

BOOK REVIEWS

Reich, Walter, ed. *Origins of terrorism. Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press with the Woodrow Wilson International Center, 1990.

Despite the title, the *Origins of Terrorism* is neither a collection of historical studies in the antecedents and beginnings of terrorism, nor in the ancestry — putative or otherwise — of contemporary terrorists. Instead, its central concern is, as the book's subtitle indicates, to analyze the mentality and/or beliefs of terrorists as sources of their behavior. This project the editor loosely terms, "a study of terrorism's psychology." (p. 1) However, in the strict sense of the word, only four of the book's twelve substantive chapters (excluded are the two summarizing and "where do we go from here" ones) are psychological studies, i.e., where human behavior is explained as necessary responses to mental phenomena, or as the mechanical effects of psychological mechanisms such as "splitting." The remaining chapters presuppose a rational-actor (instrumental) model of behavior that explains it, not in terms of necessity, but in terms of contingency; as the intentional pursuit of chosen ends by selected means, where both sets of choices reflect contingently held beliefs and are made under contingent conditions of constraint by a reasoning process, principally that of calculation. These two approaches are incommensurable or mutually exclusive; what is contingent cannot be necessary, and vice versa. Thus, if, as the editor claims, "*both approaches . . . must be used in an attempt to account for most instances and forms of terrorist behaviour,*" (p. 3) they cannot be combined since the result would be total incoherence (for example, conclusions such as, "ideology is and is not a casual factor in terrorist behaviour"). Yet it *appears* that this is exactly what is being enjoined by him when he represents them as the poles of a single explanatory spectrum. (p. 7) Fortunately, none of the thirteen contributors have misguidedly attempted such a "synthesis": each adopts one or other of the two approaches; the book's basic structure is a dualism.

Jerrold Post gives a very full and rigorously argued exposition of the behaviorist psychological approach to terrorism (it includes the new orthodoxy that terrorist personality traits are not psychopathological) by drawing on, and synthesizing, his previously published journal articles and book chapters. It is a dazzling *tour de force*, albeit one suspended by only the most slender of empirical threads and perhaps slightly marred by occasionally taking the logic of his position to the point of absurdity, for example, ". . . individuals become terrorists in order to join terrorist groups and commit acts of terrorism." (p. 35) Post's bravura performance is lacking in Albert Bandura's contribution on the psychological mechanisms of moral disengagement by terrorists from their violence against innocent people; it is a thorough, but pedestrian, application of psychological theory to terrorist behavior. Much more lively, and certainly more solidly based on empirical data, is Ariel

Merari's study of suicidal terrorism in the Middle East. The evidence leads him to conclude that this comparatively rare phenomenon — not all were genuine suicides, some were "remote-control martyrs"/dupes — owes little to culture (especially religion and its charismatic leaders), but a great deal to the personality of the terrorists concerned. (pp. 206-7) What the key personality factors of this subset are, Merari is unable to say: all the limited available evidence allows him to generalize is that coming from a broken home is significant. (ibid) The joint contribution of Margaret and Charles Hermann, though an outstanding pioneering study in political psychology, is probably out of place here, for it deals not with terrorist behavior, but with that of US presidents subjected to the severe stresses caused by terrorist seizure of US hostages. (The psychological impact upon the hostages, or on any other target-victim, of terrorist violence is not examined in the book.) If the inclusion of this otherwise excellent study is odd (as is that of the less impressive piece on the same phenomenon, employing a rational-actor model and focusing on the consequences for presidential decision-making, by Gary Sick), no less curious is the omission from the book of terrorist behavior by government personnel and with it the possibility of different mental sources (the editor's excuse for this omission on pp. 274-6 is lame). In this, in the neglect of nationalist and right-wing terrorism, and in numerous other ways noted by Martha Crenshaw in her summarizing chapter, there remains an extensive psychological research agenda into terrorism. Of the existing body of this research the *Origins of Terrorism* contains several leading examples, though a summary of the whole is not attempted (probably wisely).

Among the non-psychological group of chapters the quality is less even. Konrad Kellen's piece on the ideological motivation of (West) German terrorists is discursive, it breaks no new ground and it is ultimately inconclusive. Franco Ferracuti is disappointingly perfunctory in his treatment of the motivation of the so-called *pentiti* (leftist Italian terrorists conspicuous for their lack of repentance), which led to their exit from terrorism. But against these less-than-successful endeavors must be set the high level of scholarship and incisive analysis of the other five chapters of this group, all but one of which were written by political scientists. David Rapoport further explores his well-known theme of "sacred terror" by differentiating its means (organization, tactics, weapons) from those of secular terrorism. Perhaps the chief interest of his cogently argued case is the careful examination of the ideological manifesto of Sadat's assassins in this connection. Martin Kramer's piece, "The moral logic of Hizbollah," will be of interest to students of terrorism for its extended analysis, based on primary sources, of the political theology of its mentor, Sheikh Fadhallah, particularly in relation to suicide bombings, which traditionally Islam forbids. In an introductory chapter which is the counterpart to Jerrold Post's, Martha Crenshaw provides a pellucid account of the rational-actor model of terrorist behavior in a collective version, here termed "strategic choice." In a sense, Ted Gurr supplements her general account in his study of terrorism's emergence and decline. He relates the behavior of terrorist fish to the sea of public opinion in which they swim, showing how backlash against terrorist violence, the meeting of grievances by governments and raising the

costs of terrorism affects their environment, fostering their decay. Finally, there is Ehud Sprinzak's superb contribution on the formation of ideological terrorism in a democracy, based on a case study of the Weathermen in the USA. Such terrorism is formed in a three stage process of delegitimation, he argues, during which the "psychopolitical" identity of the terrorist group changes and this group identity increasingly comes to prevail over the personal identities of its members.

In summary, despite a few blemishes and with only two exceptions, the *Origins of Terrorism*, as a collection of psychological and related studies of terrorist behavior, makes a major contribution to the ever-growing literature on terrorism. No serious student of the subject will fail to have it on his/her bookshelf.

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Lambert, Joseph J. *Terrorism and Hostages in International Law*. Cambridge: Grotius Publications, 1990.

As one who has worked on the legal aspects of international terrorism for longer than he cares to remember, I have read a large number of books and articles on terrorism. Most, frankly, aren't worth the paper they're printed on. Joseph Lambert's splendid contribution, I'm pleased to report, is a notable exception. Indeed, I would judge Lambert's *Terrorism and Hostages in International Law* to be one of the most scholarly works on international terrorism I have ever read. One might think that, looking only at its title, the book had a rather narrow focus. Quite to the contrary, Lambert's study is far ranging in scope and profound in the depth of its analysis.

Lambert divides his study into two parts. Part I gives a general overview of the problem of international terrorism and of efforts to combat it and serves as a useful backdrop to the detailed article-by-article consideration of the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages (Hostages Convention) set forth in Part II of the book. In Part I Lambert, *inter alia*, explains the difficulties states (and scholars) have had in defining international terrorism, sets forth the history of efforts — in the League of Nations and in the United Nations — to combat international terrorism and explores the reasons the United Nations decided to abandon attempts to conclude a general convention or treaty against terrorism and instead adopted the so-called "piecemeal" approach, i.e., the conclusion of conventions limited in their coverage to one particular manifestation of terrorism — aircraft hijacking or sabotage, attacks on diplomats or other internationally protected persons, the taking of hostages, etc. He notes (p. 2) that, except for the Tokyo Convention (which