

*Soldados del Terrorismo Global. Los nuevos combatientes extranjeros.* By Inmaculada Marrero Rocha (Tecnos, Madrid, 2020) 216pp.

This book, written within the framework of several prestigious research projects (some of them European), represents a new convincing and accurate book in the already long list of great works written by Inmaculada Marrero, professor of International Relations at the University of Granada and a widely recognized expert on the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters. Among her previous works, we must mention a recent book co-edited by her together with Trujillo Mendoza: *Jihadism, Foreign Fighters and Radicalization in the EU* (Routledge, London / NewYork, 2019).

The work I am reviewing offers a comprehensive study of the current foreign terrorist fighters, as well as the main issues from the perspective of international relations, focused on the European Union (EU) framework. The book has nine parts, the main aspects of which are going to be addressed here. Part 1, where the contents are presented, shows some important keys to fully understand the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, being one of them an essential historical approach.

The analysis of the contents begins in Part 2, which makes reference to certain relevant elements of the evolution of the phenomenon of foreign fighters. After examining the classic foreign fighters, "*the heroes*", represented by figures such as Lord Byron, Che Guevara or John Cornford (who left their country of origin to join the ranks of the foreign insurgency, fighting for noble causes), prof. Marrero starts the analysis on the nature and action of foreign fighters nowadays. Many of them are connected with jihadist terrorist organizations such as ISIS, Al-Nusra Front and other cells, affiliated entities or groups derived from Al-Qaida, which may be considered "*the villains*". The author focuses her research on the *villains*, although this does not prevent her from drawing attention to the fact that the evolution experienced by the phenomenon does not reflect the whole current reality, inasmuch as the figure of the classic foreign fighter still exists actually, but has ceased to be visible. Prof. Marrero also pays attention to the phenomenon of violent radicalization, not only from the perspective of International Relations, but also from that of behavioral and social psychology, thanks to the interdisciplinary tools provided by the research projects that have served as guidance and support for this book. Prof. Marrero accurately highlights a relevant factor of uncertainty concerning the measurement of the recent exodus of foreign terrorist fighters and their alleged incorporation to groups such as ISIS, that is connected to the fact that many States informed about the departures to Syria and Iraq without knowing which are the groups of destination, and therefore without taking into account either the large number of currently existing insurgent groups which the combatants might have

joined (for instance, in Syria there are more than 100), many of which are not considered terrorist organizations and even enjoy some international support.

Part 3 addresses the issue of terrorist fighters in connection with global terrorism. Prof. Marrero analyzes three main aspects very wisely. In the first place, she studies the transition from international terrorism to global terrorism, and how the appearance of the latter (religious in nature, and linked to neo-Salafism, i.e., an extremist and violent version of Islam) has revolutionized the studies on terrorism, promoting a program of research within the critical security studies, called *critical studies on terrorism* "which counteracts the vision of the mainstream and orthodox current of terrorism studies, more focused on developing a commonly accepted meaning of the term terrorism" (p. 67). Second, decentralization and virtualization of global terrorism, which allow the development of a "virtual caliphate" in addition to another one proclaimed at the territorial level (which has now disappeared), are also analyzed. And, thirdly, Professor Marrero deals with the commitment of those affiliated to global terrorism and the problem resulting from the replacement of national identity with another of transnational or global nature, which makes demobilization and disengagement of the members especially complex.

Part 4 focuses on foreign terrorist fighters in relation to armed conflicts, and consists of two sections, referring successively, first, to the participation of foreign terrorist fighters in current armed conflicts, and secondly, to the relationships with other violent non-State actors in armed conflicts. Among other aspects, prof. Marrero examines the challenge that new global terrorism poses to the Westphalian model; the exercise of new extreme forms of violence by foreign combatants, which contributes to the *chronification* of many conflicts, that violence becomes structural, an irreconcilable rupture between the different sectors of the civilian population and the decrease of the possibilities for future reconciliation and pacification; likewise, there is a progressive increase in collaboration with organized crime.

