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„The Good, the Bad and the Ugly": Terrorists and NGOs in Modern Armed Conflicts

„Dobry, zły i brzydki": terroryści i organizacje pozarządowe we współczesnych konfliktach zbrojnych

Streszczenie:

Celem artykułu jest analiza ról odgrywanych przez tzw. aktorów niepaństwowych we współczesnych konfliktach zbrojnych. Analizie poddano działania dwóch klas podmiotów, tj. grup terrorystycznych oraz organizacji pozarządowych (NGO), w celu zweryfikowania utrzymującego się w potocznym odbiorze zniekształconego, nadmiernie uproszczonego ich obrazu. Zaprezentowane badania wykazały, wbrew panującym powszechnie opiniom, że żadnej z tych klas nie można przypisać jednoznacznie „dobrych" lub „złych" ról. Grupy terrorystyczne i organizacje pozarządowe mogą odgrywać bardzo zróżnicowane role w trakcie i po zakończeniu konfliktu zbrojnego, a ich działania bywają postrzegane i oceniane w odmienny sposób przez różne strony konfliktu.

Słowa kluczowe:

aktorzy niepaństwowi, terroryści, organizacje pozarządowe, współczesne konflikty zbrojne, post-westfalski ład międzynarodowy

Summary:

The article aims at analyzing the roles played by the so-called non-state actors (NSAs) in modern armed conflicts. The analysis covered the activities of two classes of entities, i.e. terrorist groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in order to verify the distorted, overly simplified picture of these entities that prevails in colloquial perception. The study suggests that, contrary to popular assumptions, one cannot assign exclusively „good" or „bad" labels to either of these classes. Terrorist groups and NGOs can play a variety of roles during and after armed conflict, and what is more, their actions may be perceived and evaluated differently by different parties to a conflict.

Keywords:

non-state actors, terrorists, non-governmental organizations, modern armed conflicts, post-Westphalian international order

1. Introductory remarks

The aim of this paper is to identify and compare the roles that terrorist groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are likely to play in modern armed conflicts. We deliberately juxtapose two very different types of entities, to challenge the prevailing stereotypes of thoroughly „bad" terrorists and always „good" NGOs. The article provides evidence that these images are essentially false and shows complexity and ambiguity of the roles played by non-state actors (NSAs). In the last part of the paper, various approaches of the international community towards NSAs are considered to identify the most promising strategy in this respect.

We intend to present the potential roles of non-state actors by building on the actual activities of some terrorist organizations and NGOs. Comparing these entities may seem a little odd at first glance because we are dealing with actors that are quite different, at least in terms of their goals, methods of operation, rules of conduct, sources of finance or organization. Yet, the common denominator of terrorist groups and NGOs that „justifies" the comparison is their peculiar status in international politics. Both are non-state actors and have no legal personality under international law.

2. Post-Westphalian world order and the nature of modern armed conflicts

Non-state actors constitute an integral part of the emerging post-Westphalian world order. Global politics in the 21st century is no longer characterized by exclusively interstate relations, but by more complicated, multidimensional and multilevel ties, especially transnational and intrastate. The latter are becoming increasingly significant due to the progressive processes of globalization. While the Westphalian international system was based upon sovereign nation-states, the late- or post-Westphalian order emphasizes the importance of non-state actors, such as non-governmental organizations, terrorists, private military and security companies (PMCs/PSCs), multinational corporations (MNCs) or even warlords and clan chiefs. These actors are undermining the modern state's traditional attribute of a monopoly of the legitimate use of force[1]. In some cases, NSAs seem

[1] Paradoxically, this diffuse, multilevel structure of authority makes the post-Westphalian order resemble the pre-Westphalian world. See: U. Schneckener, *Armed Non-State Actors and the Monopoly of Force*, in: A. Bailes, U. Schneckener, H. Wulf, *Revisiting the State Monopoly on the Legitimate Use of Force*, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), Policy Paper No. 24, p. 10-18; A. Toffler, H. Toffler, *Foreword:*

to be even more powerful (in terms of financial capabilities for instance) than certain states (compare big multinational corporations and a considerable group of fragile or failed states). Furthermore, if the Westphalian system was primarily preoccupied with symmetrical, interstate wars over territory and resources, the post-Westphalian order can be characterized by asymmetrical intrastate conflicts, civil wars and low-intensity conflicts. These developments are generally reflected in several reports concerning armed conflicts around the world. According to the report released by the Human Security Centre at the University of British Columbia (2005), the number of intrastate conflicts had increased from 20 in 1950 to over 50 in 1992[2].

