

Counterterrorism Bookshelf: Eight Books on Terrorism & Counter-Terrorism-Related Subjects

Reviewed by Joshua Sinai

So many books are published on terrorism- and counterterrorism-related subjects that it is difficult to catch up on a large backlog of monographs and edited volumes received for review. In order to deal with this backlog, this column consists of capsule reviews, including Tables of Contents of eight recently published books. The main focus of five of the eight books reviewed below is on military literature that is also relevant for counter-terrorist operations.

General

John Withington, *Assassins' Deeds: A History of Assassination from Ancient Egypt to the Present Day* (London, England, UK: Reaktion Books, 2020), 368 pp., US \$ 25.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-7891-4351-5.

This is a fascinating and important account of significant politically-motivated assassinations throughout history, whether by regimes or against political leaders. In the modern era, the author observes, motivations for assassinations include religious and political fanaticism, political revolution and national liberation. Some of the significant assassinations by terrorist groups include those by the Sicarii, the Jewish zealots who resisted the Roman rule over Judea around 54 CE, the Provisional IRA, who assassinated several British leaders, such as Earl Mountbatten in August 1979, and the Stern Gang, the Jewish terrorist group in Palestine, who assassinated Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte, who had served as a United Nations mediator, in September 1948. Significant assassinations by governments of terrorist leaders include the assassination by a U.S. Seal team of Usama bin Laden in his hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan, on May 2, 2011, as well as numerous targeted assassinations of Palestinian terrorist leaders by Israeli Special Forces. Regarding the question of whether assassinations work, the author concludes that terrorists have switched “from hard, well-protected targets, such as prominent politicians, to soft targets” which are easier to attack (p. 281). This is an interesting explanation for the decline in assassinations of well-protected political leaders by terrorists, although the author should have added that targeted killings by governments of top terrorist leaders have not abated over the years. The last chapter presents an interesting and under-researched account of unsuccessful assassination attempts of leaders such as Adolph Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Lenin, Napoleon, as well as several British and American leaders, all of whom survived such attempts on their lives. The author is a British-based television journalist and writer on historical subjects.

Table of Contents: Prologue; The Ancient World; The Roman Empire and the Dark Ages; The Age of Chivalry; The Wars of Religion; The Age of Revolution; The Modern Age: World Wars and Terrorism; The Ones That Got Away.

Global Jihad

Michael Freeman, with Katherine Ellena & Amina Kator-Mubarez, *The Global Spread of Islamism and the Consequences of Terrorism* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books/University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 264 pp., US \$ 50.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-6401-2370-0.

This is a well analyzed account of the spread of Islamist religious ideology around the world since the late 1970s, with the authors utilizing David Rapoport's religious fourth historical wave of modern terrorism to provide a historical timeframe for their discussion. Drawing on their thesis that understanding the “supply side of ideologies is particularly useful in answering the ‘why now’ question of the recent rise of Islamic extremist violence” (p. 6), four countries are selected to examine how it applies: Indonesia, Pakistan, Great Britain, and the United States. For countermeasures, the authors developed a useful y and x axis graph, with the vertical y axis indicating the degree of ease and difficulty in countering violent extremism along five areas (violent outputs,

non-violent outputs, organizations, funds/sponsors/ and incentives), and the horizontal x axis indicating the degree of effectiveness of such measures. The authors conclude that targeting the supply-side's incentives to counter the spread of Islamist extremist is the most difficult – but also the most effective countermeasure. Michael Freeman is a professor in the Department of Defense Analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA. Katherine Ellena is the senior global legal advisor for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, and Amina Kator-Mubarez is a faculty associate at the Naval Postgraduate School for the Global ECCO Project.

Table of Contents: List of Figures; The Supply of an Ideology; Exporting Islamism; Islamism in Indonesia; Islamism in Pakistan; Islamism in Britain; Islamism in the United States; Countering an Ideology.

Douglas Weeks, *Al Muhajiroun, A Case Study in Contemporary Islamic Activism* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020), 393 pp., US \$ 99.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-3-0303-5839-6.

This is a highly interesting and important study about the origins, evolution and current state of the British-based al Muhajiroun/Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah (ALM/ASWJ) militant movement. Especially noteworthy is the author's several years-long ethnographic field research in which he extensively interacted with the group and its leaders, which began during the field research work conducted for his doctoral dissertation at the University of St. Andrews. In his ethnographic study, the author focuses on the movement's "day-to-day leadership and how the group functioned as an organization (or not), including the internal challenges that the movement faced, interaction with government, and the threat they actually pose" (p. 308). The author's discussion begins with his definition of radicalization, which he characterizes, especially as it applies to al Muhajiroun, as a process involving three fundamental needs: "the response to perceived injustice, the need for social ties, and the need for meaning/identity" (p. 13). What makes al Muhajiroun a threat to Britain, the author explains, is that as a "radical religiously based social movement" its radical message, while non-violent, makes its adherents "vulnerable to violent messaging from sources outside the group" (p. 288). This has led to many of its members (but few of its leaders, according to the author) to leave Britain for Syria, where they joined jihadi groups such as the Islamic State. The author concludes with eight policy recommendations for the British government to effectively mitigate the threats posed by this militant movement, including understanding that it is a "social and political agency", that "social protest is a safety valve", that "the government's pursuit of security through repression" needs to be moderated, and that a repatriation scheme needs to be established to manage the return of British citizens who had joined the jihadi fighters in Syria (pp. 313-314). The author, a former official in emergency services and counter-terrorism in Southern California, is a Lecturer at California State University, Long Beach.

