

James J.F. Forest, *The Terrorism Lectures: A Comprehensive Collection for the Student of Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and National Security* [3rd Edition] (Santa Ana, CA: Nortia Press, 2019) 442 pp., US \$ \$49.99, ISBN: 978-1-9405-0316-5.

Reviewed by Edward J. Valla

James J. F. Forest, Professor in the School of Criminology and Justice Studies at the University of Massachusetts/Lowell, is a veteran expert on terrorism, counterterrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and homeland security. In his newest edition of *The Terrorism Lectures*, Forest provides updates to two previous editions. This comprehensive textbook consists of nineteen chapters divided into five parts. Part One provides definitions, a history of terrorism, and conceptual frameworks. Part Two examines terrorism's facilitators, with chapters that delve into politics and governance, terrorism's economic contexts, how terrorists finance their activities, and terrorist communication. Part Three details terrorist group ideologies and strategies. The chapters in this section center upon terrorism emanating from ethno-nationalist and separatist groups, Left-Wing terrorism, Right-Wing terrorism, Religious Terrorism, and terrorist group decision-making. In Part Four, Forest turns his attention to terrorism's contemporary challenges, covering terrorist engagement, recruitment, and radicalization, "Do-it-Yourself" terrorism, suicide terrorism, and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). He concludes in Part Five with a discussion of likely future trends in terrorism. Each chapter begins with a "BLUF" (Bottom Line Up Front), followed by numerous examples to support the main themes.

The author begins with a definition of terrorism as a combination of strategies and violent tactics in which the victims (such as ordinary citizens) are a sub-element of a broader target. "These strategies and tactics are used by individuals or groups in pursuit of some type of objectives - typically of a political, social, criminal, economic and/or religious nature - and they perceive terrorism to be the most effective way to obtain the power needed to achieve those objectives." (p.8)

This is followed by an application of David Rapoport's "four waves" of terrorism to describe terrorism's history and evolution. This historical narrative provides a useful backdrop for a discussion of the context in which terrorism occurs. Here, Forest focuses on terrorism's pre-conditions and triggers to explain the conditions that "generate or give legitimacy to a core set of grievances articulated in a terrorist group's ideology."

The discussion of the context in which terrorism emerges regarding "Potential Triggers for Terrorist Activity" (pp. 51-56) is particularly insightful. Environmental triggers are defined as "those actions, policies, and events that enhance the perceived need for action within a particular environment." (p.51) Such triggers are dynamic, may take many forms, and may include changes in government policy, the erosion of a security environment, and censorship. (p.51)

In chapters 4-7 Forest discusses terrorism's facilitators, beginning with politics and governance, and continuing with economic and financial aspects of terrorism, and rounding up the discussion with terrorist communication. Notable in chapter 4, Forest introduces the term/phrase "zone of competing governance," which he uses to describe an environment which enables a terrorist group to operate. Here, he argues that groups prefer such spaces because unlike completely ungoverned space, zones of competing governance provide at least some order and infrastructure which a terrorist group would find useful (p.73).

In his discussion of economics and terrorism, Forest examines three main dimensions of the relationship between them: motivations, facilitators, and impacts. The chapter on terrorist financing illustrates the ways in which terrorist organizations have attempted to fund their operations by various means, e.g. through drug trafficking. Forest raises an important point about some of the most sophisticated terrorist groups transforming into "hybrid terror-crime networked organizations that will pose increasingly difficult challenges for law

enforcement and security professionals throughout the international community (p.110).

In Part 2, Forest discusses the activities of terrorists in the media and the Internet, which he describes as two powerful arenas in which “influencers” communicate and try to spread violent ideologies to a broad audience (p.117). By using the media and the Internet, terrorists can spread disinformation, and threaten their enemies as part of a broader psychological warfare effort. Forest’s discussion of “media amplification” is particularly important, as he explains that “Massive media coverage of terrorist attacks reaches a vast audience, creating an impact far beyond that which the incident, in the absence of this media, could be expected to generate.” (p.119)

In Part 3, Forest provides an overview of the main characteristics, activities, and objectives of ethno-nationalist/ Separatist groups, Left-Wing and Right Wing Groups, including religious terrorism. In Forest’s two chapters on religious terrorism he points out that there are “religious terrorist groups that have nothing to do with Islamist extremism,” (p.208) such as the Army of God, Kahane Chai, Aum Shinrikyo, and the Lord’s Resistance Army. He then turns his attention to “Islamist terror groups with a local or regional orientation.” (p.213) This is followed by examples of Islamist terrorist groups such as Hamas, Hizballah, Boko Haram, and Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Forest also devotes attention to “the history, evolution, and ideology of the global Salafi-jihadist movement.” (p.231) The section on “Key Ideological Influences” identifies many of the most relevant influencers, including Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Abul ala Maududi, Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini, and Abu Musab al-Suri. (pps. 235-241). Also discussed are topics such as terrorist group decision-making, with particular emphasis on groups that have succeeded in remaining operational despite facing significant challenges. Here, Forest argues that each day terrorist groups “make a variety of decisions about strategy, tactics, personnel, finances, and much more. These decisions impact the likelihood of their success or failure.” (270) The section on terrorist group learning and innovation is particularly helpful for understanding how terrorist groups acquire and transmit knowledge, and how they adapt in attempting to ensure their long term success.

In Part Four’s Contemporary Challenges, Forest examines terrorist recruitment and radicalization, including the difficult problem of “Do-It-Yourself” terrorism where, regardless of ideology, individuals commit attacks “autonomously, independent of any operational support from a formal organization.” (p. 317) Such individuals, whether operating as lone actors, or as part of “self-starter” terrorist teams present significant challenges for law enforcement and intelligence services. He writes: “In many cases, the perpetrators had clean police records, and no detectable affiliation with an extremist movement or group. There were no indications they might be planning a lethal terrorist attack.” (p.335)

The chapters on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) provide readers with an overview of the four main categories of WMD: chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons, and how these can affect their human victims. After outlining the types of weapons, Forest assesses the WMD terrorist threat, noting specifically that terrorists have used or attempted to use such weapons. He cites the well-known cases of the 1995 Aum Shinrikyo attack on the Tokyo subway system, and the 2001 attack using anthrax delivered via the U.S. mail. For those interested in additional information regarding WMD, there is an excellent list of websites at the end of Chapter 17.

Prof. Forest concludes by describing recent trends in terrorist activity, counterterrorism, and also explores the likely future of terrorism with a focus on how it pertains to the United States. With respect to future trends, Forest notes the competition between the Islamic State and al-Qa’ida regarding which should be “considered the true vanguard of the global jihadist movement.” (p. 410) A second trend is the rise of right-wing extremist attacks in Europe and North America. Lastly, Forest suggests that “perhaps the most important trend...is the increasing frequency of do-it-yourself (DIY) attacks,” where terrorists use “weapons of opportunity,” such as vehicles, knives, guns and basic explosives. Also insightful is Forest’s observation about the crucial importance

of intelligence in the success or failure of counterterrorism...” because “accurate, high quality intelligence is absolutely critical for determining where, when, and how to apply other instruments of national power” (p. 416).

In this excellent textbook, instructors, in particular, will find questions for discussion, recommended readings, and websites listed at the end of each chapter. This is most useful for crafting assignments and for directing students to excellent scholarly resources. It also serves as a highly useful reference resource with an extensive bibliography.

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