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THE SECURITY OF POLISH CITIES IN THE FACE OF ISLAMIC TERRORISM THREATS

Abstract

The increasing threat of Islamic terrorism observed in recent years in Western European countries justifies a scientific reflection on the state of security in Polish cities. Urban areas are home to over 60% of the population and host the most important state, religious, cultural, and economic facilities – including critical infrastructure – of particular significance to national security. Moreover, the dynamic nature of the international security environment, including the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan, the war in Ukraine, uncontrolled migration, and the resurgence of ISIS, may contribute to the emergence and development of terrorist threats in Polish cities. Therefore, this article identifies the key factors influencing the growth of terrorist threats in major urban agglomerations. It also presents the results of a survey assessing the perception and probability of such threats occurring. In the final part of the article, an action is proposed that will ensure the effectiveness of the anti-terrorist system and, consequently, the safety of the city's residents.

Keywords: security, terrorism, threat

Introduction

The beginnings of urban development in Poland date back to the 13th century. The growth of towns and cities primarily resulted from the transformation of settlements located at the crossroads of trade routes, as well as suburban areas situated near churches, monasteries, strongholds, and castles. In the Polish territories, rapid expansion of the urban network occurred in the 19th century, driven by the dynamic development of industrial centres, including mining, metallurgy, food processing and construction industries. As a consequence of intense social and industrial development, separate and independent administrative units began to emerge. According to the definition, a city is "a settlement unit characterized by a predom-

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inance of compact building development and non-agricultural functions, possessing municipal rights or city status granted in accordance with specific legal regulations."[1]

A characteristic feature of cities is the presence of certain elements known as "permanent structures" within their area – constructions and facilities such as buildings, bridges, overpasses, streets, critical infrastructure, and others. However, the key element is the population (community), which not only inhabits urban space, but also jointly produces the aforementioned material elements and drives the development of the city. From the perspective of the issue at hand, both urban systems and the population should be considered as potential terrorist targets – or, in the case of the population, as a potential source of such threats.

Urban terrorism is characterised by a high number of casualties, the randomness of attack targets, and the diversity of methods, forms, and tools used. Such attacks can be carried out by virtually anyone – criminals, deviants, mercenaries, religious fundamentalists, and others. Potential targets include political centres, local authorities, critical infrastructure, diplomatic facilities, high-profile individuals, or ordinary citizens. Terrorists may employ single and simultaneous attacks using conventional weapons or unconventional means, including weapons of mass destruction. In addition, they may exploit new domains of warfare, such as electromagnetic spectrum operations and cyberspace. Therefore, the issue of ensuring security in Polish cities against terrorist threats remains relevant and of critical importance.

Unfortunately, the literature on the indicated topic is scarce and lacks systematic organisation. Nevertheless, the following works may be considered of particular interest: 1) *Cities in a Time of Terror: Space, Territory, and Local Resilience*[2], 2) *Urban Terrorism in Contemporary Europe*[3], 3) *Urban Terrorism: Theory, Practice & Response*[4], 4) *Urban Terrorism*[5]*; 5) Protecting urban centres from terrorist attacks*[6]*;* 6) *Cities, War, and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*[7]. Among the Polish-language publications that address this issue in a very general manner are: 1) *Miasta*

[1] Ustawa z 29 sierpnia 2003 r. o urzędowych nazwach miejscowości i obiektów fizjograficznych (Dz.U. 2003, nr 166, poz. 1612).

[2] H.V. Savitch, *Cities in a Time of Terror: Space, Territory, and Local Resilience Space, Territory, and Local Resilience*, Abingdon 2008.

[3] K. Karcher [et al.], *Urban Terrorism in Contemporary Europe,* London 2024.

[4] A. Burton, *Urban Terrorism: Theory, Practice & Response,* Galway 1975.

[5] A.E. Sadler, P.A. Winters, *Urban Terrorism*, San Diego 1996.

[6] *Protecting urban centres from terrorist attacks,* New York 2022.

[7] S. Graham, *Cities, War, and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*, Malden 2004.

trwogi. Terroryzm na obszarze zurbanizowanym[8]*, 2) Terroryzm w Polsce - analiza wybranych przypadków*[9]*,* oraz *3) Bezpieczeństwo terrorystyczne budynków użyteczności publicznej*[10]. However, these works primarily present the development, challenges, and threats associated with terrorism, while to a lesser extent focusing on the conditions of urban terrorism, its specific characteristics, and tactics.

In light of the presented problematic situation, the **subject of the research** was established as: Ensuring the security of urban agglomerations against threats related to Islamic terrorism. The purpose of the research was to: assess the vulnerability of Polish cities to Islamic terrorism and to propose measures to enhance their security against such threats. The research problem question was formulated as follows: How are terrorist threats perceived in Polish cities and what actions can be taken to ensure the safety of residents and urban infrastructure?

