

Ondřej Filipec:
Fenomén terorismus: Česká perspektiva

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The contemporary political milieu has been influenced by terrorism quite significantly bearing in mind the recent events in the world. For many readers, the era of terrorism may be seen from the attacks known as 9/11 taking place in New York and Washington, DC in 2001. The reviewed book *'The phenomenon of Terrorism: A Czech Perspective'* is meant to spark off further discussions after its inquiry of the matter and the Czech perception and experience in history and thus, the monograph shall encompass terrorism as a theme to comprehend it within the Czech society as declared by the author (p. 6). On that account, the book is being torn asunder whilst the first section specifies sundry theoretical approaches towards terrorism. Interestingly at first, however, the author summarises all the prior

analyses and articles, and other sorts of academic outcomes to state that the local research predominantly results in Czech-written works without any significant implications (p. 8–11). Subsequently, the initial section is divided into seven chapters that are supposed to gradually explore distinctive attributes of terrorism. These are as follows: 1 (Mis)interpretations of terrorism; 2 Motivations and classifications; 3 History of terrorism; 4 Terrorism in the Czech Republic; 5 Organisational aspects; 6 Psychology of terrorism; and 7 Fighting terrorism. The second section, on the other hand, is compounded of seven interviews with distinctive Czech personages who are to complete and supplement the aforementioned findings, and therefore these people come from different backgrounds of science, as for instance Middle East stud-

ies; cyberterrorism; violence and psychological patterns of terrorists and ruffians; terrorism in the Czech Republic and the EU; weapons of mass destruction; and international law and its infringement.

The introductory chapter denotes the overall complexity of terrorism although no coherent and satisfactory definition of terrorism has been delivered yet, nor its origin might be identified. Nevertheless, the author concludes that its roots may be found in the period of the French Revolution in the course of the Reign of Terror that is associated with the Jacobins, *Club des Jacobins* (p. 13). The modern appearance and its contemporary saliencies may be dated back to the 1930s, though, and the UN resolution (no 49/60) is concerned with this matter. Consequently, a basic division may be delineated between so called positive and negative forms of terrorism (p. 13–15; 13–24). This rather brief divagation implies an ability to simplify and bring together all the fundamental sets of information within three areas; i.e. the global, European, and the Czech one. The author draws readers' attention to multifarious events from history, as shown above, to today's problems such as the Islamic State while applying theoretical approaches of terrorism.

The issue of hunt for a definition and its further comprehension is disassembled even in the second chapter when the author emphasises the overlapping tendencies causing the problem in delivering a proper definition (p. 25). And

thus, nine forms of terrorism could be recognised and inquired afterwards, these are as follows: political terrorism which is related to ideologies; right-oriented terrorism known due to the Nazi and conservative home-grown terrorist groups; nationally-separatist terrorism predominantly stressing the national questions; left-oriented terrorism such as communism and anarchism; environmental terrorist groups, specifics of the foregoing and therefore exploiting the imperfection of capitalism; religious terrorism and its two prevailing forms, the fundamentalist and eschatological one.¹ The last three categories are single-issue terrorist groups created as an opposition against abortions, same-sex relationships and marriages, etc.; psychopathological terrorism as committed due to 'mental needs'; and criminal terrorism as the most questionable one in a shape of drug-terrorism. Each category is specified, and examples are given to clarify profoundly. While doing so, the author keeps using instances not only from Europe, but the whole world instead and moreover, the tool the author has used is simple and apposite since it is the left-right scale of political preference. Yet the monograph is not short in vain and although there are many examples of terrorist attacks taking place all around the world. On this account, the author is not stuck in delivering explanations of conflicts cores and the linkage amongst them which one may find dubious.

¹ The author, however, does not adhere to Islam only, but lists instances of Christian and Jewish, etc. terrorist attacks, too (p. 39–41) and it shall be perceived as meritorious, indeed.