The standard definition of armed conflict has been expressed in Carl von Clausewitz's famous dictum that 'war is merely the continuation of politics by other means'. Elaborating on this expression, one could state that the traditional conception of armed conflict has five constituent elements: (a) deliberate violence by collectives, (b) the use of arms, (c) the battle, (d) political objectives and (e) a government as an actor on at least one side of a conflict[3]. This conception has until recently dominated in academic literature and policy circles. However, there are opinions that such a view is too narrow to capture the trends in contemporary global politics. Many authors argue that since the end of the cold war there have been fundamental changes in how collective violence is used. Some claim that 'new wars' have become the dominant type of armed conflict. As Brzoska notes, „New wars are said to be marked by characteristics that call into question the validity of the standard political definition of a war, such as the avoidance of battle, the deliberate killing of civilians, the crucial role of economic motives in warfare and a fluidity of actors"[4]. In a similar vein, Goodhand and Hulme assert that in recent decades the nature of large-scale violent conflict has fundamentally changed from an era of 'wars' to one that is characterized by complex political emergencies (CPEs)[5]. The victims of CPEs are increasingly civilians rather than combatants. Civilians are often the objects of military strategy, thus CPEs are frequently accompanied with abuses

The New Intangibles, in: *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age*, ed. by J. Arquilla, D. Ronfeldt, Washington 1997, p. XX.

2 A. Acharya, *Human Security*, in: *The Globalization of World Politics. An Introduction to International Relations*, ed. by J. Baylis, S. Smith, P. Owens, Oxford 2011, p. 484-485.

3 M. Brzoska, *Collective Violence Beyond the Standard Definition of Armed Conflict*, in: SIPRI Yearbook 2007: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, Oxford 2007, p. 95.

4 Ibidem, p. 96.

5 J. Goodhand, D. Hulme, *From Wars to Complex Political Emergencies: Understanding Conflict and Peace-building in the New World Disorder*, „Third World Quarterly", 1999 Vol. 20 No. 1, p. 13–26.

of international humanitarian law and rising numbers of internally displaced people and refugees.

This turbulent environment is generally conducive to the operation of non-state actors, including those „good" and the „bad". State collapse and humanitarian crisis frequently caused by armed conflict create an increased demand of the local people for assistance from NGOs. On the other hand, terrorist groups may benefit from the war-driven chaos and the lack of law enforcement to further their unlawful goals.

3. The dynamics of conflict and the involvement of NSAs

The number of possible roles that non-state actors can perform in modern armed conflicts depends on many circumstances. Some of the relevant factors are related to the actors themselves, whereas others can be identified as environmental conditions. The former include legal status of NSAs, their statutory and/or informal goals, scope of activities, financial, material and human resources, and, last but not least, cooperative and communication skills. As for the latter, one should take into account the scale, intensity and phase of a conflict, the attitudes of local population toward the NSAs involved (friendliness, indifference or hostility), and the tactics applied by other NSAs (cooperation or competition).

For analytical purposes, it is useful to examine the activities of terrorists and NGOs separately. It seems that possible roles played by terrorist groups in armed conflicts are far less diverse than in the case of NGOs. It is due to the fact that terrorist organizations are primarily concerned with political matters, while NGOs can be interested in literally every aspect of human life. Thus, we will start our study with an apparently simpler case of terrorists.