The preliminary research conducted has allowed the formulation of the following working hypothesis: It is assumed that despite the prevailing military threats in the current security environment – such as the war in Ukraine and the activities of hybrid warfare activities – the threat of terrorism to Polish cities remains real and relevant. The assessment of the likelihood of such threats can vary depending on the size of the locality, the importance of the infrastructure located there, the presence of national minorities, and the attractiveness of the area to potential perpetrators of attacks. Changes in systemic, organisational, architectural, and technical areas are assumed to contribute to improving the security level of Polish cities. In the research process, the method of document analysis (including laws, regulations, reports, statistical data, etc.), literature review and critique (source materials), as well as knowledge synthesis, were employed. Data and opinions were collected through a diagnostic survey (using a questionnaire technique) with a standardized questionnaire consisting of 7 questions[11]. The data collected were then processed using statistical methods.

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[8] A. Aksamitowski, M. Cupryjak, Z. Kozak, *Miasta trwogi. Terroryzm na obszarze zurbanizowanym*, Szczecin 2016.

[9] K. Liedel, A. Mroczek, *Terroryzm w Polsce - analiza wybranych przypadków,* Warszawa 2013.

[10] J. Stelmach, *Bezpieczeństwo terrorystyczne budynków użyteczności publicznej*, Warszawa 2022.

[11] The study was conducted in March 2025 at the University of Warsaw among first--year master's students in the field of Internal Security. A total of 74 out of 92 individuals participated in the survey, representing 80.5% of the studied population.

Factors Determining the threat of Islamic Terrorism in Polish Cities

According to the definition, determining factors are key elements that influence a specific process, phenomenon, or decision.[12] Therefore, it is important to identify the most significant ones – those that will substantially impact the emergence of terrorist threats in cities. The selection of factors was made based on an analysis of the relevant literature and empirical research obtained. The survey included the following question: Which factors will have the greatest impact on the increase in threats from Islamic terrorism in cities?

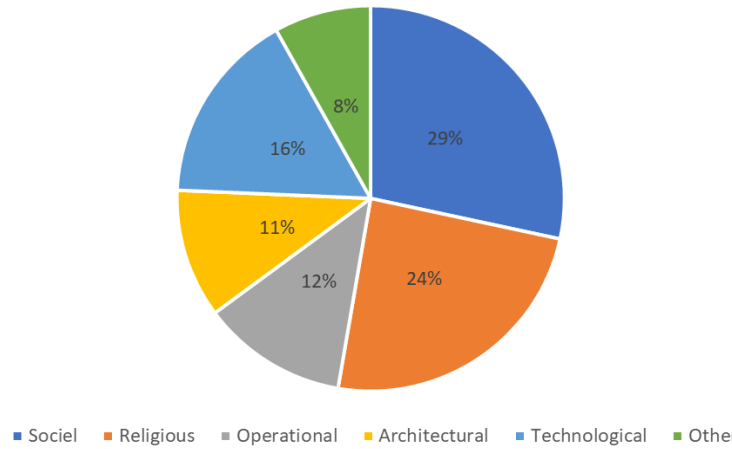


Figure 1. Factors determining terrorist threats in cities

Source: Author elaboration.

The respondents believe that the key factors that determine terrorist threats in cities are social (29%) and religious (24%). Next, they pointed to technological factors (16%) and operational factors (12%). Architectural factors (11%) were mentioned last, while other factors (8%) included political, economic, and psychological elements. At this point, it is appropriate to describe the most important factors in more detail.

The first group of factors under consideration consists of those of a social nature, with migration being particularly significant. According to statistics from the Border Guard, approximately 12.7 million people from third countries (outside the EU/EEA) arrived in Poland in 2024, of whom

[12] Encyklopedia zarzadzania, https://mfiles.pl (10.05.2025).

244,638[13] were from countries where Islam is the dominant religion. As shown in the summary presented in Table 1, the largest groups of foreigners are from Turkey (approximately 31%), the United Arab Emirates (approximately 16.4%), Kazakhstan (approximately 10%), and Azerbaijan (approximately 7.9%).

Table 1. The number of border crossings made by foreign nationals from Arab countries into the Republic of Poland in 2024.

Citizenship	Number of people crossing the border of the Republic of Poland
Turkey	77 008
United Arab Emirates	40 156
Kazakhstan	24 361
Azerbaijan	19 353
Saudi Arabia	14 132
Uzbekistan	12 102
Egypt	11 990
Malaysia	5 588
Kuwait	5 504
Kyrgyzstan	5 479
Indonesia	4 911
Pakistan	4 483
Iran	3 435
Bangladesh	3 297
Lebanon	3 295
Marocco	3 204
Qatar	3 193
Jordan	3 147
	244 638

Source: Own elaboration based on the *Statistical Information for 2024*, Warsaw 2025, p. 2.

