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## BOOK REVIEW: THE PHENOMENON OF TERRORISM: CZECH PERSPECTIVE

**Dominika Kosárová\***

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FILIPEC, O. 2017. *Fenomén terorismu: česká perspektiva. (Phenomenon of terrorism: Czech perspective)* Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2017. 256 p. ISBN 978-80-244-5040-7.

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Terrorism is not a new security phenomenon; yet, in its modern form, it acquired potential to threaten security and stability on national, regional but also on the global level. It has been widely discussed within the academic and security community especially since 9/11 when a number of publications emerged on this subject, in particular in the USA and countries that felt to be the most threatened by potential terrorist attacks. However, the increasing frequency of attacks in the Western Europe since the last decade has deepened the perception of vulnerability even in the Central European countries. This relatively new trend has intensified discussions and increased demand on scientific literature dealing with the issue of terrorism, even in the Central Europe. One of the latest contributions to the debate is a monograph by **Ondřej Filipec**, the associate lecturer at the Faculty of Law at Palacký University and at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. His publication *“The phenomenon of terrorism: Czech perspective”* reacts to the fact that the threat of terrorism has become a part of our ordinary lives and it has impact on various dimensions of the society and its functioning. The monograph aims to provide a multidisciplinary overview of terrorism from the Czech perspective and to identify the key areas that dominate in nowadays terrorism-related discourse. (p. 6)

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The monograph consists of two main parts. The first one is focused on the delimitation of terrorism and its associated aspects while the second part consists of interviews with Czech experts who deal with this issue from different perspectives, hence contributing to multidisciplinary approach to the topic.

At first, the author studies the phenomenon in terms of definition, which represents a significant challenge for every academic dealing with this issue. **Filipec** points to the fact that evolving nature of terrorism disables to provide a universal definition. Therefore, he opted for a positive and negative delimitation that enabled him to approach terrorism by comparing it with other phenomena such as conventional and guerrilla warfare or organised crime. Hence, he explains the essence of terrorism not only by defining what it is, but foremost by stating what it is not.

Another challenge that most of academics studying terrorism face concerns the issue of its typology. **Filipec** distinguishes particular types of terrorism according to the motivation of terrorists. However, he emphasizes that it is not always so clear to identify the type of terrorism that we are facing as the motivation of terrorists may overlap and hence it may exhibit features of more than one specific type.

Common challenge of academic and security community is not only based in how to define terrorism and how to distinguish its various forms, but different experts chose different approach when studying the evolution of this phenomenon. In the chapter dealing with the transformation of terrorism, **Filipec** distinguishes four eras in terms of methods and instruments used by terrorists. Probably the most interesting, and due to the contemporary trends within the security environment the major asset, is the part where the author concentrates on the so-called post-modern terrorism that he dates from 9/11. In this context, he explains why Europe finds itself in such an unfavourable situation in terms of increasing terrorist threat. **Filipec** claims that there are three major factors at the origin of this situation: firstly, the long-lasting ignorance of the problems that the marginalised communities of immigrants have been facing, which in turn has contributed to their radicalisation. Secondly, unbalanced approach to the protection of Schengen frontiers enabling people to enter the EU without registration; and finally, the failure of the EU to create a common European capacities and to become a real security actor that could influence and resolve the situation in its near neighbourhood. (p. 68-69) In terms of possible future trends the author suggests that terrorists will not only exploit vacuum and unregulated environment of failing states but he emphasizes that they can profit

also from shortcomings of liberal societies, especially in regard to non-integrated communities of immigrants. These suggestions pointing to the origins of modern terrorist threat may be of a significant importance especially for decision-makers who are responsible for the adoption of anti-terrorism measures.

Author's suggestions are subsequently applied on the case of the Czech Republic. Even though the Czech Republic has no experience with major terrorist attacks in its modern history, **Filipec** suggests that there are certain tendencies within the society that could potentially increase the risk of terrorism. These dangerous trends concern discontent with democracy and subsequent radicalisation and extremism especially in relation to radical anti-immigration attitudes and islamophobia. The threat of terrorism is reinforced also by the fact that the Czech Republic is part of the Western civilization that is at the same time the major target of contemporary radical jihadists. Last but not least, the Czech armed forces are deployed in foreign missions, hence at risk of being targeted in a potential terrorist attack. Finally, **Filipec** emphasizes that the Czech Republic has transformed from a state that had provided support to certain terrorist groups before 1989 to a state currently participating in the fight against terrorism. (p. 89)

Another chapter deals with the internal functioning of terrorist groups with a special focus on their structure and financial resources, which are the crucial aspects when it comes to efficiency and success of the group. In terms of structure, the author outlines basic models of terrorist groups reflecting the liaisons between their particular units. As far as economy is concerned, financial income may come from their own (usually illegal) activities such as exploiting the territory under their control, illegal trade, demanding ransoms and raising taxes or from external resources and donors including non-governmental organisations and charities, but also state sponsors of terrorism or people in diaspora. As the author suggests, "*favourable structure with effective coordination and sufficient resources broaden the scope of possibilities to execute attacks and resist antiterrorist measures.*" (p. 91) This chapter provides a deeper understanding of the phenomenon as it deals with particular inside aspects of terrorist groups, thus contributing to a better evaluation of the terrorist threat. It answers the crucial question of how nowadays terrorists are organized and what stands behind their success.