Terrorism remains one of the main methods available in the „toolbox of violence" and actually used in contemporary intrastate conflicts (e.g. by Chechen, Kashmiri, Palestinian, Tamil and other militants). Regardless of the emergence of the so-called „global terrorism" and the fact that it has preoccupied anti-terrorism agendas in the Western world, especially since the unprecedented attacks of the September 11th 2001, conflict-related terrorism systematically employed as a tactic in local or regional asymmetrical armed conflicts continues to be the most widespread form of terrorism[6]. Such terrorism is connected with the specif-

[6] E. Stepanova, *Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict. Ideological and Structural Aspects*, SIPRI Research Report No. 23, Oxford 2008, p. 11; *Global Terrorism Index 2018: Measuring the impact of terrorism*, Institute for Economics & Peace, Sydney 2018, p. 3.

ic agenda of a particular conflict, thus terrorists are usually motivated by a very particular political goal (or goals). This goal might be relatively ambitious (e.g. to seize power in a state, to create a new state or to fight against foreign occupation), but it usually does not extend beyond a local or regional context[7].

As noted elsewhere, important differences in the roles and impact of NSAs reflect the changing phases of conflict[8]. It is true of terrorist organizations which typically play „bad" roles in every phase of a given conflict. Firstly, they can initiate or provoke a conflict. This was a case of the Second Chechen War which was launched by the Russian Federation in 1999, in response to the invasion of Dagestan by the Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade and the bombing attacks in Moscow, Ryazan and Volgodonsk. Secondly, terrorists can perpetuate and exacerbate the ongoing conflict by fueling a vicious circle of violence. It seems that the endless Israeli-Palestinian conflict serves as a perfect example of this situation. Thirdly, sustained and high-profile acts of terrorism can impede a peace process. This problem becomes most evident when terrorist attacks are used by the key NSAs at the stage of ongoing confrontation intentionally to disrupt actual or potential peace negotiations. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, one of many such examples was the deadly suicide attack by Hamas in a hotel in the Israeli town of Netanya on 27 March 2002, deliberately timed to coincide with the Arab League Summit in Beirut. A slightly different situation occurs when a peace process breaks down as a result of the activity of the so-called 'spoilers' (usually more radical splinter organizations that enjoy less or no broad popular support and stand to gain little from the peace process). It may happen when some preliminary or more formal agreement with the main parties has already been achieved (e.g. the case of Northern Ireland)[9].

In contrast to terrorist groups, the scope of roles that NGOs are likely to play during and after conflict seems broader. Their primary activities range from humanitarian assistance through conflict resolution to building civil and democratic society. Some of them may be created for very specific purposes (e.g. demining, well drilling, visiting people in detention, support for women, community policing), while others perform more general functions (e.g. the International Committee of the Red Cross protects the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and provides them with assistance).

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[7] E. Stepanova, p. 10.

[8] A.J.K. Bailes, D. Nord, *Non-State Actors in Conflict: A Challenge for Policy and for Law*, in: *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, ed. by K. Mulaj, New York 2010, p. 441-466.

[9] E. Stepanova, *Anti-terrorism and Peace-building During and After Conflict*, SIPRI, Stockholm 2003, p. 19-20.

Similarly to terrorist organizations, NGOs' activities may extend across different phases of the life cycle of a conflict, i.e. even before the first signs of violence right through to the consolidation of peace[10]. Despite the fact that the most visible and valued activities of NGOs are usually those undertaken in the limelight, that is during conflict, one cannot overestimate the role that these organizations play in preventing war. In this context, some NGOs on the African continent (e.g. the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, the Institute for Security Studies, the Nairobi Peace Initiative) have established different tools which help to detect threats to peace. The early warning systems are concerned with forecasting the potential for violent conflict and, where necessary, framing an appropriate response that seeks not only to resolve the current conflict, but also to create the conditions that will result in sustainable peace[11].

After an outbreak of war, NGOs have to deal with the bulk of threats to human dignity and life. To this end, they can use resources which states immersed in war usually lack. This includes financial resources as well as sources of expertise. Since NGOs have become the donors' 'favoured child'[12], they have access to growing funds and influence. Moreover, they can make better use of these resources than governments, generally being perceived as more efficient and cost-effective[13]. One should not also forget the NGOs' human resources, that is their employees and volunteers whose competences, skills and creativity may contribute considerably to alleviating war suffering. As one author put it, NGOs are 'rushing in where soldiers and bureaucrats fear to tread'[14].