However, it should be emphasised that estimating the number of individuals illegally crossing the border is extremely difficult, as not all of them are detected. These individuals also pose a significant challenge to the security system of Poland. Mass and uncontrolled migration generates social tensions and increases the risk of criminal and terrorist activities. It is important to note that terrorist activity is often closely linked to

[13] *Informacja statystyczna za 2024 r.,* Warszawa 2025, p. 2.

specific urban environments and exploits existing social conflicts within them. With the influx of migrants, ethnic divisions emerge, and the coexistence of different religions can become a source of social unrest. A noticeable trend in Western European countries is the formation of ethnic ghettos (neighbourhoods), where Arab clans often become involved in drug trafficking, arms smuggling, human trafficking, and the spread of religious fundamentalism. Therefore, in Polish cities, terrorists are likely to focus primarily on radicalisation and the recruitment of new members for their organisations. Among migrants, there will be individuals who will provide logistic support – helping to secure funding, as well as food, transportation, and shelter. Most crucially, however, will be those who offer ideological support, joining what is referred to as the "war against the infidels" (jihad). Undoubtedly, spiritual leaders play a significant role in spreading Islamic fundamentalism, and mosques have increasingly become incubators for potential attackers and centers of radicalization within the Muslim community[14]. In various regions of Poland, there are six mosques (masjids), two of which are located in Warsaw, one in Gdańsk, and one in Poznań, with the remaining two situated in Kruszyniany and Bohoniki. In addition, Muslim cultural centres are established in several cities, serving both as places of worship (musalla) and venues for community gatherings. The Muslim Religious Union in Poland estimates that the Muslim population in the country currently stands at approximately 60,000 people, including both Polish converts and refugees. The largest religious group is the Muslim League, with around 25,000 adherents. Slightly smaller organisations include the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland and the Ahl-ul-Bayt Assembly. The oldest religious group is the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland. Also worth mentioning are the Association for Muslim Unity and the "Ahmadiyya" Muslim Association.

Another group of factors comprises operational factors that should be analysed through the lens of the terrorist strategy, tactics, and organisational structure. The strategy of terrorist organisations evolves on both the ideological and operational levels. On the ideological level, the primary goal of Islamic terrorists is to establish a single Islamic state – through the revival of the caliphate – governed by Sharia law and to eliminate all manifestations of Western culture. On the operational level, contemporary terrorist organisations increasingly rely on the Leaderless Resistance strategy, in which there is no central command structure, and individual cells

[14] A.M. Piwko, *Muzułmański terroryzm w krajach Unii Europejskiej. Radykalizacja poglądów religijnych wśród imigrantów z Bliskiego Wschodu*, "De Securitate et Defensione", 2010, nr 1, p. 128.

or operatives act autonomously. As a result, the organisation is based on a cellular structure, lacking central control or management. All individuals and cells operate independently from one another and never report to a headquarters or single leader for orders.[15] The current strategy is also marked by a shift away from large-scale attacks in favor of individual assaults carried out by so-called lone wolves or solo terrorists (Leaderless Resistance). Tactically, this approach is dominated by individual attacks using easily accessible and inexpensive means, such as bladed weapons or vehicles, often targeting public gatherings, festivals, and similar events.

Architectural factors are among the key conditions that allow terrorists to operate extensively in Polish cities. Large concentrations of civilians and the presence of people on the streets or in other public spaces make such areas vulnerable to attacks, which can result in a high number of fatalities or injuries. Terrorists can also exploit crowds to conceal themselves and civilians can be used as "human shields." The high density of various types of buildings, along with extensive urban and road infrastructure, provides excellent conditions for planning attacks, selecting targets, and evading detection. A crucial feature that grants terrorists significant operational freedom is the ability to carry out actions on three levels: below the street level, at the street level, and above the street level. The area below street level offers favourable conditions for concealment, such as in garages and basements, as well as discreet movement to other locations via tunnels, cable routes, or utility ducts. The street-level area includes various infrastructure and street fixtures, which create countless blind spots and covered zones that provide terrorists with opportunities to hide and open fire. The area above street level refers to the use of buildings and rooftops for shooting and surveillance purposes.

