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THE INFLUENCE OF TERRORISM ON THE DYNAMICS OF INSTITUTIONS. A NEOINSTITUTIONALIST ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT:

IN RECENT YEARS, TERRORISM BECAME A WIDE SPREAD TERM GLOBALLY, ESPECIALLY IN THE WESTERN WORLD. THIS PAPER ARGUES THAT, BY TERRORIST ATTACKS, THE PERPETRATORS HAVE IN MIND TO TRANSFORM THE INTERNAL STATE INSTITUTIONS FROM THOSE NEAR TO THE INCLUSIVE EXTREME OF THE AXIS, TO SOME INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS CLOSER TO THE EXTRACTIVE SIDE, BY AIMING TO GENERATE A SEVERE RESPONSE BY THE STATE, THROUGH RETALIATION AND RESTRICTIONS. IN THIS INSTANCE, THIS PAPER WILL USE THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE PROVIDED BY THE NEW INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS, IN THE INTERPRETATION OF DARON ACEMOGLU AND JAMES A. ROBINSON, WHO USE A CONCEPTUAL DICHOTOMY DIVIDING THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN THOSE WITH INCLUSIVE AND EXTRACTIVE CHARACTER.

KEY WORDS: INSTITUTIONS, NEW INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS, TERRORISM

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is an increasingly common scourge in the 21st century. Various terrorist attacks have taken place or are currently taking place in the world, mainly targeting the Western world. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the twin towers in New York, followed by a worldwide anti-terrorist campaign, coordinated by the United States of America, along with Western allies, are well-known. Since then, there have been a number of attacks in the Western world, with particular attention given to terrorism based on Islamic religious considerations. Terrorism is not a random form of violence, but a calculated one, which is deliberately directed against civilians (through terrorist acts or threats), for political reasons, using the fear factor. In fact, the term comes from the French - terrorism - and originally denoted the regime of state terror established during the French Revolution [1].

This paper aims to analyze terrorism as a social and political phenomenon through the theory of neo-institutionalism (NIE), from the perspective of Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson. Through Acemoglu and Robinson's theory, this paper, starting from the question "Why do terrorists adopt attacks against civilians as a mode of action?" aims to argue that terrorists, through such practices, want the transformation of state institutions, or at least a

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part of them, from inclusive institutions (specific to a democratic state) into extractive institutions (specific to an authoritarian/dictatorial system). In essence, through their practices, terrorists aim for target states to tighten the institutional system, curtailing the rights and freedoms of civilians. Thus, the NIE will be used to analyze the extent to which the institutional configuration of the state can influence the terrorist phenomenon.

In the understanding of NIE from the perspective of Acemoglu and Robinson, the economic performance of a state depends on the configuration of institutional arrangements in the political and economic domain. Political elites can create and support a certain configuration of institutions: inclusive political (specific to democratic regimes) or extractive (specific to authoritarian or totalitarian political regimes), respectively inclusive economic (specific to the capitalist economic system) or extractive economic (specific to economic systems with a degree low degree of freedom). Thus, following the institutional configuration of a state, situations can result in which various groups can be excluded from the political and economic life of a society, a fact that can degenerate into dissatisfaction or even social convulsions [2].

Thus, the paper will be organized as follows. The first part will be reserved for a theoretical excursion on institutional theory, emphasizing the theory of Acemoglu and Robinson (NIE). The second part will consider a presentation of the terrorist phenomenon. The third part will be reserved for an analysis of the terrorist phenomenon using NIE. The last part will be dedicated to the conclusions of this paper.