Another important aspect of terrorism is its psychological dimension. In this context **Filipec** focus in particular on what leads people to become terrorists. He

delimits several reasons of radicalisation and stresses that these reasons correspond to the motivation of terrorists to execute violent attacks. They consist of political, economic or personal frustration, crisis of identity, victimisation, desire of revenge for perceived injustice, hatred or martyrdom.

The first part of the monograph is concluded by a chapter dealing with the fight against terrorism on the national level (the Czech Republic), on the regional level (Council of Europe, European Union, NATO and OSCE) and finally on the global level where actors such as the UN, G8 and Global Counterterrorism Forum play the key role. The author refers to the documents adopted and measures implemented on particular levels and on the ground of particular institutions.

In the conclusion, the author reminds that nowadays Europe faces a variety of security challenges including immigration crisis and it has to struggle with the consequences of financial crisis as well as terrorism and violations of human rights. However, the increasing number of immigrants and frequency of terrorist attacks committed often by people with foreign nationality or origins lead political parties to politicise and securitise these issues, hence provoking fear, xenophobia, islamophobia and radicalisation in the society. This creates opportunity for populist and nationalistic parties that promote radical agenda compromising values of the Western civilisation. In this context, **Filipec** reminds that *„easy solutions are not always right and they may have unexpected and fatal consequences on democracy“*. (p. 142) Moreover, this development may threaten not only democracy but also the project of European integration and ultimately deteriorate international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. At the same time, the author emphasizes the changing facets of terrorism and the fact that there will always remain certain group of people dissatisfied with the status quo. Hence, according to him, we should admit that terrorism would always exist even though the motivation of terrorists and means of committing attacks will change. (p. 144) One of the features peculiar to modern terrorist groups is the use of cyberspace as internet is widely used by terrorists to communicate, spread their ideology, recruit new member or eventually to inspire individuals to commit terrorist acts as “lone wolves”. Therefore, the author suggests that the fight against contemporary terrorism should take into account this transformation and it should occur in the cyberspace as well.

**Filipec** himself admits that one of the key challenges when dealing with the issue of terrorism is the complexity of the phenomenon. Therefore, in order to enrich the research he opted for multidisciplinary approach by means of

interviews. In the second part of the monograph, he discusses specific terrorism-related aspects with experts with different specialisation. Seven interviews provide seven different perspectives on terrorism, yet all of them reflecting Czech viewpoints. At first, Oldřich Bureš from Metropolitan University Prague approached the issue of the fight against terrorism at the level of the EU. Afterwards, Roman Pačka, policy specialist from National Cyber Security Centre established within the National Security Authority, focused on the potential use of cyberspace by terrorists to commit an attack. The subsequent interview with Miroslav Mareš, from Masaryk University, is focused more specifically on terrorism and the Czech Republic. Terrorism is often associated with the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, the author conducted an interview on this matter with Vladimír Pitschmann from the Faculty of Biomedical Engineering of the Czech Technical University in Prague. Thereafter, Ludmila Čírtková from Police Academy of the Czech Republic answered author's questions about the role of psychology in relation to terrorism, and Břetislav Tureček from Metropolitan University Prague was interviewed about the topic that probably dominates contemporary security discourse – radical Islamism and the Middle East. Finally, Ondřej Svaček approached the issue of terrorism from the perspective of international law. These seven interviews complete the first part of the monograph and help to create more compact image on the complex issue of terrorism. This multidisciplinary approach is a unique contribution of the publication.

Although there is a great number of scientific works dealing with terrorism, we regard the monograph by **Filipec** as a significant contribution to academic and security discourse, especially in the context of Central Europe. Terrorism is an evolving phenomenon that changes in terms of motivation, means and tactics. Since the last few years, Europe has faced unprecedented threat in terms of terrorist attacks motivated especially by radical Islamism. Therefore, there is a great demand to update information on regular basis. Taking into account the number of attacks that occurred in Europe and dynamic transformation of the European security environment, terrorism can be regarded as a "living phenomenon" that requires permanent and careful scrutiny within security and academic circles. The monograph by **Filipec** adequately reacts to these changing facets of terrorism. It reflects the development until the attacks in Berlin in December 2016, and still, already at the time of writing this review, there was another attack in March 2017 in London. This proves the exigence to deal with this security phenomenon in order to be able to understand its current

facet, try to predict future trends and opt for adequate counter-measures. The author reacts also to the fact that the contemporary development in Europe stimulates discussions about the liaison between counter-terrorism measures and preservation of the Western values such as democracy, as well as between increasing terrorist threat and xenophobia, nationalism or populism, which after all may threaten stability much more than terrorism itself. Hence the monograph leads us to evaluate what is the major threat, either terrorism or “side-effects” provoked by the securitisation of this phenomenon.