The last group of factors concerns the use of new technologies by terrorists. Mobile phones, satellite phones, and tablets are highly useful tools for terrorists operating in urban areas. These devices are small and allow for the real-time transmission of information in the form of sound, text, images, or video. Terrorists can use these devices to take photos of planned attack targets (such as buildings, equipment, people, etc.). In addition, with such devices, they can connect to the internet and use satellite navigation systems. These technologies not only enable easy movement and planning of escape routes, but also facilitate reconnaissance of targets. The internet, in turn, allows terrorist organisations to enhance their offensive capabilities for conducting cyber operations and spreading propaganda. A propaganda campaign conducted through social networks,

[15] L. Beam, *Leaderless Resistance.* The Seditionist, 1992, https://www.researchgate.net (30.07.2025).

for example, enables the intimidation of large groups of recipients, the radicalisation of urban communities, and the inspiration of supporters to carry out terrorist attacks. Another technological area, particularly useful for terrorists, is 3D printing. This technology allows the production of hard-to-detect homemade weapons, including explosives, pistols, and rifles. Among the rapidly developing new technologies are immersive technologies. Terrorists could successfully create a virtual training ground simulating an urban agglomeration, practicing attacks on various targets using different types of weapons in various weather conditions and at different times of day. In addition, they see the potential to use autonomous vehicles in cities, which could be used for reconnaissance, surveillance, or even offensive operations. Ground, aerial, and water-based drones could be controlled by operators located far from the target, enabling them to attack any object, such as firing upon it or leaving behind an explosive device. In the near future, terrorists may not even need to physically operate drones, as artificial intelligence could take over control.

Assessment of Terrorist Threats in Polish Cities

According to data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS), there are 1,020 cities in the country, with the largest ones (population over 500,000) being: Warsaw (1.86 million), Kraków (803,000), Wrocław (675,000), Łódź (658,000), and Poznań (541,000)[16]. It is projected that by 2030 the country's urbanisation rate will reach 60%, making it a key challenge to ensure an adequate level of security for urban communities amid the evolving nature of contemporary threats. Undoubtedly, as evidenced by numerous examples from Western European countries, one of the major threats to modern cities is Islamic terrorism. According to reports from the Internal Security Agency (ABW), the threat of Islamic terrorism on Polish territory is relatively low. Cases of individuals detained in Poland indicate activities of a supportive nature rather than direct attacks, such as preparing terrorist attacks, spreading jihadist propaganda, radicalizing others, or fundraising.

Despite the above assessment, following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the Prime Minister[17] introduced the BRA-

[16] *Największe miasta w Polsce pod względem liczby ludności*, Polska w liczbach, https://www.polskawliczbach.pl (19.06.2025)

[17] The Prime Minister introduces alert levels pursuant to the provisions of the Act of 10 June 2016 on Anti-Terrorism Measures.

VO[18] alert level. Initially, this alert level was implemented in two provinces – Podkarpackie and Lubelskie – and was later extended to the whole country. Subsequent regulations have continuously extended the BRAVO alert level, and it remains in effect until August 31, 2025. Therefore, it can be concluded that, in the view of the highest authorities of the Republic of Poland, the threat of terrorism is considered real.

Regarding the assessment of terrorist threats in cities, an important document to reference is the National Crisis Management Plan[19],, which identifies 19 types of threats, including terrorist incidents. Unfortunately, in the referenced document, Part A, Section 2, Subsection 2.16: Terrorist Incident – no risk assessment for the occurrence of terrorist events has been conducted. An analysis of similar documents developed for the largest cities in Poland (Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, Łódź, and Poznań) indicates that the threat of terrorism is considered rare, but it cannot be entirely ruled out.

Table 2. Probability of Various Types of Terrorist Attacks Occurring in Polish Cities

	Form of threats	**Probability of occurrence of the threat**
Type of threat	Placement of an explosive device	Possible
	Hijacking of a means of transport	Rare
	Occupation of a facility (including hostage-holding),	Rare
	Hostage Takeover	Rare
	hostage-taking, terrorist act involving the use of an aircraft („Renegade")	Very rare

Source: Own elaboration based on the crisis management plans of selected cities.

In addition to the position of the state institution responsible for security (the Internal Security Agency) and assessments of terrorist threats in Polish cities presented in official municipal documents, an important source of information is the responses obtained from survey participants who answered the following question: *How do you assess the likelihood of Islamic-motivated terrorist attacks occurring in Polish cities?*

[18] The BRAVO level is the second in a four-tier alert scale and may be implemented in the event of an increased and foreseeable threat of a terrorist incident, even though no specific target of the attack has been identified.

[19] The National Crisis Management Plan (NCMP) is one of the most important strategic documents in the field of crisis management. On March 3, 2022, the Council of Ministers adopted an updated version of the National Crisis Management Plan 2021/2022. *Aktualizacja krajowego planu zarządzania kryzysowego*, Council of Ministers, https://www.gov.pl (02.08.2025).