INSTITUTIONAL THEORY - NEO-INSTITUTIONALISM. ACEMOGLU AND ROBINSON'S PERSPECTIVE

Institutional theory has as its focal point the study of institutions, the appearance or disappearance, respectively the evolution of institutions within a state. Although the institutional paradigm involves several branches, such as historical, sociological, rational choice institutionalism, etc., this paper will focus on presenting the new economic institutionalism (NIE), which is the subject of the theoretical part of this paper. While the earlier institutionalist authors operated with a methodologically less sophisticated perspective on the subject designated by institutions, over time economic institutionalism evolved into more sophisticated theoretical versions, reaching theoretical and conceptual constructions of the type of inclusive-extractive dichotomy advanced by Acemoglu and Robinson. If at the end of the 19th century authors such as Thorstein Veblen theorized the institution defined by a certain "leisure class", whose main activity was designated by a "conspicuous consumption", as a result of the habits of consuming luxury goods and services [3].

To begin with, a definition is needed regarding what the term "institution" means from a conceptual and ontological point of view. Considering the multiple valences that such a term can acquire, a definitive, consensual definition among the academic community does not exist, but there are some defining features that define the institutions, to be presented below. Seen in the most simplistic way, according to a definition provided by Douglass C. North, the institutions represent "the rules of the game", which "define the way the game is played", while the players are designated by the organizations [4]. The institutions represent human-made constraints to determine the social interaction, thus influencing incentives in exchanges between individuals [5].

Adrian Miroiu defined an institution as "a network of norms, rules (formal and informal) which shape the interaction between humans" [6]. Institutions come from the interactions of the individuals, thus determining their behavior and coordinating their actions.

There are the result of a balance in a community after the different opposing interests are brought to a common ground [6].

For institutional economists, there are several differences between terms such as *structures*, *institutions*, *conventions* and *organizations* [7] (Hodgson: 2007, 1). Therefore, according to Hodgson:

“*Social structures* include all sets of social relations, including the episodic and those without rules, as well as social institutions. *Institutions* are systems of established and embedded social rules that structure social interactions. *Rules* in this context are understood as socially transmitted and customary normative injunctions or immanently normative dispositions, that in circumstances X do Y. *Conventions* are particular instances of institutional rules. *Organizations* are special institutions that involve (a) criteria to establish their boundaries and to distinguish their members from non-members, (b) principles of sovereignty concerning who is in charge and (c) chains of command delineating responsibilities within the organization.” [7].

As a theoretical perspective, NIE has a long tradition, founded by Ronald H. Coase. If initially the theoretical concern of this perspective was related to the analysis of the emergence of firms on the market and the transactions between them [8], so that, later, the same author focused on the issue of negotiations in various disputes between firms that cause damage to others [9]. Much later, Oliver E. Williamson argued that NIE focuses on the analysis of formal rules, such as constitutions, the functions of government and the distribution of power and property rights, along with governing institutions of contractual relations [10]. For Douglass C. North, institutions function as instruments to constrain social interactions, these having a formal or informal character [5]. For Elinor Ostrom, the successful institutional model is meant to produce positive results in the context of the existence of the freeriding phenomenon [11].

Acemoglu and Robinson's theory considers the analysis of political and economic institutions aimed at evaluating the economic performance of states. Thus, the interplay between political and economic institutions determines the level of freedom and wealth within a state. As recent representatives of the NIE, Acemoglu and Robinson were concerned with the influence of institutions on the political and economic environment at the domestic level of states. In older works, these authors dealt with the impact of extractive or inclusive institutions in states colonized by colonial empires [12], so that later the same authors affirm that "differences in economic institutions are the fundamental cause of differences in economic development" [13]. Later, Acemoglu and Robinson argued that simply put, a society consists of the elites and the citizens, as the majority who has more power in democratic regimes. Thus, it is natural for elites to oppose democracy or undermine it, even though most are elite projects [14].

In their most famous book, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, Acemoglu and Robinson [2] distinguish between two broad types of institutions, inclusive and extractive, both economic and political in nature. The inclusive economic institutions encourage the free participation to the economic life of a great mass of people, protecting the private property, impartial laws and public services that sustain a platform for economic exchanges between people. These institutions foster productivity increase and prosperity, while the private property protection is important for economic progress [2]. The inclusive economic institutions are the engines of prosperity, leading to inclusive, free

markets favoring technological advance and education, that complete the sustainable economic growth [2].

