
A review of the book:

Sebastian Wojciechowski, *The Hybridity of Terrorism*, Logos, Berlin 2013, pp. 216

by Artur Wejkszner

The issue of modern terrorism is a significant subject of academic research. For decades the representatives of many branches of science, ranging from psychology and sociology, through history, law and political science to criminology, in particular, have been trying to find basic answers to a number of fundamental questions concerning the nature, manifestations, evolution of terrorism, and combating it. A definite majority of studies that have been around are fragmentary, selective or descriptive, and they do not make a significant contribution to the state of knowledge. There are very few studies that discuss the matter in question in a comprehensive, in-depth and original manner. This cognitive gap has clearly been to some extent filled by the latest publication by Professor Sebastian Wojciechowski, entitled *The Hybridity of Terrorism*. While the title may seem somewhat general, it actually points to a crucial feature (or a set of features) of the phenomenon it analyzes. In the simplest terms, dealing with terrorism we come across a cluster of elements, and relations between them, that sometimes are independent from one another, sometimes coexist side by side, and most frequently

complement each other, constituting terrorism and influencing its evolution.

The concept presented in this study crowns many years of the author's academic investigation, reflected in numerous publications frequently quoted in international academia, including such books as *The Modern Terrorism and Its Forms*, *The Power of Terrorism*, or *Terroryzm na początku XXI wieku* [Terrorism at the beginning of the 21st century].

The concept of the hybridity of terrorism (CHT) is based on several key assumptions, where the most significant role is played by six manifestations of terrorism that form a cubic model, or a hexahedron. Although the justification for adopting this theoretical model can be disputed (bearing in mind various manifestations of hybridity on the one hand and other types of polyhedrons on the other), the originality of this concept cannot be denied. First and foremost it concerns the manner in which the multi-dimensional relations between apparently unrelated spatial, institutional, subjective and objective factors are linked to one another and emphasized. The author is fully aware of that – although universal and perfect in terms of its simplicity and

clarity – his construct can assume some other forms when expanded to include new elements that are not discussed in the book, such as the hybridity of the consequences or envisaged development directions of terrorism. His construct can also be applied to discuss other, equally complex social phenomena (such as nationalism, fundamentalism, etc.).

The book comprises six chapters, preceded by an introduction, and conclusions and a bibliography which contains both source materials and several hundred academic studies. The value of the study is additionally increased by several dozen figures and graphs allowing a more systematic presentation of the theoretical construct and by the exemplification of the analyzed phenomenon. Each chapter analyzes a different manifestation of hybridity, namely the hybridity of the object (of the study), hybridity of actors, hybridity of forms, hybridity of reasons, spatial hybridity, and hybridity of features (mechanisms). Each chapter is a coherent, clearly presented whole which contains a systematic discussion of the concept and manifestations of the analyzed phenomenon. Additionally, the author manages to grasp the multi-level relations that occur among a total of several dozen elements, assuming the form of simple or complex relations.

The first chapter deals with the hybridity of the subject of the study. The author understands this concept as the semantic

diversity of the notion of terrorism, as well as the diversity of components this phenomenon is made of, and the consequences it produces. This chapter presents considerations on the etymology of the concept, reviews the most important definitions, and presents a highly interesting submodel of relations between the five key components of terrorism. The gravity of considerations in this chapter is enormous. They make it possible to formulate conclusions that address the question of why a coherent and commonly accepted definition of terrorism has not been developed so far. Such a definition would have to encompass virtually all the possible combinations of variables which are decisive for its epistemological significance.

Chapter two contains reflections on the subjective aspect of terrorism, analyzed both horizontally and vertically. In a transparent and exhaustive manner, the author presents the profiles of various types of participation in terrorist activity (participation of individuals, groups of people – i.e. terrorist organizations, and the entities that support or combat terrorist activity). He also manages to grasp the essence of the subjective relations he illustrates by means of the 3Cs model (cooperation, combat/confrontation, co-existence). On account of the current stage of structural evolution of terrorism the issue of its asymmetrical and network-like nature is a vital element of consideration

presented in this chapter. Although the analysis of these issues is limited to the presentation of model aspects, it evidences a deep knowledge of the subject and the author's awareness of its current and potential evolutionary tendencies.

Chapter three contains a successful attempt to identify the most important types of modern terrorism. The taxonomy of terrorism discussed in this part of the book may not be exhaustive, but it makes it possible to find preliminary answers to such fundamental questions as, for example: Who are terrorists? How do they operate?, What is the scale and range of their activity? The number of possible answers to these questions is enormous, which fully justifies why only the most important and academically popular typological criteria are selected.

Chapter four actually develops the analysis presented in the former part of the study. The author manages to capture the extensive cluster of reasons, or sources generating terrorist activity. The difficulty of this challenge is well illustrated by the fact that in the 20th and early 21st centuries there are over two thousand active terrorist groups operating for a whole catalogue of different reasons, or to achieve various goals. In a competent, insightful and interesting manner the author presents the hierarchy of importance of the reasons for terrorism on the one hand, and on the other, an exhaustive typology, taking into account the territorial,

ethnic, religious, cultural, socio-economic, politico-historical and psychological dimensions. The catalogue of other reasons seems to remain open, which is directly related to the evolution of modern terrorism. The author is fully aware of this fact, and leaves room for academic discussion and new, more complex concepts. The academic value of this chapter is augmented by the original attitude to the hybridity of the reasons for terrorism. The author demonstrates that in this case, too, the sources and reasons for terrorism can be perceived vertically as well as horizontally. Such an attitude allows us to understand why we are dealing with such a varied catalogue of reasons for terrorist activity in any given geographical area (for instance as regards a concrete time vector) and at the same time convergent, or even identical reasons in terms of the whole world.

The next chapter deals with another important issue, namely the spatial range of terrorist activity. The author's approach goes beyond the traditional typology that refers solely to the territorial aspect. This is evidenced by how he applies the two analytical categories of globality and locality. Both can refer to the analysis of the range of terrorist activity as well as to an analysis of the dissemination or popularization of the ideas that constitute this activity, stereotypes related to it, fighting tactics and strategies (adopted by either side of an asymmetrical conflict, which is

an excellent corroboration of the fact that the research attitude adopted by the author is accurate).

Chapter six is a highly successful attempt to classify the most important features or mechanisms which shape or influence the phenomenon of terrorism and how it is perceived. The author distinguishes two types of features: alternative (opposing) and compatible (harmonious) features. The most significant examples are indicated in each group. In the former case, the focus is on the analysis of differences between terrorism understood as a state or process, on the broad or narrow understanding of terrorism, horizontal or vertical dimension of terrorism and its evolutionary (phased) or continuous development. In the latter case, attention is paid primarily to the multifaceted nature of terrorism, the avalanche effect (related to the territorial escalation of terrorism), the various goals of terrorist activity and the changeability of the terrorist threat.

The theoretical construct presented in this study appears to be a result of thorough consideration founded on the reference to numerous concepts and exemplifications, evidencing the author's enormous erudition. Some researchers may approach the multidisciplinary approach presented in this study with ambivalence, for example due to the fact that a homogeneous set of research tools cannot be applied here. Yet, only this approach allows numerous regularities to be discovered that might elude experts in separate branches of science. Professor Wojciechowski's publication constitutes a vital contribution to the development of research into modern terrorism. Even if it remains impossible to develop a 'general theory of terrorism', as indicated by Walter Laqueur over forty years ago, the author of the concept of the hybridity of terrorism has succeeded in getting significantly closer to this ultimate goal.