Part 5 is devoted to the return of foreign fighters from the perspective of European security. Although the return of foreign fighters is nothing new, the alarm raised by the return of those who recently joined groups like ISIS in conflicts such as those in Syria and Iraq is something new. In fact, this aspect, linked to the situation of the members who are still in Syrian territory or in other foreign countries, along with the situation of their women and children detained in different detention camps, have been among the issues which have raised more media interest until the pandemic caused by Covid-19 displaced the focus of attention. These problems have not yet been solved by many States (even within the EU there is still division about it). Nonetheless, the author emphasizes that the data seem to show, so far, that foreign fighters are more attracted by the transnational nature of the fight than by local terrorism. Therefore, certain fears felt by political leaders (also by public opinion) might be unfounded, at least in part. In any case, States have international obligations that they are currently neglecting, as several representatives from international organizations have also pointed out.

Part 6 refers to the treatment of the legal response against foreign fighters, limiting the scope studied to its "*efficacy and implications*". Regarding this part, three main aspects are addressed: international humanitarian law; the response of the United Nations Security Council to the phenomenon (UNSC); and the EU's response. Regarding the first aspect, the author makes it clear that the Islamic State must be considered as one of the parties in conflict in the wars fought in Iraq and Syria. Beyond the acts of terrorism committed during these armed conflicts, the author rightly brings up the obligation to deal with war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, such as the one committed against the Yazidi minority. One of the bodies created by the UN to facilitate things in this area is, in particular, the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under International Law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, created by the UN General Assembly in 2016. Another body that must be mentioned in relation to its potential future works is the Investigation Team on Daesh crimes in Iraq, which is rather singular due to its origin which is a UNSC Resolution (2379 (2017)), with the power and possibilities it provides. In any case, in the next section prof. Marrero fully proceeds to the analysis of the second aspect, that is the most emblematic response of the UNSC, through its well-known resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017), which has given a lot of scope to the doctrine, due to the various weaknesses contained in them. Concerning the third aspect, prof. Marrero reviews the reaction *of* and *within* the EU, highlighting how most of the instruments and measures adopted so far have been more repressive than preventive. I totally agree, although, in my opinion, one more word could have been added to the title of part 6. It is "legitimacy", because, in addition to the questions related to effectiveness, an approach to legality and aspects connected are equally needed (and present), not in vain harsh measures have been adopted without trial, including the revocation of nationality, the controversial nature of which is well known (and shown in the book).

Part 7 delves into the complex issue of de-radicalization, disengagement and integration of European foreign fighters. Regarding this issue, certainly, legal and international relations *per se* would not be able to take into account more than a part of the reality which must be considered to face the complex and sensitive problems faced. Despite the fact that the concern of the States and international organizations in this regard has not emerged until very recently, finally there are strategies and instruments that may be analyzed. The author faces key issues, such as the "*securitized*" perspective of the EU. On the one hand, she essentially examines cooperation in relation to the phenomenon of radicalization, analyzing among other initiatives, the contents and implications of one of the greatest achievements of the EU to date, namely the creation of the *Radicalization Awareness Network* (RAN). And, on the other hand, the most relevant national policies against violent radicalization are also considered, in particular the British strategy (*Prevent*); the Danish one (*Aarhus*) and also the German model.

Part 8 approaches the response given by Spain to terrorist fighters and violent radicalization, through the study of the adaptation of the Spanish political-regulatory framework to the new manifestations of terrorism and the fight against violent radicalization in our country. The analysis carried out splendidly shows the main features that define our country's approach: a security approach, but providing all possible guarantees (still mentioning significant aspects to be reformed).

The above-mentioned part is the last one dedicated to the study of the material contents, since the final part, number 9, contains the bibliographic references, lacking one referred to the conclusions. I must confess that initially I missed that part, since it is common that research works contain a specific section where personal contributions are gathered. However, it is also true that the author compensates that lack from beginning to end: in the design of the work scheme, by splendidly taking control of the research object chapter by chapter, optimally choosing each and every one of the research questions and problems subject to examination, and finally making clear the possible solutions and also showing her own position on every relevant matter. In short, it is an excellent book, a reflection of the great intellectual maturity and expertise of its writer.

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