

Expert's opinion on Dissertation

The Influence of Cyber Terrorism Threat on the American Security Policy

Author: Ing. Tomáš Rezek

Dissertation Reader: doc. PhDr. Ladislav Cabada, Ph.D.

The present thesis focuses on important and contemporary issue of terrorism as one of the most important threats endangering the states and societies. The author decided for specific problem of cyber security as new phenomenon accompanying the “traditional” terrorism within the last two decades. Such problem is analyzed in his dissertation in the broader framework (debate on contemporary terrorism), but also with more précised and specific focus on changes in the United States security policy *vis-à-vis* the strengthening and developing of new strategies of cyber terrorism.

The three main research questions are presented at the pages 13 and 14 of the dissertation. The first one is simple, but important and relevant, namely the search for the definition of the cyber terrorism. The second one is not question in fact; the author presents it as a “necessity” to “confirm if terrorist pose still a threat to the U.S. security”. Such declaration seems to be more thesis than question and it is not clear how the “question” might be answered, or – better said – if there is any space for negative response / falsification. The third question stresses the position of terrorist asking if they are forced to change their strategies (towards the cyber terrorism). Basically, such set of questions seems to be fully acceptable and the later structure of the dissertation follows this plan of activities. Nevertheless, it is not clear, how these questions are interconnected with the general theme of the thesis. The dissertation's title promises the focus on US Security Policy and how this policy is influenced by the development and changes of cyber terrorism. But the set of question does not include the changes in US security policy at all!

Also the next part of the thesis is problematic, even more, especially this part I feel as unsatisfactory. I have in mind the chapter 3 (Current research on the topic) that has to play the role of “heuristic” part. In my opinion, such chapter, having only 1 and half pages in sum, is too short and too unclear for the dissertation. Neither in this chapter, nor in other parts of the dissertation the author discusses the contemporary research on the cyber terrorism; next to the rich international debate also important Czech authors might be – and are not – mentioned such as N. Hynek or O. Bureš. More generally, also the operationalization of terms including the terrorism as the general one is not based at rich database of sources. When we look at the chapter 6.1. – “Theoretical background” (of the terrorism) – we can find less than two pages without any evidence in scientific sources ... Basically, I have doubts if we could fully accept the dissertation that does not include comprehensive heuristics and theoretical debate on the phenomenon presenting the key term within the thesis' title. Next to other problems it means also the matter of fact that the later definitions of terrorism (chapter 6.2) fully ignore the scientific position and present only the political and legal definitions (US, Russian, Chinese).

All the mentioned problems are in essential discrepancy with the matter of fact that the next parts of the dissertation, that might be generally and in sum recognized as the essay, have good and in some

subchapter even excellent quality. This might be said already about the last part of the chapter 6 where the author presents the operationalization of important terms including terrorism itself and cyber terrorism as its important subtype. Again, in chapter 7, the author promises to present some theoretical discussion about terrorism, but also this part (subchapter 7.2) is too short (about two pages) and not built on relevant sources from contemporary social sciences. Indeed, the next part of the chapter beginning with the discussion about methodology and presentation of hypotheses is very good and the statistical analysis, that concludes this chapter, is really useful and excellent. This might be said also about chapter 8, although the presentation of contemporary terrorism as being placed between two “ideal” positions (WMD or cyber weapons) seems to be too black and white; if I may ask the author, does he really believe that other, more conventional sources and tools are or will be soon forgotten by the terrorists? Nevertheless, the chapter as a whole is well prepared and the next chapter, presenting the selected case studies of cyber terrorism activities.

Also in the next chapters the logic of the argumentation is clear – in chapter 10 the USA as the “superpower in cyber space” are confronted and compared with the most important state challenging their cyber security (China, Russia, North Korea). I agree with the author that to win relevant data about the “state terrorist” activities of mentioned states is very difficult; nevertheless, I would welcome also at least short discussion about Iran at this place. In the last part of the analysis the US security policy and the institutional and legal changes framing and determining this policy are presented based on deep analysis and in very satisfactory manner.

If we evaluate the present dissertation as a whole, the positive sides clearly prevail over the negative ones. The author collected big amount of contemporary strategic documents, policy papers, legislative acts, internal material etc. framing the US counter-terrorism policy and showed that he is fully able to analyze such documents using fully acceptable methodological tools. His work brings clearly new and innovative findings and such recognition seems to me as the most important impact every dissertation has to include. Nevertheless, also the negatives should be mentioned. As I did above, such negatives might be generally evaluated as lack of theoretical background and unsatisfactory heuristics presenting and using the contemporary theoretical (security) debate about (cyber) terrorism. In my opinion, especially the evaluation committee has to decide if such deficiency might be accepted at this stage. In any case, should the author think about the publication of his work such defect has to be removed; or he has to present only analytical work and resign fully on the theoretical parts and subchapters (and this matter of fact has to be mentioned also and above all in the introduction).

Despite some critical comments, at the end I evaluate personally the present dissertation as acceptable and recommend it for the defense.

Tlučná, 27 April 2015