Table of Contents: Researching the Activists: Understanding Methods, Data, and Approaches; The Vanguard of Radicalism in the UK; Al Muhajiroun: The Early Days (1996-2004); The Ideology of Al Muhajiroun; The Post Al Muhajiroun Years (2005-2014): Proscription and other Means of Deterrence; The Impacts of the Islamic State and Strategies of Control; Comparing Ideologies: Al Muhajiroun, Al Qaeda, and Islamic State; Understanding and Managing the Threat; Conclusion: Summing up the Activists; Appendix 1: ALM/ASWJ and Related Interviews; Appendix 2: Protests, *Dawah* Stalls, and *Halaqah* Sessions; Appendix 3: Radical Preachers; Appendix 4: Arabic Terms Glossary.

Counterterrorism within Military Warfare

Peter Darman, *SAS: From World War II to the Gulf War* [Republished Edition] (London: Amber Books, 2019), 192 pp., US \$ 29.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-7827-4751-2.

This is a fascinating and detailed reference volume on the Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment, the elite British special forces military units. As explained in the entry on the SAS, which was formed in 1941, it has several wartime roles of a strategic nature. These include operating in small, self-contained groups behind enemy

lines, conducting sabotage and intelligence-gathering operations, prosecuting counter-insurgency warfare, and conducting counter-terrorist operations, including in hostage-rescue. The volume's more than 600 alphabetically arranged entries list the Regiment's battles and campaigns, weapons, equipment, techniques, as well as the biographies of leading commanders. The author is a veteran British writer on military history.

Table of Contents: Alphabetic A – Z entries.

Kelly Devries, Iain Dickie, Martin J. Dougherty, Phyllis G. Jestice, Christer Jorgensen, and Michel F. Pavkovic, ***Battles of the Crusades, 1097-1444: From Dorylaeum to Varna*** [Republished Edition] (London: Amber Books, 2019), 224 pp., US \$ 29.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-2827-4704-8.

It is important for analysts on terrorism to understand the history of the Crusades because although Muslim forces ultimately expelled the European Christian armies who invaded the eastern Mediterranean in the 12th and 13th centuries, thereby thwarting them from regaining control of sacred Holy Land sites such as Jerusalem, to this day the Crusades form a central component in Jihadi literature on the dangers posed by foreign military invaders to Muslim lands. For this and other reasons, this authoritative and beautifully illustrated reference volume on the Crusaders' main battles is indispensable for understanding the nature of the confrontation. Each entry consists of an introduction, a description and an analysis of the battle and its aftermath. These are accompanied by color maps of the battles and contending forces. The volume's authors are prominent academic experts on military history.

Table of Contents: Introduction; Dorylaeum, 1097; Antioch, 1098; Jerusalem, 1099; Ascalon, 1099; Harran, 1104; Sarmada, 1119; Lisbon, 1147; Montgisard, 1177; Hattin, 1187; Acre, 1191; Constantinople, 1203; Adrianople, 1205; Beziere, 1209; Las Navas, 1212; Lake Peipus, 1242; La Forble, 1244; Mansura, 1250; Nicopolis, 1396; Gunwald, 1410; Varna, 1444.

Chris McNab, ***World's Worst Military Disasters: Battlefield Calamities from the Ancient World to the Present Day*** [Republished Edition] (London: Amber Books, 2020), 320 pp., US \$ 14.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-2827-4981-3.

Terrorism is sometimes also a component of military warfare, involving a failure to anticipate unexpected surprise attack by an asymmetric actor against a more powerful adversary. In a second component, it involves badly executed counter-terrorism campaigns, which result in failure to defeat a terrorist (or guerrilla) adversary. Understanding the nature of military surprise and failure in battle is important for effective counter-terrorism campaign planners so that they can take preemptive measures to reduce the element of military surprise and ensure that their response operations are effectively executed. These and other issues involved in military disasters are authoritatively discussed in this illustrated pocket reference handbook's capsule entries. Following the author's insightful introduction, some 70 battlefield disasters are covered from ancient times to the fall of Mosul in Iraq in 2014. Some of these military disasters involved terrorist actors, such as in Operation Irene, on October 3, 1993, with the downing of the two Blackhawk helicopters carrying U.S. Special Forces who were on a mission to capture key militia leaders associated with warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid in Mogadishu, Somalia. Each entry, which is accompanied by an illustration, provides an explanation of the events leading up to the military disaster, including the reasons for the failure. The entries also include side boxes with key facts about the events. The author is a veteran British writer on military history.

