

Investigating Terrorism: Current Political, Legal and Psychological Issues

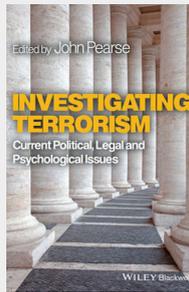
Edited by John Pearse

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In *Investigating Terrorism: Current Political, Legal and Psychological Issues*, the contributors investigate the relationship between terrorism and the police, and how this relationship affects societies from both political and judicial aspects. The book reviews the tactics police use in fighting terror, challenges the procedures of interviewing terrorist suspects in the United Kingdom, and makes cross-comparisons with other countries. Because the editor and the contributors are mostly experts active in the United Kingdom, their views are largely influenced by particular events such as the July 7th 2005 bombings and Irish terrorist campaigns.

The authors split the book into three major parts: they discuss the political, legal and policing context of the subject first, and then enter into an elaborate discussion of the criminal justice process. The final part concerns individual and group perspectives. In the first, fourth and fifth chapters, the authors discuss the legal and political aspects of terrorism within the United Kingdom. The passing of legislation and other legal acts related to counter-terrorism are analyzed, and the practice of 'urgent interviews' is discussed, as well as their legal framework and how these factors may affect the rights of a terror suspect. The authors also cover defense counseling, its role and responsibilities if the court is examining a terror suspect case. In the sec-



ond, eighth, twelfth, and thirteenth chapters, the authors analyze police behavior when it is confronted with terror cases. Here they enter into a detailed discussion of the nature of post-9/11 terrorism and how it differs from 'old' terrorism. Appropriate behaviors for 'crisis negotiators' and their model of approaching suspects are also described within the book.

In the final chapter, the relationship between the community and police is explored in order to understand how it may be damaged or improved depending on particular police procedures. Here, the author highlights the relationship between the community and police and intelligence services in order to explain how a 'long-term counter-terrorism' approach might be implemented to decrease the likelihood of terrorist attacks. In the third and sixth chapters, the authors analyze interviewing procedures within the United Kingdom and Ireland and discuss their efficiency and limitations. The remaining chapters deal with the psychological dimension involved in terrorism, such as the 'psyche' of individuals and groups engaged in terrorist activity. Their thinking, ideological roots, and social structures are examined in order to arrive at a general typology of terrorists and terrorist groups.

The authors argue that the UK's police model has been effective in fighting against terror-

ism, especially against Irish terrorism. However, they argue that post-9/11 terrorism, especially Islamist religious fundamentalist terrorism, is essentially different from the aforementioned type (IRA) in terms of the goals and tactics implemented. The authors wisely caution categorically against the militarization of fighting terrorism, arguing that it can backfire and fuel instead of extinguishing the fire. They recommend closing the cooperation gap between police and security services to deal with the new type of threat.

The main strength of the book is that it describes the evolution within legal procedures regarding the arrest of terrorist suspects and the human rights to which they are entitled while under surveillance or detained by the police. Thus, the book offers invaluable insight in destroying the popular myths of police abusing the human rights of terrorist suspects in order to gather information in a “ticking-bomb scenario.” It instead shows various challenges the police face when interviewing terror suspects. *Investigating Terrorism: Current Political, Legal and Psychological Issues* advocates versatility in approaches regarding matters related to terror suspects, thus encouraging flexibility not only in cases of crisis negotiations, but also during the interviewing process.

One idea upon which all the authors agree is that individuals engaged in acts of terrorism are rational and engage in cost-benefit analysis by weighing carefully their own capabilities as compared to or *vis-à-vis* state capabilities. Furthermore, they argue that the concept of identity within an individual or collective mind determines the targets and their scope of operations. Inadvertently, the authors subscribe to the ‘resource mobilization theory’ by explaining the recruitment and radicalization of individuals and how they and the resources

they bring are used to grow a terrorist organization, and ‘framing theory’ by illustrating how particular grievances are used by terrorist groups to fuel radicalization among youth. Surprisingly, the authors distinguish between terrorists and madmen, arguing that individuals such as Anders Breivik and Ted Kaczynski, the “Unabomber,” would not be classified as insane by a face-to-face medical examination. This issue is important in order to understand how the portrayal of madmen within the media influences public perceptions of terror suspects.

In the book, ‘Islamist terrorism’ is more or less described as a crime which ultimately involves the suicide of the perpetrator at the end of his act. This claim is open to questioning, as the author fails to distinguish between political assassinations, mass shootings, and suicide terrorism. It would be an interesting addition to differentiate between these concepts, since the book already shows common traits in terms of motivation between mass-murderers and suicide terrorists.

One of the main criticisms of the volume involves the chapters about the psychological aspect of terrorism; the authors argue that the majority of suicide bombers have a “dependent-avoidant” personality. In other words, persons within this category will “... have depressive and suicidal tendencies” (p. 128). Merari’s research (Psychological and social aspects of suicide terrorism) supports this claim; however, the authors use the terms suicide bomber and terrorist interchangeably. Furthermore, Gudjonsson, West and McKee argue that convicted terrorists are typically “socially isolated from a young age, [and were] ...bullied at school” (p. 137); they make a connection between terrorists and shooters such as the perpetrators of the Columbine High School massacre. On the other

hand, according to Bjorgo, the author of *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, psychopathology is not a root cause for terrorism; structural factors are more important. Keeping this idea in mind, the authors fail to address and recommend a political solution, by restricting their perspective to police approaches towards fundamentalist terrorism.

The book describes how particular police techniques have been deemed too intrusive into the privacy of individuals and how, consequently, accusations of profiling have prevailed in the public sphere. Unintentionally, particular techniques have damaged the police's relations with the Muslim community in areas where they were supposed to have been implemented. The contributors categorically deny any sort of malice on police's part and recommend police sensitivity training.

The book describes the main interviewing technique used in United Kingdom, the PEACE (an acronym for Planning and preparation; Engagement and explanation; Account and clarification; Closure; Evaluation)

model of interviewing as flawed for not including "challenge" (p. 107). This criticism is valid, based on the evidence brought forward by the mandatory implementation of audio recordings during each interviewing session. However, the models of interviewing from other countries are only seen from a theoretical perspective, thus whether they would be able to be implemented in a practical sense in interviewing terrorist suspects remains uncertain. Other models of investigative interview have been relatively successful; however, their success rests upon their being used on ordinary crime suspects and witnesses, rather than terrorist suspects.

Overall the book offers a good introduction into understanding the police's knowledge regarding sensitive issues, as well as the limitations of their efforts. This makes *Investigating Terrorism: Current Political, Legal and Psychological Issues* a good read not only for specialists, but also for people who wish to understand the main problems surrounding the nature of terrorist activities, how they impact society, and the challenges they pose for police enforcement.