The extractive economic institutions are on the opposite, highly coercive side, as the private property is not protected, while the great mass of the population is blocked from taking individual economic decisions. The public services do not foster prosperity and the laws are one-sided. These institutions are designed to extract the wealth and revenues from a part of the society in the benefit of a minority [2].

The political institutions are a key component that determine the way of electing a government and what is allowed to do, also influencing the distribution of power in the society and how it can be used [2]. The political institutions are absolutist (extractive) when the power distribution is limited and unconstrained. The absolutist institutions favor those who have the power, allowing them to build extractive institutions that help them to consolidate their position and get rich at the expense of the society [2]. At the opposite pole there are the pluralist (inclusive) political institutions, the power is constrained and it is found inside a large coalition or in many groups and is not concentrated in the hands of a single individual or a small group [2].

AR argue that there is a strong link between pluralism and inclusive economic institutions, but the key to explain why some states, as United States or South Korea, have this kind of economic institutions, is that there are sufficiently powerful and centralized, the political pluralist institutions not representing the only condition [2]. The inclusive political institutions have to refer to some political institutions that present a sufficient degree of centralization and plurality. At the moment when one of these conditions is not fulfilled the political institutions are extractive [2].

In this sense, given the multitude of perspectives on institutions, this paper will assume that institutions represent rules of the game, which define how certain actors can act in different contexts. In this instance, in the case of ensuring national security, in the context of the anti-terrorist fight, the institutions tasked with combating terrorism have a set of predefined behaviors in the event of a terrorist threat.

TERRORISM: CHARACTERISTICS, DEFINITION, ATTACKS

In addition to a global scourge, terrorism is also a term that has attracted increasing attention in recent decades, both from the state in the ontological and Weberian sense, from the member states of the international community, as well as from civilians who frequently were or still are victims of terrorist attacks. The fear that the threat of resorting to terrorist attacks instills is taken seriously by the authorities and the civilian population. An example is given by the fear of terrorist attacks in the context of the Olympic Games in Paris in 2024, a fact that generated discussions and a mobilization among the French authorities [15]. According to Șerban Cioculescu, “the terrorists hope that through the obtained image they will attract numerous followers, funds and other forms of support” [16].

Characteristics

Terror and tyrants can be talked about since Antiquity, when the first forms of state organization appeared, with a hierarchical, more or less centralized political system. The rulers could have at their disposal a system of coercion on the population, which they could use according to their own interests or whims, and various insurgent groups opposed occupiers such as the Roman Empire [16]. In the Middle Ages, many monarchs could indulge in various acts of terror, here recalling, to give a few examples, the Spanish Inquisition with its methods of torture and its own system of terror based on religious motives [17] or figures

historical figures such as Vlad Tepeş or Ivan the Terrible. As I showed at the beginning of the paper, the term designated "terrorism" comes from the French language, from "terrorisme" and characterizes the regime of state terror during the French Revolution [1] under Robespierre - in his efforts to maintain the new revolutionary regime -, whose symbol of execution and terror was designated by the guillotine [18]. Later, in the contemporary period, in the 20th century, the world witnessed the terror instituted by totalitarian regimes, with millions of people who fell victim to political regimes such as the communist or Nazi.

Another facet of terrorism came from non-state actors, in the form of individuals who could act individually or in groups. The terrorist phenomenon took the form of individual or organized acts, such as the assassination of Russian tsars by the Will of the People group, of an American president or of Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, by individual actors, or of terrorist organizations, such as Marxist ones, or ETA in the Basque Country, the IRA in Northern Ireland, respectively Islamist terrorism, more recently [16]. As I will show below, today, terrorism is an increasingly common phenomenon worldwide, with societies in Western states being frequent targets of Islamist claims and attacks.

