

**Kosárová, D. (2018). Failing States and Islamic Terrorism: Causal Context** (*in Slovak: Zlyhávajúce štáty a islamský terorizmus – kauzálne súvislosti*). Banská Bystrica: Belianum, 2018. 198 pp. ISBN 978-80-557-1456-1.

Transformation of the security environment in the 1990s led to increased attention to new security challenges including the issue of the failed states. Since early beginning the issue of failed states was put into the direct link with terrorism. Scholars intuitively expected that failed states provide vital environment for the rise of a terrorist group which was supported by the medialized cases of Somalia or Afghanistan. This initiative link became much stronger after 9/11 and following invasion to Afghanistan and recent experience with the rise of Daesh on the ruins of Syria and Iraq is supporting this vision. However, the link is not as simple as it seems.

Dominika Kosárová from the Czech University of Defence presented a very interesting study assessing these, at first sight intuitive, but in reality very complicated links. After an extensive theoretical background to the terms “failed state” (historical development, definitions, attributes and functions) and “terrorism” (definitions, classifications, causes and consequences in theoretical perspective or security implications) Dr. Kosárová presents three detailed case studies dealing with Afghanistan, Somalia and Guinea. Analyses dedicated to individual states have the same structure which enables easy comparison in areas, which were defined based on theoretical background. In each case there is assessment of the situation and factors influencing the link between state failure and terrorism.

Despite case study approach to the issue is dominating, the author used also more quantitative approach to the issue which is applied in the first part where variables of 15 most stable states are compared with 15 least stable states. As a result, the book is using a vital mixture of complementary methods with dominating qualitative approach. Nonetheless, scholar readers familiar with the so called Mill’s methods will certainly get an impression that the research conducted by Dr. Kosárová is well suitable for its application or at least, that it would be interesting to conduct such an attempt, despite Mill’s methods are very sensitive to changes in variables and demanding regarding qualitative interpretation.

This was, however, also a challenge of the monograph, especially in relation to the summarizing table 9 (pp. 162-163) where the author presented factors related to a failing state as a dependent variable, consequences of failing state as an enabling variable and false variables involving factors independent on state failure. As noted by the author, measuring impact is always somehow arbitrary as complexity of the reality does not allow to separate variables and clearly expresses simple causality. In other words, the relationship between terrorism and failed states is so complex, that variables shall be considered in their mutual and contextual influence. This is sort of paradox as researcher is on one hand confronted with the need to simplify a very complex reality, but, on the other hand, to go as deep as much as possible in the analysis. I am persuaded, that Dr. Kosárová skillfully succeeded to deal with this challenge. This is because the simplification was not limiting further application of theoretical concepts on one side and that she succeeded in providing a broader context in the presented case studies on the other.

In the conclusion the author positively verified a hypothesis that the environment of the failed states is easing presence of the Islamist terrorist groups and that this process is enhanced by other factors (enabling variables) which may not be directly linked with a state failure (p. 172). In other words, state failure is not the only necessary precondition for the presence of a terrorist group.

The book by Dominika Kosárová may be also used as a starting point for the debate of the statehood and attributes of (effective) state. It is interesting that author found out that for assessing the role of the state realism is much more suitable than liberalism (p. 169). This observation is interesting as realism has been often criticised for a strong emphasis on states as dominant actors in the international relations and for approaching to the states as “black-boxes”. On the other hand, as the author noted, the key issue is an effective control over a territory, which might be conducted also by non-democratic states. Moreover, non-democratic regimes might be more effective in dealing with factors supportive to the environment vital for the rise of terrorist organizations than democratic regimes. As the author noted, it is necessary to distinguish between a formal power of the state and de facto a control of a territory by a non-state actor, which might be in some cases much more effective. As a result, it is a simplification to directly link failing states with the rise of terrorism, as terrorism may be limited on a local level.

The work of Dr. Kosárová might be appreciated by international security and international relations experts, civil servants and general academic public interested in terrorism and the issue of failed states. It may well serve as extended reading for international security students. Thanks to an interesting research design including three case studies, Dr. Kosárová opened the floor for other case studies, which might verify and possibly adjust her findings, which are relevant also for political practice and decision-makers. To sum up, the reviewed book "Failing States and Islamic Terrorism: Causal Context" is a nice piece of academic work, which in September 2019 was appreciated also by the Dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, who awarded Dr. Kosárová a special recognition for her research.

**Mgr. et Mgr. Ondřej Filipec, Ph.D.**

*Faculty of Social Sciences*

*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava*

*e-mail: [ondrej.filipec@ucm.sk](mailto:ondrej.filipec@ucm.sk)*