Another important role which NGOs can play when conflict is still ongoing is the commitment to multi-track or second-track diplomacy. Both concepts refer to the situation when non-officials engage in informal dialogue, aiming at conflict resolution. This approach is based on the idea that different actors' activities in peacemaking can be complementary to each other and part of a larger framework of initiatives. For instance, while NGOs may monitor human rights abuses

[10] C. Branco, *Non-governmental Organizations in the Mediation of Violent Intra-state Conflict: the Confrontation Between Theory and Practice in the Mozambican Peace Process*, „JANUS.NET e-journal of International Relations", 2011 Vol. 2 No. 2, www.observare.ual.pt/janus.net/en_vol2_n2_art4, p. 80 [accessed: April 1, 2012].

[11] H. Solomon, S. Matthews, *Civil Society, the State and Conflicts in Africa*, DPMF Occasional Paper No. 3, 2002, http://www.dpmf.org/images/occasionalpaper3.pdf, p. 11-12 [accessed: April 1, 2012].

[12] J. Goodhand, P. Chamberlain, *'Dancing with the prince': NGOs' survival strategies in the Afghan conflict*, in: *Development in States of War*, ed. by D. Eade, Oxford 1996, p. 39.

[13] J. Bray, *Public-Private Partnerships in State-Building and Recovery from Conflict*, International Security Programme Briefing Paper No. 1, Chatham House, London 2006, p. 2.

[14] J. Goodhand, P. Chamberlain, p. 41.

at a grassroots level, international economic institutions can press for peace coalitions to exert pressure on the parties of a conflict to negotiate[15].

There are numerous examples of multi-track and second-track diplomacy, especially in Africa[16]. In Mozambique, for instance, the Italian-based Catholic lay community of Sant' Egidio initiated the talks which led to the cease-fire between the *Resistência Nacional Moçambique* (RENAMO) and the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO). Religious elites – Roman Catholic and Anglican – were also involved in conflict-management in the Mozambican conflict. It was in this context that the Christian Council of Mozambique established the „Commission for Peace and Reconciliation" in order to explore possible opportunities for dialogue and facilitate communication between the parties[17].

In regard to the methods used in multi-track and second-track diplomacy, NGOs have a relatively small number of strategies at their disposal. The options are limited to communication and facilitation strategies guided to quality-oriented interaction between the parties and to maintaining an environment conducive to conflict management[18]. Therefore, some authors claim that informal diplomacy may only support the efforts of official, first-track diplomacy and plays merely a secondary role. According to Branco, there were only few cases of direct involvement of NGOs in the mediation of violent conflicts, and neither of them can be considered a success[19].

In contrast to Branco, Cochrane drew more optimistic conclusions from his comparative analysis of the roles and impacts of community-based NGOs in conflict resolution activity. The author argues that the third sector has made an important contribution to the peace processes in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel/Palestine. Cochrane emphasizes that „the culture of the track-one negotiations that led ultimately to political agreement in the three cases highlighted, was significantly different from the ethos held at the track-two level of civil society. While political compromises were made by all of the negotiating parties within South Africa, Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, these were essentially trade-offs between the elite representatives of conflict parties rather than an achievement of mutual consensus on the issues

[15] H. Solomon, S. Matthews, p. 15.

[16] Ibidem, p. 13-14; C. Branco, p. 93.

[17] C. Branco, p. 87.

[18] Ibidem, p. 85.

[19] Ibidem, p. 93.

underlying the respective conflicts"[20]. He suggests that the elite-level, track-one diplomacy has limited capacity to transform political conflict, and that more attention should be paid to community-based second-track initiatives, which are immersed more thoroughly in consensus-building activities[21].

The main role of NGOs in the post-war period may be described as participation in building civil and democratic society. Before rebuilding of state institutions is over, NGOs can complement the overarching role and primary responsibility of a state to uphold human rights and to promote equitable human development and wellbeing. In other words, NGOs can fill the power gap. If national laws which promote human rights do not exist, are not fully implemented or abused, NGOs can highlight these issues for public debate and advocate appropriate remedial action[22].

4. Beyond stereotypical perceptions of NSAs

Prima facie, it seems that NGOs and terrorist organizations are on opposite sides of the „good/evil spectrum". We usually assume that the former are always angels doing a good job, while the latter are only mean and contemptible. However, the reality is quite different from our imaginations and much more complex. Obviously, the results of NGOs' activities are predominantly „good" and terrorists usually play „bad" roles. Nevertheless, we should not idealize or demonize neither of them.