Definition

A generally accepted definition of terrorism does not exist. In essence, one can discuss an actor (individual or group) who uses or threatens violence, aiming to generate fear among civilians, which should constrain the decision-makers of a state. It thus seeks to achieve its own goals by using coercion on the target, who should obey. Attacks can take place with a political or revenge goal. In general, terrorist acts are also characterized by: action in the name of the state or against it; exaggerated violence; psychological impact through fear; political character, aimed at the imposition of power; premeditation and unpredictability; pressure on government and public opinion; institutional destabilization of society and the state; action against social laws and customs; propagation in the media [16].

James D. Kiras argued that the weak, an extremist minority, resort to terrorism tactics in pursuit of political change [19]. According to Kiras, "[t]errorism is characterized, first and foremost, by the use of violence", while "often indiscriminately targets non-combatants" [19]. In the case of terrorist attacks, the problem is low legitimacy and support from society. Terrorist acts are illegitimate for the simple reason that only the state has a legitimate monopoly on coercion. In essence, terrorism is the simplest form of irregular warfare because it does not have the same popular support as revolutions and insurgencies, especially since terrorist groups pursue radical, unpopular goals [19].

Several definitions are extracted from the space of American force institutions. In 2001, the U. S. Department of State defined terrorism as "[p]remeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents" [20], while the FBI refers to terrorism as "[v]iolent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature" [21]. In Romania, according to law no. 535 of November 25, 2004, art. 1 stipulates that, "terrorism represents the set of actions and/or threats that pose a public danger and affect national security, having the following characteristics: a) they are committed premeditated by terrorist entities, motivated by extremist conceptions and attitudes, hostile to other entities, against which they act in violent and/or destructive ways; b) they aim to achieve specific objectives of a political nature; c) it targets human factors and/or material factors within public authorities and institutions, the civilian population or any other segment belonging to them;

d) produce states with a strong psychological impact on the population, intended to draw attention to the goals pursued" [22].

Art. 2 of the same law provides that "acts committed by terrorist entities are sanctioned according to the provisions of this law, if they meet one of the following conditions: a) they are committed, as a rule, with violence and produce states of anxiety, insecurity, fear, panic or terror among the population; b) seriously affects specific and non-specific human factors, as well as material factors; c) pursue the achievement of specific objectives, of a political nature, by determining the authorities of the state or an international organization to order, renounce or influence the taking of decisions in favor of the terrorist entity" [22].

In order to prevent and combat terrorism, law 535 provides for the existence of a National System for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (SNPCT), under the coordination of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), which includes the following institutions: Romanian Intelligence Service, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Finances, Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE), The Protection and Guard Service (SPP), Special Telecommunications Service, Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice, Romanian National Bank, Department for Export Controls, National Office for the Prevention and Combating of Money Laundering and National Commission for the Control of Nuclear Activities [22].

Recent attacks

Starting with September 11, 2001, when the terrorist phenomenon, especially the Islamist one, gained global media coverage, a series of other terrorist attacks with global resonance were planned and carried out, with a series of victims. Most of the terrorist attacks that gained international notoriety were carried out by Islamist militants, such as those who claimed to be from Al Qaeda or, later, the Islamic State (ISIS), which emerged in the Middle East, gaining more and more notoriety increased since 2014. These attacks have attracted worldwide public attention, of the entire international community, and generated more or less harsh reactions from the states whose societies or communities were affected. These attacks usually targeted public, crowded places, such as schools, trains, public squares, subways or promenades. It should be noted that terrorist organizations have preferred as sites of objective attacks inside Western states, Western society being the main target especially of Islamist terrorism. Below, I will briefly present a list of some of the most high-profile attacks that have attracted public attention worldwide.