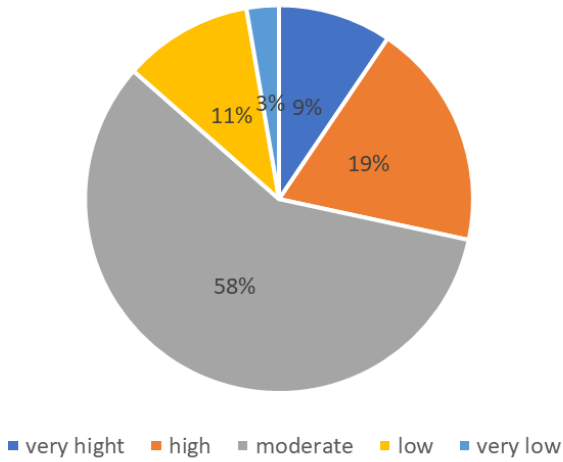


Figure 2. The probability of terrorist threats occurring

Source: Author elaboration.

Based on the responses obtained, the majority of the respondents assessed the threat of Islamic terrorism in cities as moderate (58%). Meanwhile, nearly 19% considered the threat to be high or very high (9%), while 11% perceived it as low or very low (3%). The next question posed to the respondents was: Which of the Polish cities do you consider the most likely target of a terrorist attack, and why?

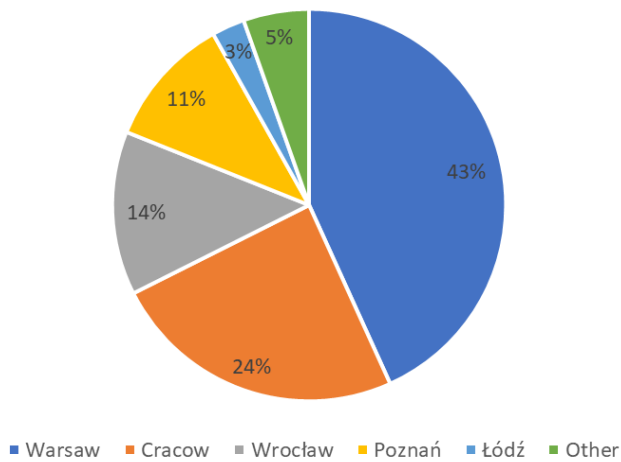


Figure 3. The cities in Poland with the highest risk of terrorist attacks

Source: Author elaboration.

The data obtained indicate that the most vulnerable city among all urban agglomerations in Poland is Warsaw, according to 43% of respondents. The next most mentioned city is Kraków, with 24% of respondents identifying it as at risk, while 14% consider Wrocław to be the most vulnerable. Poznań was indicated by 11% of the respondents. According to 3% of respondents, Łódź is the least vulnerable city. Furthermore, respondents believe that Gdańsk and Katowice are also cities at risk of Islamic terrorism, with 5% of respondents agreeing. Among the reasons cited for this choice, respondents highlighted the presence of key state and economic institutions, a large number of foreigners, the organization of major mass events, and the potential for the development of terrorist organizations.

As part of scientific inquiries, the objects of attack were also determined by obtaining responses to the question posed to the respondents: What could be the potential targets of an attack in cities?

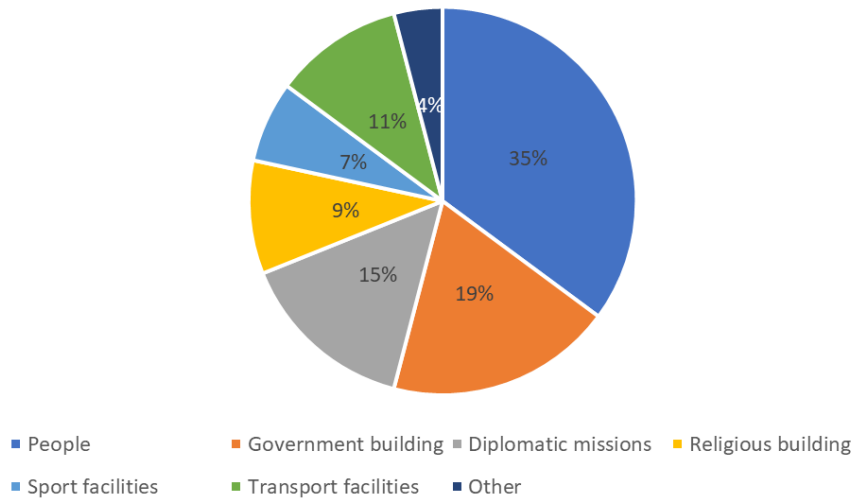


Figure 4. Potential targets of terrorist attacks in the city

Source: Author elaboration.