As regards terrorists, the first problem which arises is to define and identify them. This issue is reflected in a well-known expression: „One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter". In fact, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish terrorists from freedom fighters, guerrillas, militants, or mere criminals. These ambiguities led to many political problems and dilemmas. On the one hand, some – let us say „real" – terrorists have portrayed themselves as freedom fighters struggling for rights of the oppressed people, which – according to them – justified their targeting of civilians. On the other hand, some states have made use of the prevailing ambiguity to apply the term „terrorist organization" to freedom fighters and have evoked the threat of terrorism as a pretext to crush them with

[20] F. Cochrane, *Beyond the Political Elites: A Comparative Analysis of the Roles and Impacts of Community-Based NGOs in Conflict Resolution Activity*, „Civil Wars", 2000, Vol. 3 No. 2, p. 2-3.

[21] Ibidem, p. 3.

[22] *International Non Governmental Organizations Accountability Charter*, December 20, 2005, http://www.ingoaccountabilitycharter.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/INGO-Accountability-Charter_logo1.pdf, p. 2 [accessed: April 1, 2012].

force[23]. The latter situation is the case of the North Caucasus conflict. Russia has increasingly sought to present its engagement with the problems of this region as a struggle with terrorism. Following the *al-Qaeda* attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, the Russian government was quick to associate the militants in the North Caucasus with the global *jihadi* movement and to cast its actions in the region as part of the „war on terrorism"[24].

Another misapprehension related to terrorist organizations is the scope of their activities. We usually tend to perceive these groups as one-dimensional, i.e. involved exclusively in violent activities. In reality, some of the organizations considered as terrorist and engaged in armed confrontation may also be involved in non-violent activities that can range from social and community work to economic, political and religious functions. These activities are of significant importance in weak states where non-state groups often have to fill the governmental void. This combination of violent and non-violent activities is often found in Islamic fundamentalist organizations – from the large Palestinian *Hamas* to the low-profile Somalia-based *al-Ittihad al-Islami*[25]. In performing basic social welfare functions in the Palestinian territories, *Hamas* has proved to be more effective than the Palestinian Autonomy. It has enjoyed growing involvement in political activities and had solid experience in community-based social work and extensive grassroots outreach. This approach is considered to be its main strength and gives it significant popular support[26]. *Al-Ittihad al-Islami*, in turn, put its focus to „working on the prerequisites for eventual Islamic rule" by becoming increasingly active in social welfare, education, commerce and the media[27].

To sum up, terrorists' roles during and after conflict are far from being „all bad". It is all too easy to put them in a pigeonhole. One has to bear in mind the socio-economic origins of terrorism. Every counter-terrorism strategy should therefore be directed towards reducing causes of this phenomenon (*inter alia* poverty, social disparities, economic underdevelopment), rather than eliminating individual terrorists. As has been shown above, organizations commonly considered as terrorist can perform essential social functions, and, more im-

[23] A. Ullah Khan, *The Terrorist Threat and the Policy Response in Pakistan*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 11, Stockholm 2005, p. 13.

[24] N. J. Melvin, *Building Stability in the North Caucasus. Ways Forward for Russia and the European Union*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 16, Stockholm 2007, p. 31.

[25] E. Stepanova, *Anti-terrorism…*, p. 2.

[26] Ibidem, p. 23.

[27] Ibidem, p. 24.

portantly, gain support from some sectors of society. Non-governmental forces can mark their control of territories by starting to deliver state-like services including welfare, schooling etc. This has been a prominent aspect of *Hamas*' and *Hezbollah*'s profile but is not a strong point for, e.g., the Taliban[28].

Referring to NGOs, it should be stated that despite their undeniable contribution to economic and social development in many parts of the world, there are also some negative trends. In this context, many authors noticed that the NGO 'boom' brought competition, duplication, lack of planning, poor coordination, and a lack of self-critical evaluation[29]. Others claim that NGOs are in danger of becoming increasingly marginal in terms of the importance of their work, „superficially alleviating the misery of the victims of conflict, but lacking the capacity, understanding, or interest to address its causes and consequences"[30].

