

Resources

Counterterrorism Bookshelf: 7 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 volumes received for review. In order to deal with this backlog, this column consists of capsule reviews and tables of contents of seven recently published books.

Tahir Abbas, ***Countering Violent Extremism: The International Deradicalization Agenda*** (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2021), 232 pp., US \$ 81.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 26.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-7883-1069-7.

This is an insightful assessment of the strengths and limitations of countering violent extremism (CVE) programs around the world. In the book's foreword, the author points out that while governments' CVE programs "aim to discourage, disengage and dis-incentivize vulnerable young people on the verge of radical political views that could lead to violence... without alleviating political inequality or issues arising from problematic (re)integration policy, which are important considerations in motivating would-be extremism of various kinds, the results are likely to remain limited" (p. viii). He is also correct in noting that "The problems of extremism and radicalization are local area in nature and, therefore, the solutions are local in nature too" (p. 174). The author is Associate Professor at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs at Leiden University in The Hague, Netherlands.

Table of Contents: About the Book; Part One: Terrorism and states; Definitional challenges; State terrorism; The counter-terror state; genocide and ethnic cleansing; Part Two: Disentangling violent extremism; individual factors in terrorism; The social science of extremism; Reciprocal radicalization; The UK 'Prevent' agenda; Part Three: Deradicalization; Leaving terrorism behind; Disordered deradicalization; driven to hate; Terror politics.

Mel Ayton, ***Protecting the Presidential Candidates: From JFK to Biden*** (Philadelphia, PA: Frontline Books/ An Imprint of Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2021), 376 pp., US \$34.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-3990-1408.

An often-overlooked aspect of counterterrorism academic studies is the tactical challenge of protecting public figures from terrorist attacks. This book fills the gap with its fascinating and detailed account of how U.S. Presidents and, during presidential election cycles, presidential candidates, are protected by their various types of protective security details, such as the U.S. Secret Service. The book's coverage begins with John F. Kennedy's administration and ends with President Joe Biden's, including the violent takeover by far-right-wing supporters of former President Donald Trump of the U.S. Capitol Building on January 6, 2021. The book is filled with numerous protective detail insights that are useful to counterterrorism studies, such as the various security roles by the U.S. Secret Service, which the author describes as "physical protection which includes guarding the home, coverage of the office and examination of vehicles and aeroplanes. Agents take control of the candidate's schedules, travel arrangements and checking out the venues where a candidate is due to speak. The venue is checked for bombs and possible evacuation routes are identified should an incident occur" (p. 10). The author adds that the Secret Service agents "work in three different perimeters: an inner perimeter, a middle perimeter and an outer perimeter" (p. 11). Also of interest is the author's profiling of assassins of presidents as unemployed men who underwent a "period of downward spiral in their lives," who had little emotional contact with women, were "loveless; almost all had some form of personality disorder," and were motivated to carry out their assassination plot against a public figure "to achieve notoriety or fame," as well as, in some cases, "to avenge a perceived wrong..." (p. 19). The author, a former college lecturer, is a veteran author of several books and television documentaries in the United Kingdom and the U.S. on subjects such as assassins of U.S. Presi-

dents. He lives in Durham, England.

Table of Contents: Preface; The Torture Trail; Camelot's Sentinels; Lyndon Johnson's Secret Servants; The Hubert H. Humphrey Assassination Plots; The Stalking of Robert Kennedy; Guarding Governor Reagan; Searchlist and Pathfinder; Beating Nixon; The Populist; Jimmy Who? The Last Brother; Jess Jackson's Perilous Campaigns; The Front-Runners, 1984-2004; Father and Son; The Comeback Kid; Evergreen; Obama's Challengers; Protecting Trump and Biden.

Anthony Celso, *Al-Qaeda's Post-9/11 Devolution: The Failed Jihadist Struggle Against the Near and Far Enemy* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic/An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2015), 256 pp., US \$ 144.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 43.15 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1—5013-1244-1.

