

Review Feature - Terrorism and Political Violence

Written by Robert Bunker

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ROBERT BUNKER, JUL 23 2014

The CRC Press Terrorism Reader
By: Marie-Helen Mara
London: Routledge, 2014

Examining Political Violence: Studies of Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and Internal War
By: David Lowe, Austin Turk, and Dilip K. Das, eds.
London: Routledge, 2014

The CRC Press Terrorism Reader by Marie-Helen Maras provides a comprehensive introduction to the study of terrorism and counterterrorism. The 418 page book is divided into sections on terrorism and terrorism history; terrorist tactics, terrorism capabilities; terrorism preparedness, terrorism response; regional focus on terrorism; and emerging issues and the future of terrorism. A total of twenty chapters comprise the work along with an introduction, three appendices (a glossary of global terrorism groups, US/domestic-based terrorist organizations, and foreign terrorist organizations) and a well-developed index.

The author—a practitioner/scholar—is an associate professor at the Department of Security, Fire, and Emergency Management at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. Dr. Maras has also published books on computer forensics and counterterrorism, has an impressive educational pedigree with numerous graduate and undergraduate degrees, and service in the U.S. Navy related to law enforcement, investigation, and counter-surveillance.

What immediately struck the reviewer was the sheer amount of work that went into this book project. The various chapters were drawn from numerous earlier CRC Press books published between 2003 and 2013 which required the author to synthesize the terrorism and counterterrorism material which they contained and merge it together into a coherent work (pp. xvii-xxiii). In a sense, they were required to create an immense “review essay” on this subject matter.

As can be expected, the reader provides an introductory overview to the numerous components of terrorism and counterterrorism. Chapter 4, for example, on terrorist organizations and cells covers this expansive theme in a mere 15 pages, yielding to those reading the chapter basic generic concepts and examples but nothing more (pp. 47-61). Another example of a very thin overview would be that of Narco-terrorism in Mexico covered in only a few quick pages (pp. 186-188) but, then, that is the pace at which the work must operate to cover the multitude of topics it surveys. For this reason, while the final section of the work on ‘Emerging Issues and the Future of Terrorism’ is solid and may be of interest to those learning to master this subject matter it is by no means cutting edge—if you don’t understand the relationship of 4th generation warfare and terrorism then you have been out of the loop on that one for about 25 years now (pp. 312-314).

Still, a lot of merit exists concerning the utility of the reader and I’d definitely consider using it for an introductory course on this subject because of its breadth of scope, practical utility, underlying scholarship, and author competency. In fact, using the work in tandem with Malcolm Nance’s 3^d edition of the *Terrorist Recognition Handbook* (CRC Press, 2013) would create an exceptionally strong foundation of study from which to build upon for

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introductory studies purposes.

Examining Political Violence edited by David Lowe, Austin Turk, and Dilip K. Das is a CRC Press co-publication with the International Police Executive Symposium (IPES) derived from its yearly global conference. The first two editors have extensive policing and criminal justice academic backgrounds and bring in Indian and United Kingdom perspectives to this subject matter. The third editor, now deceased, was a professor of sociology from University of California, Riverside with an emphasis on counterterrorism issues. Dr. Das, founder of the IPES, has an extensive publication record and functioned as the book series editor with Dr. Lowe and Dr. Turk serving as the managing editors of this project.

The 408 page book contains sixteen essays divided into three sections on terrorism and counterterrorism; countering terrorism—developments from 9/11; and policing revolutionary and secessionist violence. Notable contributors include old time terrorism scholars Boaz Ganor, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Herzlia, and Stephen Sloan, emeritus University of Oklahoma as well as the Canadian criminologists Stéphane Leman-Langlois, Laval University, Quebec, and Jean-Paul Brodeur, University of Montreal. The contributors are predominately an Anglo-US-Commonwealth mixture of scholars and/or policing practitioners who thus provide a Western perspective on what is political violence and the threat it represents.

The first section of the work provides essays on defining terrorism, the 32CSM (political wing)/IRA threat to U.K. security, policing international terrorism, and religious terrorism profiles. The second section of the work looks at localized counterterrorism intelligence, strategic local police coordination, local preparedness from a law enforcement perspective, policing counterterrorism networks, policing terrorism vs community policing, post 9/11 community policing, and counterterrorism in Canada. The final section of the work explores counterterrorism informant use in Northern Ireland, Jammu and Kashmir (Indian) counterterrorism policing, Sri Lankan terrorism, studying terrorist attacks on police, and policing political violence in Australia. Of these essays, the Kiran Sarma essay on informant use in Northern Ireland (pp. 237-260), which incorporated a review of Republican movement (IRA and Sinn Fein) documents, was most educational due to my unfamiliarity with the subject matter.

A very short concluding observations section also exists at the end of the work (pp. 353-357). Three major questions underlying the practical policing bent of the work are then briefly touched upon:

- When and where have countermeasures been effective?
- In what context are opponents motivated? When do political actors come to see others as enemies?
- Can terrorism and other destructive political violence be countered without sacrificing the rule of law?

Given the ad hoc nature of the contributions of the work drawn as it is from international conference papers—normal for an anthology such as this—these questions and some of the responses presented are meant to be more thought pieces to spur further discussion more than anything else.

One nice aspect of the book is the detailed contents listing for each essay—right after the chapter title and author listing—providing a quick reference sketch of the outline of each essay. A reference listing is at the end of each essay which is reader friendly and an adequate index exists at the end of the work. While the work suggests that ‘the conclusions drawn’ from the operational and empirical findings contained within the book ‘may assist in combating terrorism and political violence around the world’ (back cover), in reality they will be more pertinent to Western rather than non-Western and Global South audiences, and while possibly promoting scholarly debate will likely not have much counterterrorism policy impact. The reason for the latter, of course, is due to the firewall that continues to exist between academic scholarship and policy (application) in this field of endeavor.

In summation, both works are very useful additions to the growing literature on terrorism and political violence. Of the two books, the Maras work is the far more straightforward and practical one. It has clear terrorism course and counterterrorism practitioner use applications. At \$44.95, it is fairly priced for a hardcover work of its size. The Lowe, Turk, and Das book is more specialized in nature owing to its IPES conference origins. Reader interest will be determined by specific themes and essays in that work— such as Jennifer Gibb’s focus on why study terrorist

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attacks on police (pp. 311-327) or the various regionally focused essays by a number of other contributors—and mostly dictated by focused research needs or possibly as part of a topical reading assigned for classroom purposes in an advanced or graduate level international relations or criminology course. Further, the higher \$79.96 price tag will likely limit the work to university library and institute collections and the personal libraries of specialized scholars.

About the author:

Dr. Robert J. Bunker is Director of Research and Analysis, C/O Futures, LLC, and an Instructor at the Safe Communities Institute (SCI) at the University of Southern California Sol Price School of Public Policy. Past professional associations include Minerva Chair at the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College and Futurist in Residence, Training and Development Division, Behavioral Science Unit, Federal Bureau of Investigation Academy, Quantico. Dr. Bunker has well over 500 publications—including about 40 books as co-author, editor, and co-editor—and can be reached at docbunker@cofutures.net.