The third sector is mostly viewed as having positive qualities and altruistic motives. Such a view is idealistic if not naïve[31]. There is much evidence that civil society organizations may (unintentionally) exacerbate conflict. If, for instance, a certain NGO focuses its development initiatives on one part of a divided community, it may be interpreted as favoring one side of the conflict against another. Even if the organization's priority appears justified by a wish to concentrate on the people most in need, it will send the wrong political message. By contrast, projects that focus on common problems – for example cleaning up a shared water supply – may serve as 'connectors', bringing communities together instead of dividing them[32].

Thus, rather than contributing to solving the crisis, non-governmental organizations may occasionally become parties to the conflict. Ramarajan et al. examined the nature of the relationship between NGO workers (employees of international and national NGOs working in a conflict situation) and peacekeepers (members of a military force intervening to maintain a ceasefire in a conflict situation) and came to the conclusion that this interaction often resulted in conflict[33]. Drawing from many studies, the authors outlined three hypoth-

[28] A.J.K. Bailes, D. Nord, p. 441-466.

[29] F. A. Solis, P. Martin, *The Role of Salvadorean NGOs in Post-war Reconstruction*, in: *Development in States of War*, ed. by D. Eade, Oxford 1996, p. 53.

[30] S. Commins, *In the Line of Fire: Development in Conflict*, in: *Development in States of War*, ed. by D. Eade, Oxford 1996, p. 13.

[31] As Green warns, „civil society bodies reflect and embody the tensions in their communities: seeking to manipulate as often to transcend them". R.H. Green, *Rehabilitation, Sustainable Peace and Development: Towards Reconceptualisation*, „Third World Quarterly", 1999 Vol. 20 No. 1, p. 195.

[32] J. Bray, p. 3.

[33] L. Ramarajan et al., *Relationship Between Peacekeepers and NGO Workers: The Role Of Training and Conflict Management Styles in International Peacekeeping*, „The International Journal of Conflict Management", 2004

eses regarding the causes of conflict. „First, problems between peacekeepers and NGO personnel are attributed to differences in organizational goals, missions, and mandates. The two actors are organized for different purposes: peacekeeping missions are designed to stop violence while NGOs are designed to build relationships. Therefore, military peacekeeping objectives may dictate withholding assistance to persuade local parties to cooperate, while for many NGOs in humanitarian situations, their *raison d'etre* is to give to those most in need. Thus, NGOs may provide succor to local warring parties, and in doing so restrict the peacekeepers' leverage. Second, it has been suggested that organizational culture differences between military and civilian organizations, such as the need for hierarchy and order in the military, and the need for consensus building among NGOs, may contribute to conflict between the two parties. Finally, there is direct competition over resources, legitimacy, and claims to glory"[34].

Even though NGOs are by definition apolitical and impartial, they are sometimes directly involved in politics, supporting, for example, some particular ideological vision of a state, society or economy, e.g. (neo)liberal, capitalist, secular, individualistic, or, in general, Western. It may be asked whether NGOs are indeed strengthening civil society (by the way, the concept of „civil society", as well as this term itself, were „invented" in the West), or rather attempting to shape social order in ways that some external actors consider desirable[35]. One can also ask if NGOs move from neutral role to one which may influence the outcome of the conflict when they hire guards or negotiate agreements with particular leaders[36].

The divergence between the rhetoric of neutrality and the reality of certain activities that are increasingly politicized has been clearly visible in Afghanistan. NGOs working in this country had a genuine impact on the local balance of power, by supporting some warlords in preference to others. Hence, they may have contributed to local conflicts and diminished social cohesion. Cash-for-food distributions in the early 1980s are an extreme example where poorly monitored programs are suspected of having provided Mujahideen commanders with funds for their military activities. Some donors were prepared to accept 'wastage levels' of up to 40% for their projects in Afghanistan[37].

Vol. 15 No. 2, p. 167-191.

[34] Ibidem, p. 168.

[35] J. Goodhand, P. Chamberlain, p. 43.

[36] S. Commins, p. 11.