Among the potential targets for a terrorist attack, the most frequently identified by respondents were people (35%), followed by government buildings (19%) and diplomatic missions (15%). Additionally, transportation infrastructure (11%), religious buildings (9%), and sports facilities (7%) were also mentioned. Respondents also considered commercial, military, and tourist sites (4%) as potential targets. The survey questionnaire directed to respondents included the following question: How could terrorist attacks be carried out in Polish cities?

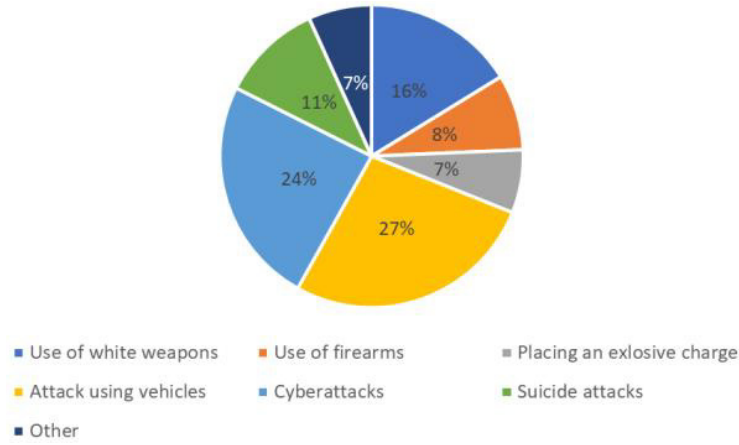


Figure 5. Methods of conducting terrorist attacks

Source: Author elaboration

The majority of the respondents selected vehicle-based attacks (27%). The second most common choice was cyberattacks (24%), followed by attacks using bladed weapons (16%). In the next position, respondents considered suicide attacks as the likely scenario (11%), followed by attacks involving firearms (8%). The least chosen method of attack was through the use of explosive devices (7%). Respondents also deemed CBRN attacks to be likely (7%).

The respondents were asked the following question: **What factors might influence the choice of Polish cities as targets for terrorist activity?**

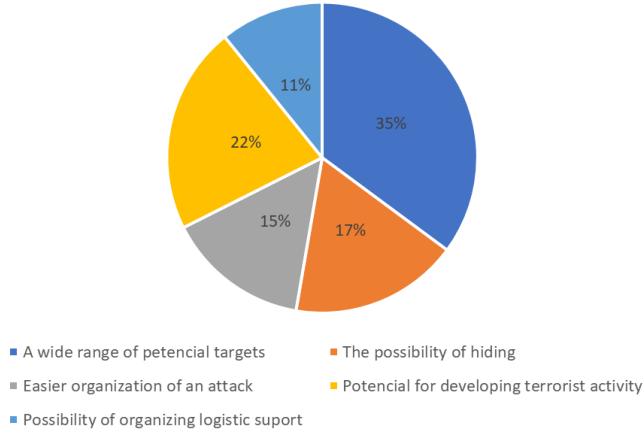


Figure 6. Reasons for selecting cities as targets for terrorist activities

Source: Author elaboration.

Respondents claim that the primary reason for choosing a city as a location for terrorist activity is the wide range of potential targets available there (35%). Approximately 25% of those surveyed also point to the significant opportunities for expanding terrorist operations. Others indicate that cities offer better possibilities for hiding (17%) and facilitate easier planning and execution of attacks (15%). Some respondents also highlight the ease of organizing logistical support in urban areas (11%).

Recommendations for Preventive Actions to Counteract the Development of Terrorist Activities in the City

The evolving nature of the international security environment, particularly the resurgence of ISIS, could serve as a catalyst for the development of terrorist threats. The Global Terrorism Index Report for 2025 indicates that the number of countries where terrorist attacks have been recorded has increased from 58 to 66, with 45 countries also experiencing a deterioration in the security situation. Therefore, actions must be taken to ensure the resilience and sustainability of Polish cities against such threats. One of the questions posed to the respondents was: *What changes should be made to ensure the security of Polish cities against the threat of Islamic terrorism?*

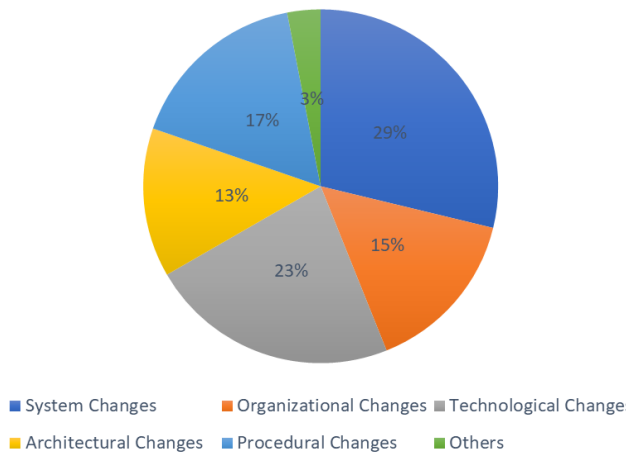


Figure 7. Areas of Proposed Changes

Source: Author elaboration.

