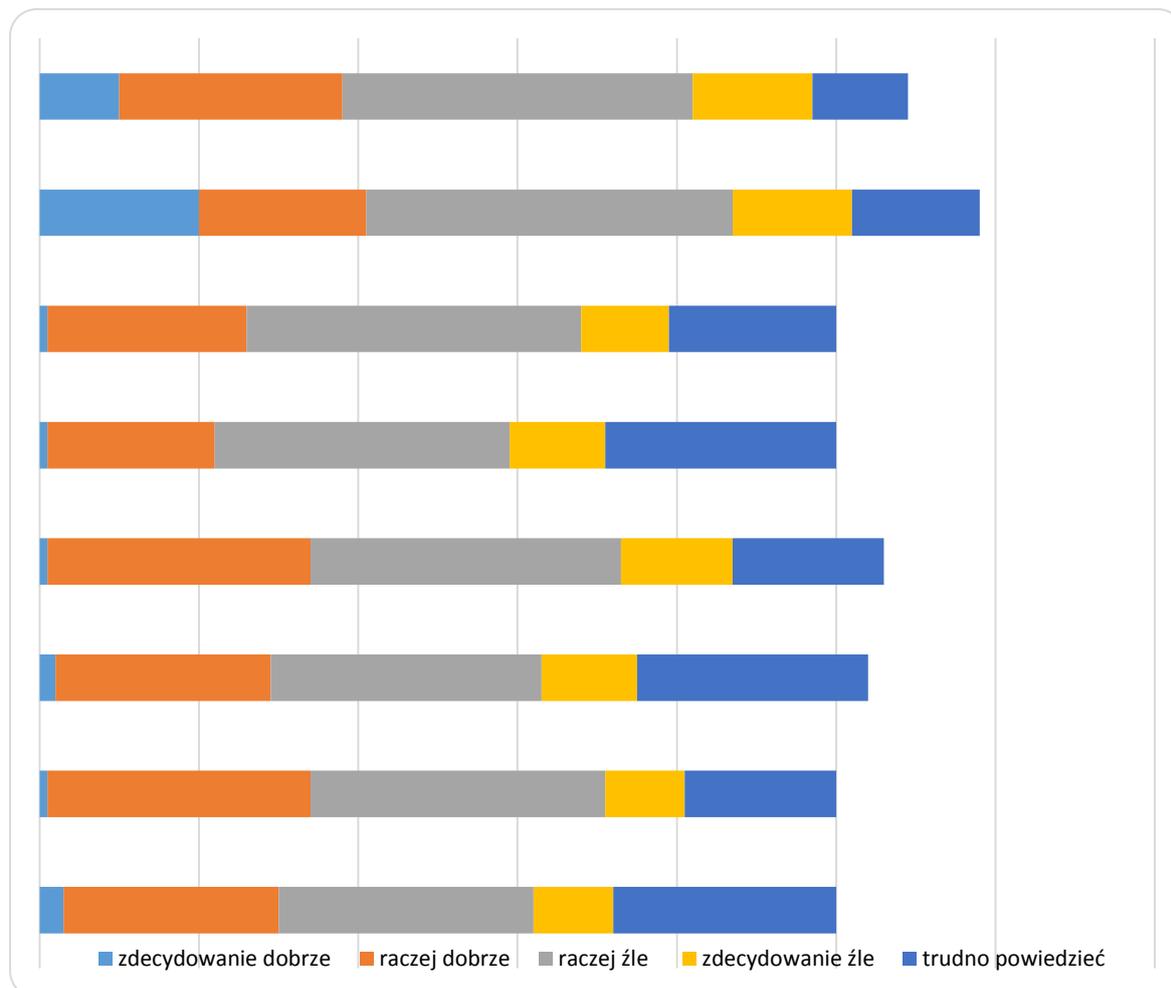


Figure 4. Opinions on the preparation of Polish authorities for internal and external threats. From Centrum Badań Społecznych, No 18/2014, p. 11.

5. Conclusion

The above research shows that it is not important in what context the society will discuss the phenomenon of terrorism - it is important that it will appear in the public forum that it will cease to be an "internal matter" of any entity. At the same time, it must be emphasized that publicizing the terrorist attacks by the media has a particular aspect. Reports of terrorist attacks increase viewership, but no media action is able to gain significant public support for the cause in which they are carried out, although there are cases where governments undergo terrorist pressure (Liedel, 30.10.2012).

It is worth noting that this classic model of terrorism is only found in countries with a democratic system of government, and practically impossible in non-democratic states.

Politicians very often commit to appearing on television in a crisis situation associated with a terrorist attack (Liedel, 30.10.2012). They feel obliged to provide information, comment and respond to questions that arise on the part of journalists. These actions do not necessarily serve a good cause. They often help terrorists in this way. Also repeated criticism of the authorities' actions, uttered by non-specialist journalists in the field of combating terrorism, affects public opinion, which in turn has an unfavorable impact on the government's actions, for example to free the hostages (Hoffman 1999, Czepik, et al 31.10.2012). Terrorist activities must be characterized by a significant psychological effect and a high social and media response – only then can a given terrorist act be effective. Calling a reaction in a much wider social group is always the essence of any terrorist operation, regardless of its nature and specificity (Otlowski 31.10.2012).

It can be noticed that information on terrorist attacks, eg April 2016 or attack in Brussels or December 2015 – after attacks in Paris), the feeling of insecurity and the threat of terrorism is growing, such as the NATO summit or World Youth Day, which took place The Polish authorities' perception of security, which had previously been negatively assessed in general, changed significantly in Poland and proceeded smoothly. The feeling of security also increased and the feeling of threat from terrorism decreased.

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