[37] J. Goodhand, P. Chamberlain, p. 43.

The examination of the role of international NGOs in the recovery of East Timor gives a similarly mixed picture. Bugnion et al. point out that „No initial framework agreement was established between UN agencies or INGOs working with local NGOs or local institutions to ensure East Timorese participation. As a result, local participants were mostly marginalized by the international community during the initial humanitarian response"[38]. Such observations correspond with the opinions, or, rather, the feelings of civil society actors in East Timor. The *Conselho National da Resistencia Timorese* (CNRT), the umbrella group representing a confederation of local resistance parties, was one of the sternest critics. The critique addressed both the UN and international NGOs with repeated claims of failure to consult East Timorese leaders, arrogance and superiority in approach[39]. The most strident criticism from Timorese local NGOs identified international assistance with „a new form of colonialism, marked by patronising values about the helplessness of the populace and imposition of pre-packaged and inappropriate solutions"[40]. As Ian Patrick rightly notes, „The marginalisation of local NGOs reflects broader concerns inherent to rehabilitation programmes where external agencies and viewpoints predominate, reinforcing the needs and priorities of donors and international NGOs"[41].

5. Final remarks

In this article, we attempted to challenge some common beliefs about terrorists and NGOs and present a fuller image of their activities. Our study suggests that, contrary to popular assumptions, one cannot assign exclusively „good" or „bad" labels to either of these actors. Terrorist groups and NGOs can play a variety of roles, and what is more, their actions may be perceived and evaluated differently by different parties to a conflict. Whether non-state actors receive approval or disapproval, praise or condemnation depends on who is judging and on what criteria (moral, legal or other). Without referring to certain rules of conduct, like ethics or law, it is difficult, if not impossible, to define who are the „good", and the „bad", or which precise rules they are breaking.

[38] C. Bugnion et al., *External Review of the Humanitarian Response to the East Timor Crisis: September 1999–May 2000*, Report from UNTAET, Dili 2000, p. 3.

[39] I. Patrick, *East Timor Emerging from Conflict: The Role of Local NGOs and International Assistance*, „Disasters", 2001 Vol. 25 No. 1, p. 56.

[40] Ibidem, p. 57.

[41] Ibidem, p. 62.

The last important question that remains to be addressed is how the international community should and can respond to NSAs' activities. Roughly speaking, there are at least six general approaches available to the international community for reducing the „bad" and increasing the potential „good" roles of terrorists. This includes: (1) physical coercion, (2) regulation, (3) cutting off supplies, (4) changing terrorists' minds and methods, (5) changing their supporters' minds, and finally (6) target protection/resilience. It seems that some of these options are more suitable and probably more effective than others. For example, physical coercion, that is any attempts to physically stop (catch or kill) terrorists, does not eliminate or reduce root causes of terrorism. This approach can be even counterproductive, as terrorists may wish to take revenge on their oppressors. Similarly, introducing new regulations *per se* means little, unless there exists efficient law enforcement. Moreover, terrorist organizations, as non-state actors, are inherently difficult to target and discipline using national and international laws in the field of warfare and weaponry that were originally designed to apply to states[42]. By contrast, changing terrorists' minds and methods appears to be the most promising and meaningful approach, since it is aimed at long-lasting and not superficial results. This is not to say, however, that it is an easy solution to develop, let alone to apply. Regardless of the chosen option, policymakers should always take measures that are based not only on effectiveness but also on 'do the least harm' approach (with regard to law, society, human rights, economy, etc.).

Unlike terrorist organizations, which do not possess legal personality under any legal system, NGOs are legal entities recognized under domestic law. Hence, it is easier for any national lawmaker to directly address NGOs and affect the way in which they operate. Apart from national legislation, non-governmental organizations should also try to improve their functioning through self-regulation. Among many issues which should be addressed by new regulations, there is a pressing need for better coordination of NGOs' activities. Particularly, there seems to be an interest in establishing mechanisms for giving accreditation to individual NGOs for different sectoral skills, partly to modify the media-driven and resource-driven nature of their work[43].

[42] A.J.K. Bailes, D. Nord, p. 441-466.

[43] S. Commins, p. 13.

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