Table of Contents: Introduction; Ancient Battles 2000 BC – 300 BC; Roman Victories, Roman Defeats 300 BC – AD 450; The Dark Ages 450 – 1100; Medieval Melees 1100 – 1500; Early Modern Disasters 1500 – 1763; Imperial Disasters 1760 – 1900; Modern Catastrophes 1900 – Present Day.

Chris McNab and Martin J. Dougherty, ***Combat Techniques: The Skills, Weaponry, and Tactics of the Modern Combat Soldier*** [Republished Edition] (London: Amber Books, 2020), 192 pp., US \$ 29.95 [Paperback], ISBN:

978-1-8388-6015-8.

This is a practitioner-oriented comprehensive analysis on many aspects of warfare, ranging from infantry tactics against conventional forces to counter-insurgency tactics against guerrilla and terrorist forces in asymmetric warfare. Of special interest are the volume's detailed discussions of how Special Forces units operate clandestinely in all environments to carry out their missions against their guerrilla and terrorist adversaries. To defeat insurgents, the author outlines six factors that need to be achieved in combination: removal of popular support, removal of necessary outside support, creating the perception that the insurrection cannot succeed, death or capture of insurgent leaders and personnel, lack of feasible targets or means to carry out operations, and an offer of an acceptable settlement involving little or no 'loss of face' (p. 171). This indispensable account of combat techniques for military and academic analysts is illustrated by numerous photographs, diagrams of military tactics, and side boxes with information supplementing the overall text. The authors are United Kingdom-based veteran writers on military and defense topics.

Table of Contents: Introduction; Infantry Firepower; Infantry Tactics; Heavy Support; Tactical Terrain; Special Forces; Counter-Insurgency Warfare.

Malcolm Swanston and Alexander Swanston, *History of Air Warfare: From World War I to the Present Day* [Republished Edition] (London: Amber Books, 2019), 224 pp., US \$ 29.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-7827-4709-3.

As explained by the authors of this fascinating, detailed and authoritative volume, "Air power remains at the forefront of modern warfare. In Afghanistan, attack aircraft and bombers are still called upon by ground forces for support, as in World War II. Ground offensives are supplemented and informed by improved reconnaissance, much as they were during World War I. This time the machines are likely to be unmanned, and are armed with ever-improving, sophisticated weaponry" (p. 9). To explain how fighter aircraft have evolved from World War I to become a dominant instrument in military warfare, the volume's chapters cover technological innovations and significant battles in which the continuously improved fighter aircrafts have been employed. Fighter aircraft, helicopters, such as the AH-64 Apaches (which the authors term "flying tanks"), and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are employed extensively in countering terrorist and guerrilla forces, with the volume's last chapter devoted to how drones and manned aircrafts are deployed in Afghanistan. The volume is richly illustrated with some 150 photographs of various types of aircraft and 120 colorful computer-generated battle maps and graphics that visualize aerial combat maneuvers, squadron locations, bombing targets and other military tactics. The father-and-son authors are veteran writers and mappers on military warfare history.

Table of Contents: Introduction; Early Aviation; Early Air Forces: 1914-18; Airships: 1914-18; Fighters: 1914-18; Bombers: 1916-18; America Mobilizes: 1917; Final Battles: 1918; The Inter-War Years; Empire of the Air; Seaborne Aviation; Birth of the Luftwaffe; Spanish Civil War: 1936-39; Japanese War in China: 1937-41; Clippers: Long Range Transport: 1934-39; Anglo-French Rearmament; The World's Air Forces: 1939; Introduction to Blitzkrieg: Poland 1939; Scandinavia: Finland 1939-40; Scandinavia: Denmark and Norway 1940; Invasion of the West: 1940; The Battle of Britain: June-October 1940; Bombing: Britain and Germany 1940-41; Maritime Air Patrol: 1940-41; The Mediterranean: 1940-42; The Balkans: The Fall of Crete; Barbarossa and the Bombing of Moscow; Pearl Harbor: December 1941; Fall of Southeast Asia: 1942; The Battle of the Coral Sea: 1942; The Battle of Midway: 1942; The Caucasus and Southern Russia: 1942; Stalingrad: 1942-43; Aviation Industries at War; Guadalcanal: 1943; Operation Cartwheel; Bombing Germany: 1942-44; Target Berlin: 1944; North Africa and the Mediterranean; Sicily and Southern Italy; Eastern Front: 1943 Soviet Initiative; Kursk: 1943; Ukraine and the Crimea; Carriers in the Pacific; 'The Marianas Turkey Shoot'; The Island-Hopping Campaign; Closing the Gap: Patrolling the Atlantic; D-Day: The Assault; D-Day: The aftermath; Market Garden and Varsity: 1944-45; Southeast Asia: 1944-45; China: 1941-45; Bagration and the Liberation of West USSR; Special Operations: Partisan Support; The End of the Reich; B-29: Development and Deployment; Nuclear War; The Post-War World; Berlin Airlift; Korea: 1950-53; World Realignment; The Cuban Missile Crisis; Indochina and Vietnam; Arab-Israeli Wars; The Falklands War; Crisis in the Gulf; Afghanistan.

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