The third chapter addresses the history of terrorism when dividing it into four clusters of events so that the readers are given a chance to better understand the primitive form of terrorism which had existed in the ancient period and prehistoric times before being substituted by the era of late or advanced terrorism of the 1790s known thanks to lethal weapons and dynamite. In the second half of the 1920s and by the end of the Great war and the second world war respectively, terrorism moved forward into its modern appearance with a lower rate of terroristic attacks in the Cold war and in the 1990s especially, albeit the first female suicidal attack in Lebanon in 1985 (p. 58). The post-modern phase shall be inevitably, as declared by the author, associated with the 1995 attacks in Tokyo and chiefly 9/11. It remains striking that the Madrid attacks in 2004 are being omitted in its significance by bare statement that this attack has 'also affected Europe' (p. 65), even though, together with 9/11, it is being considered to be even the accelerator of modifications in contemporary diplomacy. In connection with those attacks committed in Europe, the author denounces the EU's countries and their dilatoriness (p. 68–69).

Finally, the fourth chapter covers terrorism in the area of former Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. Then, reasonable time trajectories to be observed as allocated by the author. And for this reason, one shall distinguish variants of terrorism before the year of 1989 and afterwards. More precisely, it is indispensable to compartmentalise the period into

two, meaning there is a variance between the era beginning by the end of the Great war, after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, until 1939 and during the Nazi occupation followed by the communist coup d'état and rule. Although terroristic assaults committed in the First Republic might be applicable, the next classification as created for the communist regime is rather questionable since the author makes a distinction between the 'state organised terrorism' against dissidents and opposition as such and 'support towards international communist organisations' (p. 76–77). The conspicuous question is whether the phenomenon is applicable literally any-time and for every single event. Hence, it is the issue of satisfying definitions in social science making the theme more complex. Moreover, the origin of terrorism may be seen in the French Revolution or in 9/11 as well. And so, one may be reminded of the dispute amongst theorists of non-democratic regimes and totalitarianism, in particular, discussing the modernity (*modernism*) vs the agelong persistence and continuation of this specific form of totalitarian governance (*primordialism*). Nonetheless, it is up to historians, philosophers and other scholars to judge anyhow. Regrettably, though, the Austro-Hungarian era might be noteworthy to inquire as well if one agrees with the primordialism concept. It is not, however, beyond all reason that the author could not cover even this epoch due to the book extent. Altogether, the number of pages and amount of information is more than felicitous.

The next topics to deal with are terrorist bunches and the way in which they are being organised and controlled. The author ingeniously highlights the system resembling the top management arrangement (p. 90; 93). This chapter is accompanied by the quest for psychological aspects of terrorism and its knottiness in the terrorist profile creation. Overall, these three chapters complement one another. Furthermore, fighting terrorism in the Czech Republic is the very last chapter of the section. The author uses primary sources to expound the prevention processes occurring in the country as followed by the EU, NATO, and often neglected G8 level.

Seven interviews were conducted to diffuse assorted spheres of research within terrorism. Notwithstanding the author's purport to obtain evidence and backup for his previous statements, one may sometimes notice that the facts are only being reiterated without any deeper punchlines, as for instance in the case of single-issue terrorism (p. 176). However, the blend and selection of experts to hold talks with as brought along by the author shall be seen as first-rate.

Yet, in conclusion, the book suffers from three types of redundant blunders. At first, there are typing errors; to name but a few, see p. 16; 24; 35; or 79

where the mistyping may be found even in the headline, too. Technically, the pagination and titles of chapters do not correspond to reality; see the chapter(s) no 2.6, for example, being used twice in the text for different chapters but treated correctly in the content listing (p. 38; 44). Finally, the author unpleasantly overuses the '(and) so' conjunction, i.e. '*tedy*' in Czech, and the term appears to be literally everywhere throughout. Unfortunately, the tremendous number of incidence diminishes the value of text itself, albeit in a limited degree since the author's written language is rather readable and still demonstrating the eruditeness. In the end, the monograph represents a successful attempt to simplify the phenomenon of terrorism, not only in the Czech perspective as one may assume quite wrongly. Though, sometimes the author's intention to avoid overdosing on information resulted in an enumeration of tragic events rather than interconnected incidents. And it is, however, the forfeit for books with less than hundreds of pages. These, on the other hand, may not be quite appealing anymore. Ultimately, be it an academic theorist or the uninitiated, the book devalues all the readers whilst dismantling petrifying acts of terrorism.