If September 11, 2001 remained a landmark at the international level in terms of terrorist attacks, two other examples of resounding, from the year 2004, are the attack in Madrid and the one at the school in Beslan in the Russian Federation, the first taking place in March, and the second in September. The attack in Madrid, which used explosives with dynamite and nails, killed 190 people and injured 1800 people, being credited as one of the worst terrorist attacks in Europe. Among the bombers were people who shared Islamist ideology with ties to Islamist terrorist organizations. Being executed before the general elections, it was assumed that the attack was aimed at a change of government in Madrid, namely the withdrawal of the Spanish contingent from Iraq [23]. The Beslan school bombing was carried out by Chechen militants, who took about 1,000 teachers and students prisoner on the first day of school. It should be mentioned that a recent war had taken place in Chechnya, the objective of which was to separate from the Russian Federation. Being barricaded in the school, the terrorists demanded the release of some Chechen prisoners, as well as the

complete withdrawal of Russia from Chechnya, an unacceptable demand for the government in Moscow. After negotiations failed and the situation of the prisoners worsened, some of them being killed beforehand, Russian troops stormed the school, resulting in a massacre. Thus, the reaction of the Russian government was a brutal one, which led to casualties among the prisoners, including children [24]. Estimates advanced the sum of 334 victims among the prisoners, this number being attributed to the intervention of the army with tanks and flamethrowers, which set fire to the roof that collapsed on the people, so that later the rescue efforts would stumble [25].

Other attacks, more recent and resounding, are those of 2015, in Paris. The first attack took place on January 7, 2015 at the headquarters of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, killing 12 people as a result of gunfire fired by two Islamist militants - who claimed to be affiliated with al-Qaeda and the State Islamic - , on the grounds that they wanted to avenge the Prophet Muhammad, who had been satirized on the cover of the magazine. In the same context, another Islamist militant attacked a Jewish shop, these attacks being part of a series of attacks that shook France, which generated a reaction of the government in Paris in the direction of destroying the so-called Islamic separatism [26, 27]. On November 13, 2015, also in Paris, there were several coordinated attacks on several targets, claimed by militants of the Islamic State. Simultaneously, attacks took place at the Stade de France, during a friendly match between France and Germany (attended by the French president), restaurants and bars, important streets or the Bataclan concert hall, where the most important attack As a result of the attacks, 130 people died, and several hundred others were injured. Some witnesses reported that, in addition to "God is great", one of the bombers invoked the French intervention in Syria. As a result of the created crisis, French President Hollande decreed a national state of emergency, and border controls were tightened [28].

The year 2016 was marked by the March attacks in Brussels, respectively the July truck attack in Nice, both claimed by the Islamic State. In Brussels, there were initially two explosions at the airport, followed an hour later by another explosion in the subway. Both suicide bombings left 30 dead and approximately 300 injured [29, 30]. One of the reasons that could have led to the increase in the phenomenon of recruitment by ISIS in Belgium is related to the marginalization and discrimination of foreigners, who chose the path of jihadist radicalization, the Belgian authorities even encouraging the departure of immigrants from the country, who left to join Islamist groups . Likewise, Muslims in Belgium, feeling marginalized by the Brussels government, have chosen the path of Islamic radicalism [30]. The attack in Nice took place on July 14, 2016, during the festivities related to France's national day. At 10:30 p.m. an attacker acting on behalf of ISIS deliberately drove a truck into the crowd of people gathered on the Promenade des Anglais to watch the fireworks. According to estimates, this attack resulted in 85 deaths and approximately 300 injuries [31]. A similar attack to the one in Nice occurred a year later, when a van plowed into a crowd of people strolling down La Rambla in Barcelona. As a result of this attack, 14 people died and another 100 from 34 countries were injured [32], while the police reported that chants such as "God is great!" were heard [33].

