



Journal of Terrorism Research

Volume 2, Issue 2

Leonard Weinberg. *Global Terrorism: A Beginner's Guide*. Oxford, UK, Oneworld Publications, 2005. Paperback US \$14.95, pp. 182. ISBN: 1-85168-358-5, Reviewed by Scott Nicholas Romaniuk, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, United Kingdom.

Shocking the heart of US security policy, Al Qaeda's highly coordinated assault on the American homeland in 2001, radically redefined terrorism on a global scale and Western democracies' response to it. Our contemporary response to terrorism and terrorist acts represents a small part of Leonard Weinberg's faultlessly researched, well balanced, and authoritative book entitled: *Global Terrorism: A Beginner's Guide*.

Foundation Professor of Political Science at the University of Nevada, Leonard Weinberg previously served as a consultant to the United Nations' Office of the Prevention of Terrorism, and authored several books and numerous articles on terrorism, counterinsurgency, and related topics. The breadth of his experience and expertise in the academic and professional fields is made apparent in this concise but critically important work.

Comprised of six chapters, *Global Terrorism*, considers a wide variety of circumstances in which this brand of violence has appeared across the turbulent spectrum of human history, and the "numerous and often competing political causes whose advocates had used it" (p. 1). The introductory chapter defines terrorism, addresses its multiple purposes and goals, and explores the policies and practice of state terrorism as well as terrorism and warfare. Addressing the roles of both terrorists and their respondents, Weinberg asserts that, "[f]or some the very idea of 'terrorism' is a snare and delusion, a way of diverting the public's attention from the failings of Western governments, the American and British ones especially" (p. 1).

Notable for synthesizing the many currents that fuel this less than value-neutral phenomenon, chapter two describes terrorism at its beginning, drawing particular attention on its religious and revolutionary motivations, and what Weinberg refers to as the "first," "second," and "third" waves of terrorism. In chapter three Weinberg delves into the operations and actions of Jihadi organizations and Al Qaeda. He refers to contemporary global terrorism as the "new terrorism," owing to the fact that, "Many of the bands and organizations that used terrorist violence in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s as a means of igniting social revolution have either passed from the scene or faded into the background" (p. 41).

Supplementing the new threat matrix now present within the realm of international terrorism, chapter four considers the specific features that give rise to terrorism, what types of people are drawn to terrorist movements and organizations, the push and pull factors for those who become terrorist, and the source of terrorist organizations. Weinberg is well aware that understanding the causes of terrorism is to understand the geographical locales in which terrorist attacks are carried



Journal of Terrorism Research

Volume 2, Issue 2

out, and the composition of societies at which they are directed. He adeptly illustrates that, “[t]he absence of democracy need not be a root cause of terrorism” (p. 67).

In chapter five, attention is turned to terrorism on the public, and the manner in which the mass-media shapes popular perceptions. Models of government response are presented, with an emphasis on understanding how “governments, and increasingly, transnational and international organizations have related to threats posed by terrorism” (p. 89).

The final chapter speculates on the future direction of 21st century terrorist strategies and campaigns. Not to be misled by the title: “The End of Terrorism,” Weinberg argues that terrorism and terrorism violence as tactics “employed by disaffected groups of one kind or another seems unlikely to go away” (p. 116). Rather than conceiving of an endpoint to this international challenge, Weinberg considers how this violent tactic will be used in the foreseeable future, by whom, and where. “How then do people stop being terrorists?” This question is posed amid a backdrop of concern of authorities’ capacity to make them stop.

Since terrorism seems unlikely to disappear in the near and distant future, the prevalent view expressed in the final chapter of Weinberg’s book is that terrorism is bound to morph in unpredictable ways. “At present most observers are especially concerned about terrorist adapting chemical, biological, radiological, and even full-scale nuclear weapons” (p. 131).

Global Terrorism: A Beginner’s Guide is a sobering analysis that gathers a vast amount of historical information and combines it with powerful perspectives on the future of terrorism and asymmetric threats in an age of global uncertainty and perpetual security challenges. Weinberg crosses normative boundaries of analysis and discourse regarding the nature of terrorist activities and purposes of employing terrorist tactics in the course of government policy that has enabled its very survival. With the advent of “the new terrorism,” As Weinberg’s salient observations provide valuable insight into a critical field of studies for academic and policy-makers they are cogently exemplified in the 182 pages of this most useful book.