Among the responses received, the majority of the respondents advocated for changes in the systemic area (29%). Slightly fewer participants highlighted the need for technological changes (23%). Procedural changes

were mentioned next (17%). Respondents also pointed to the need for organizational changes (15%), while some considered architectural changes important (13%). A small number of respondents (3%) supported changes in the area of international cooperation.

In the author's opinion, the main challenge is to create a security system that makes it as difficult as possible for terrorists to achieve their intended objectives. Therefore, your freedom of action should be limited by expanding the security system with technical and architectural elements, as well as raising public awareness of such threats. A key priority should be to increase the level of public awareness among urban residents of terrorist threats, thereby preparing them to respond appropriately to such dangers. Anti-terrorism education should focus primarily on the formation of safe behaviours that help prevent threats, prevent their emergence, and hinder their escalation. In addition, the public should be able to improve their skills in using protective measures against weapons of mass destruction (CBRN) and in providing medical assistance. It is also essential to develop the ability to cooperate with institutions and services responsible for ensuring public safety. This cooperation can be enhanced through training sessions organised jointly with residents, the most effective format being practical exercises involving all entities responsible for countering terrorist threats.

An essential element of urban security is the development of a continuous monitoring system for individuals migrating to specific municipalities. This responsibility could be assigned, for example, to the Municipal Guard, and its implementation will only be possible in cooperation with the Border Guard and the Police. It is also necessary to prevent the formation of ethnic ghettos in cities by appropriately distributing incoming migrants and national minorities across various districts. Another important measure in this area is the creation of favourable conditions for the assimilation of foreigners residing in Polish cities, as well as the ensuring of adequate living, social and working conditions. In addition, places of religious worship should receive special protection, particularly during significant religious events. Another key step should involve the continuous monitoring of criminal networks, especially concerning the trafficking of weapons and explosives. In this regard, all products available for commercial sale and online that could be used in the production of explosive devices – such as fertilisers, fireworks, and similar items – should also be monitored. There is a need for tighter control over the flow of new technologies, particularly those with military applications. Another necessary measure is the development of systems capable of disrupting mobile phone operations, allowing for the rapid deactivation of such de-

vices when required. In addition, it is important to advance applications designed to bypass passwords on data transmission devices, computer network nodes, and similar systems, to enable the monitoring of content and, if necessary, intervention.

In urban areas, a key focus should be on improving high-resolution video surveillance systems capable of identifying individuals (facial recognition) who may pose a threat. An essential component of this effort is the proper configuration of the cameras to ensure real-time image transmission from potentially vulnerable locations. Another critical challenge is to ensure continuous and secure communication with the ability to reconfigure as needed. Communication systems must be characterised by durability, resistance to interference, high reliability, and operational readiness. In addition, they should possess strong cryptographic capabilities to prevent eavesdropping and unauthorised data interception. **Further recommendations concern the implementation of modern architectural solutions that, on the one hand, ensure comfortable conditions for work and leisure, and, on the other, provide protection for cities and their inhabitants.** Therefore, there is a need to develop technologically advanced buildings with restricted access, as well as to design the surrounding architecture accordingly. Actions in this area should focus on the use of anti-detonation protections (such as blast-resistant mats affixed to building facades) and the construction of buildings using new materials and technologies capable of absorbing shock waves from explosions. It is also necessary to expand visualisation systems (e.g., surveillance/monitoring) and enhance the security of facilities through the use of various types of protective barriers. In public spaces and around buildings, small-scale architectural elements – such as planters, trees, and similar features – can be employed, along with buffer zones in the form of earthen mounds, water features, etc. To restrict access for vehicles that may pose a threat to pedestrians, traffic-calming measures such as speed bumps or obstacles that force drivers to navigate in a zigzag pattern can be implemented. Another proposal is to equip each urban agglomeration with a mobile command post (mobile-based), ensuring effective coordination of forces and resources at the incident site. Municipal and state services are also required to be further equipped with individual and specialised protective equipment against CBRN threats.