These attacks were followed by others that shocked the international community and the societies in which they were carried out. The common and general element in such recent attacks is given above all by the presence of jihadist ideology and militants, al-Qaeda and, more recently, ISIS. The most recent attack, having a much higher impact than those mentioned so far, is the surprise attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7, 2023. This attack generated a severe reaction from Israel, which retaliated by sending the army and bombing the Gaza Strip , the Israeli government being accused of war crimes, which resulted in the

loss of life of many innocent Palestinian civilians, drawing criticism from the international community [34, 35, 36, 37]. The course of events showed that Israel has the military superiority, and therefore Hamas and Hezbollah resorted to asymmetric means of warfare, which created horror, which generated a severe response from Israel.

These attacks were intended to attract attention and shock, in order to subsequently generate a strong reaction from the government, which, under the pressure of the moment, can make mistakes that can be blamed later, as was the case with the reaction of the government in Moscow in the case the prisoners at the school in Beslan or the reaction of Israel which is still waging a war against Islamist organizations in the Middle East, which recently extended to Lebanon, against Hezbollah [38].

THE INFLUENCE OF TERRORIST ATTACKS ON STATE INSTITUTIONS

Thus, connecting the theory of Acemoglu and Robinson with the data related to terrorist attacks, it can be argued that terrorist attacks aim to alter the institutional character of the state. According to the new economic institutionalism, in Acemoglu and Robinson's version, the democratic state is one characterized by a high degree of freedom, and human rights are mostly respected, unlike other states with authoritarian or dictatorial regimes. Inclusive institutions allow a greater degree of political and economic freedom. In general, people can see their lives in accordance with their own interests. They can walk freely on the street, make their own economic decisions and move within the country or abroad without or with reduced restrictions. People generally have the certainty that a state with strong institutions can offer protection, both to them and to economic activity, through the public services it provides (infrastructure, security and order, an impartial system of laws). Such a state offers a form of certainty and stability about the future, as well as a security of livelihood. Even in a state with extractive institutions, with a minimum of order and security, there can be some security and perspective about the future, within the limits imposed by the regime.

Through attacks intended to shock, terrorist organizations aim to disrupt this daily course of life. Terrorists are aware of their inferiority in the means of combat against the government forces of the target society. Through terrorist attacks, the perpetrators aim to create a situation that will generate a harsh reaction from the state. Through this, at least temporarily, or in the longer term, the government can introduce a series of restrictions, which, in Acemoglu and Robinson's terms, translates into a shift in institutional character from the inclusive to the extractive extreme. The restrictions can be for circulation, limiting public gatherings, restricting some citizen's rights, internal or border controls, or even closing borders. Furthermore, states, as exemplified by Russia or Israel, may take a number of counter-terrorist response decisions that may result in innocent civilian casualties. Thus, the states in question can even be accused of war crimes, irresponsibility, incompetence or weakness. In this sense, terrorist attacks can disturb the daily order of states, creating insecurity and restlessness among society, which can turn against the state.

CONCLUSION

This paper shows that, through the attacks they carry out, the terrorists aim to generate a disproportionate reaction from the state authorities, through violent means aimed at inducing a state of terror and fear among the civilian population. Usually, however, the resulting effect is reflected in an antagonistic reaction of the civilian population, which supports the government's counterterrorism efforts. Seen through the theoretical lenses of the NIE, in Acemoglu and Robinson's understanding, terrorist attacks aim to transform

democratic state institutions, or a part of them, into institutions of an extractive nature, aiming at restricting citizens' rights and freedoms, such a situation encompassing the entire society. Sometimes the state's law enforcement agencies can react disproportionately, resulting in civilian casualties, as was the case with the Beslan prisoners, which can hang over the government for years. Such a phenomenon can happen, however, for short periods of time, focusing punctually on the capture and trial of terrorists, as well as on combating the terrorist phenomenon. A democratic state, as a rule, does not consider the transformation of inclusive institutions into extractive institutions just to combat the terrorist phenomenon. That is why the extraordinary measures have only a temporary and punctual character.

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