This is an important account of al-Qaida's decline since the 9/11 attacks focuses on the terrorist organization's increasing fragmentation, which the author attributes to the weakness and eventual unraveling of its partnerships with local and regional jihadi networks around the world. The result, the author argues, ultimately led to the failure of jihadist struggles in their areas of operation, including the inability of al Qaida and its affiliates to capitalize on the uprisings by the 2011 Arab Spring for their advantage. In the conclusion, the author writes, "Al-Qaeda has failed to defeat its enemies since its 1988 formation. The movement is ideologically exhausted, financially depleted, and internally fractured. International and domestic counterterror policies have killed many of its leaders and degraded the network's capabilities" (p. 198). The author is an Associate Professor with the Center for Security Studies at Angelo State University, U.S.

Table of Contents: Introduction: Al-Qaeda's Post 9-11 Devolution and its Diffuse Network of Associates, Affiliates, Insurgents and "Homegrown" Terrorists; Al-Qaeda's Jihadist World View; Al-Qaeda's Formation and its *Far Enemy* Strategy; Al-Qaeda's Post 9-11 Strategy and Organizational Devolution; Al-Qaeda's Role in the Madrid and London Bombings; Zarqawi: Al-Qaeda's Tragic Anti-Hero and the Destructive Role of the Iraqi Jihad; Al-Qaeda's Affiliated and Insurgent Groups in Somalia, Yemen and the Maghreb; West Africa: The Latest Jihadist War; The Role of Al-Qaeda Affiliated and Homegrown Terrorists in Post 9-11 Plots and Attacks against the United States; An End to Al-Qaeda? : Bin Laden's Death and the Impact of the Arab Spring.

Adrian Hänni, Thomas Riegler, and Przemyslaw Gasztold (Eds), *Terrorism in the Cold War – Volume II: State Support in the West, Middle East and Latin America* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2021), 280 pp., US \$ 108.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 35.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-7556-0027-4.

The contributors to this valuable edited volume utilize recently uncovered research materials to examine the nature of state-sponsorship of terrorist groups during the Cold War era, with a focus on how this support played out in the West, the Middle East, and Latin America. Regarding the possibilities for utilizing archival resources for future research, the editors observe that Central and Eastern European archival material offer "rich, newly gained knowledge, as well as the large potential for empirical, primary-source-based terrorism research" (p. 243). Adrian Hänni is a Lecturer for Political History at Distance Learning University Switzerland and a Lecturer in History at the University of Zurich. Thomas Riegler is an Affiliate Researcher at the Austrian Centre for Intelligence, Propaganda and Security Studies at the University of Graz. He is also a member of the Editorial Board of "Perspectives on Terrorism."

Table of Contents: Introduction – State Support for Terrorist Actors in the Cold War: Myths and Reality (Part 2); Gladio – Myth and Reality: The Origins and Function of Stay Behind in the Case of Post-war Austria; The British State and Loyalist Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland; The Secret 1970 Moratorium Agreement between Switzerland and the PLO; The Road Not Taken: Crisis Management, Dialogues and Deal-Making with Palestinian Fedayeen Groups in the Context of the Jordanian Triple-Hijacking Incident of September 1970; The Lodo Moro: Italy and the Palestine Liberation Organization; Pact with the (Un)wanted? The Wischnewski Protocol as a Spotlight for Austro-German "Agreements" with Transnational Terrorists in the Late 1970s; Hezbollah as an Iranian Proxy in the Age of the Cold War; The Propaganda Campaign for the PFLP in Switzerland

1969-1970; The United States and Nicaragua: State Terrorism during the Late Cold War; Outlook – Writing the History of Modern International Terrorism: Where Are the Puzzles?

Aki J. Peritz, *Disruption: Inside the Largest Counterterrorism Investigation in History* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, An Imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 400 pp., US \$ 36.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-6401-2380-9.

In this important and dramatically written case study, the author focuses on one of the potentially most lethal terrorist plots by al Qaida operatives to blow up passenger aircraft en route from England to North America that fortunately was foiled in Summer 2006 by British security authorities (with the assistance by American and Pakistani intelligence services). In the conclusion, the author insightfully notes that while “older” terrorist groups such as al Qaida had attempted mega terrorist attacks, such as 9/11, “relatively newer organizations like the Islamic State...generally avoids the megaconspiracy” with their operatives “acting out in their own countries with the weapons they can source on their own” (p. 292). The author is coauthor of *Find, Fix, Finish: Inside the Counterterrorism Campaigns that Killed Bin Laden and Devastated Al Qaeda*. He is a commentator on national security issues for CNN, Fox, MSNBC, and NPR, and has published in the *Atlantic*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy*, and *Politico*.