At this point, it is necessary to address the issue of organising the counterterrorism system in Polish cities. Based on an analysis of normative documents, it can be concluded that two independent systems operate in parallel in Poland. The first is the counterterrorism system and the second is the Crisis Management System. In the case of the first system, at

none of its three levels is there an institution that independently carries out tasks in the response phase to terrorist attacks. Furthermore, there are no elements of this system at the metropolitan area level. In the second case, such elements are present in the form of an organised crisis management centre and crisis management teams (even within the Internal Security Agency – ABW). So far, no concept has emerged for creating a system capable of independently and comprehensively eliminating such threats at the metropolitan area level. Therefore, the most rational solution would be to adapt the Crisis Management System to the conditions of terrorist threats. To this end, it would be necessary to divide it into three levels: 1) conceptual, based on the Municipal Crisis Management Team; 2) coordination, based on the Municipal Crisis Management Centre; and 3) operational, i.e. designated forces and resources.

Conclusions

In 2017, the terrorist organisation "Islamic State" was declared defeated; however, after losing territory in Syria and Iraq, it became a dispersed global terrorist network that remains actively operational in various parts of the world. The presence of ISIS fighters in Europe cannot be ruled out either. Terrorists constitute an effective and precise weapon, as well as a dangerous and unpredictable means of attack. Perfectly camouflaged, they do not stand out from their surroundings and their behavior does not arouse suspicion.[20] Research conducted confirms the hypothesis regarding the potential occurrence of terrorist threats in Polish cities and justifies the need to enhance measures aimed at preventing this phenomenon. At the same time, on the basis of the findings obtained, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. The primary factors determining terrorist threats in urban areas will be of social nature, including migration, poverty, social exclusion, and related issues. Cultural and religious factors must also be taken into account, particularly religious radicalism. The technological factor refers to the potential use of emerging technologies by terrorists, such as autonomous vehicles, robots, 3D printing, artificial intelligence, and others. Operational factors should be considered in terms of the capabilities of terrorist organisations, including the development of their structures, equipment, tactics, and modes of operation. Architectural factors may facilitate terrorist activities by providing opportunities for concealment, movement, combat, and defence within urban environments.

[20] M. Lasota, B. Grenda, *Arena samobójców. Wybrane aspekty terroryzmu i terroryzmu samobójczego*, Warszawa 2017, s. 7.

2. Polish cities are vulnerable to terrorist threats due to their high population density, including both permanent residents and temporary visitors. They host government, financial, religious, and cultural institutions, as well as critical infrastructure, offering a wide range of potential targets for attacks. The openness of public spaces allows easy access to various locations and large-scale public events, which in turn facilitates the planning and execution of terrorist operations.

3. Urban terrorism is characterised by the creation of an atmosphere of threat and insecurity, a high number of casualties, the random nature of attack targets (opportunistic targets) and a wide variety of methods, forms, and tools used in attacks. The most dangerous forms of terrorist attacks involve the use of vehicles loaded with explosives, civilian aircraft as weapons, and chemical, biological, or radiological agents.

4. Actions should be taken to ensure the vitality and resilience of cities against the threat of terrorism. An important component of this process is to raise public awareness of such threats, train the population, and encourage cooperation with relevant security services. It is also necessary to improve the counter-terrorism system, particularly by developing appropriate management structures and preparing municipal services to eliminate threats according to established procedures. Adaptations should also include the modification of buildings and streets to meet new challenges through the use of modern surveillance technologies, construction methods, road barriers, fencing elements, and similar measures.

The author acknowledges that the presented research findings do not exhaust the broad scope of this issue. Therefore, further efforts are necessary to comprehensively address the problem of terrorist threats in Polish cities.

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Bezpieczeństwo polskich miast w obliczu zagrożeń terroryzmem islamskim

Streszczenie

Wzrost zagrożeń terroryzmem islamskim, obserwowany na przestrzeni ostatnich lat w krajach Europy Zachodniej, uzasadnia naukową refleksję nad stanem bezpieczeństwa polskich miast. Obszary miejskie zamieszkuje ponad 60% całego społeczeństwa, ulokowane są tam najważniejsze obiekty państwowe, religijne, kulturowe i gospodarcze, a także o szczególnym znaczeniu dla bezpieczeństwa państwa, w tym obiekty infrastruktury krytycznej. Ponadto zmienność środowiska bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego, w tym przejęcie władzy w Afganistanie przez Talibów, wojna w Ukrainie, niekontrolowana migracja, odradzanie się ISIS itp., stanowić mogą asumpt do rozwoju zagrożeń terrorystycznych w polskich miastach. Dlatego, w artykule zidentyfikowane najważniejsze czynniki wpływające na rozwój zagrożeń terrorystycznych w największych aglomeracjach miejskich. Zaprezentowano także wyniki badań ankietowych obejmujące ocenę i prawdopodobieństwo zaistnienia w ich zagrożeń terrorystycznych. W ostatniej części artykułu zaproponowano działania zmierzające do poprawy efektywności systemu antyterrorystycznego, a tym samym do zapewnienia bezpieczeństwa mieszkańcom miast.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo, terroryzm, zagrożenie