Table of Contents: List of Illustrations; List of Major Characters; List of Abbreviations; Author’s Note; The Killer beside You; Baker’s Boy; Triple A; Recruits; Ali’s Evolution; Incident on the Tube; Bang/Fizz; The Rosewater Solution; Glimmers; The Dilemma; Rendezvous in Lloyd Park; Pattern of Life; Wedding Videos; Probe; “Today’s Date Is September 12, 2001”; Sarwar’s Hole; Transatlantic Tensions; Skin Infection; Our Citizens, Our Planes; It Fell out of My Pocket; The Railway Crossing; Fellowship Is Life; Scramble; The System Worked?; Rashid Rauf’s Second Chance; The Twisting Road; A Fine Balance; Appendix 1: Codenames and Nicknames; Appendix 2: Operations.

Roger Warren, *Terrorist Movements and the Recruitment of Arab Foreign Fighters: A History From 1980s Afghanistan to ISIS* (New York, I.B. Tauris, 2019), 272 pp., US \$ 108.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 35.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-7556-3650-1.

This is a valuable comprehensive account of the factors contributing to the recruitment of Arab foreign fighters in Islamist terrorism, particularly in the form of the Islamist State, in Iraq and Syria. The author’s research is noteworthy for his personal dataset of 3,010 Arab foreign fighters, which is based on their biographies, martyrdom eulogies, and postings on ‘jihadi’ websites. Contributing factors to their initial indoctrination and recruitment, the author points out, include the “influence of charismatic leadership or authority” (p. 158) and the susceptibility of the recruits to “the influence of operating under a rigid code of obedience to authority” (p. 159). Regarding implications for future research, the author notes that there are two different phases in the trajectory of the foreign fighters, with the first taking place in their country of residence and the second taking place following their arrival in the conflict zone (p. 161). Such empirically-based insights make this book an indispensable guide for understanding the processes that foreign fighters undergo when they join Islamist groups such as the Islamic State in their various areas of operations. The author is Assistant Professor at Simon Fraser University, where he focuses on Islamist-inspired radicalization, terrorism and political Islam. He was formerly a British Army commando trained officer (1980-2006).

Table of Contents: List of Figures; Is One Man’s Foreign Fighter Another Man’s Terrorist?; Afghan Arabs in the Afghan Jihad: The Incubation of Modern Terrorism; Iraq: The Unintended Cultivation of a New Generation of Terrorists; Arab Foreign Fighters and Islamist Terrorists in Syria; Analysis and Reflection; Implications and Conclusion.

Colin Wight, *Rethinking Terrorism: Terrorism, Violence and the State* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing [previously published by Palgrave Macmillan], 2015), 272 pp., US \$ 135.00 [Hardcover]; US \$ 44.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-2305-7377-2.

This is an interesting and well-written theoretical study of terrorism as a form of violent political protest communication and the need to understand it through its relation to the state and how the state responds to the terrorist violence against it. In this reviewer's opinion, the author's definition of terrorism is overly restrictive as it applies only to attacks against noncombatant civilians. This is the case when he argues that the killing in London, England, on May 22, 2013, of Lee Rigby, a member of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, by two Muslim extremists, was not a terrorist incident, since "military targets are legitimate in waging war..." while terrorism is not a legitimate tactic because it targets civilians (pp. 227-229). The author is Professor of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney, Australia.

Table of Contents: Foreword by Michael Cox; Introduction; Owning Violence: A History of the Modern Nation State; The Modern State; Political Dissent; Political Violence: Situating Terrorism; State Terrorism; Terrorism: Justifications and Explanations; Terrorism: Types, Effects and Organization; Contemporary Terrorism and the War on Terror; Conclusion: Rethinking Terrorism.

About the Reviewer: Dr. Joshua Sinai is the Book Reviews Editor of 'Perspectives on Terrorism'. He can be reached at: Joshua.sinai@comcast.net.