

Book Review

Bjørger, Tore, ed. 2005. *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

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Legend has it that prevention is better than cure. A physician ought to find out the root of a disease to uproot its causes and stop its recurrence to save human beings. Discovering the underlying factors is a must to recuperate completely from any adverse condition that hinders the normal course of events. Likewise, searching for the underpinning causes can only help eradicate the problem of terrorism—the use of violence against civilians to pursue political goals in general—to some extent. The once buzzword—terrorism—has become such an ordinary phenomenon that almost everyone in the world knows about it. Moreover, almost every human being is either an active or a passive victim of terrorism. That turns

terrorism into a pandemic that was endemic when the word was first coined during the French Revolution to describe the Reign of Terror. Taking almost twenty thousand lives every year, this pandemic—terrorism—has become deadlier than most of the threats to the human race. Against that backdrop, there is a crying need for addressing its causes and adopting viable resolutions. However, that exigency was felt by a panel of experts in 2003 when thirty scholars gathered together in a symposium and amalgamated their ideas about what causes terrorism and how to curb its causes. The aim was to share the aggregated information at the Fighting Terrorism for Humanity conference. However, this amalgamation resulted in the formation of the

book—*Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*—edited by Tore Bjørgo and published by Routledge in 2005. Employing a mixed-method strategy, the book aims to examine all the subtleties regarding the spurs that give rise to the issue of terrorism. Circumstances that contribute to its perpetuation have also been identified by examining empirical data gathered on various forms of terrorist acts. However, in most chapters, the data were collected using qualitative ethnography and interviews. The writers show that social interactionism works as a driving force behind someone's motivation to become a terrorist. Societal conditions and circumstances propel terrorist motives by affecting people negatively.

Every disease requires a distinct diagnosis technique and a unique way of preventing it. Different types of terrorist acts, likewise, require distinct strategies for their prevention. The book, however, unearths variations among terrorist acts ranging from political terrorism to left-wing, right-wing, nationalist-separatist, and religious extremist terrorism and suggests feasible solutions. Besides, spatial and temporal differences among terrorist acts have been shown in furtherance of the insights into strategies adequate for the resolution of these terrorist acts. Moreover, the methods of undertaking different terrorist acts have been outlined to comprehend terrorism at large. Fostering reasonable policies to combat terrorism, the book enlightens academic experts and policymakers, as well as students from both undergraduate and graduate levels about matters regarding terrorism and provides a scope for further research in this field. Providing biblical insights into terrorism, this book has been working as a guideline since its composition for understanding and combating terrorism and other insurgencies.

Juxtaposing two dichotomous groups of scholars—one who disagrees with and the other who gives assent to the idea of finding the root causes of terrorism—Tore Bjørgo introduces us to the contents of the book in the first chapter. The subsequent chapters outline the ins and outs of terrorism—an ambiguous concept whose complex picture has been drawn in the introductory chapter. The book frames all the phenomena—either strongly or weakly—related to the causes and the resolutions of terrorism in its chapters. The voyage begins with facing ripples—phenomena that provide an easy understanding of terrorism and takes to the tidal—waves—critical issues regarding terrorism in the subsequent chapters. That sort of organization of the book does not make its reading a humdrum endeavor since complexities do not preoccupy the readers and it engrosses the readers as they keep going. Among the twenty chapters of the book, chapters two to sixteen deal with numerous types of terrorism and their root causes and suggest the ways forward. Whereas chapters seventeen to nineteen focus immensely on the strategies for preventing terrorism in the first place. In chapter two—“Exploring Roots of Terrorism”—Dipak K. Gupta delineates the motivations behind someone's joining terrorism. Whereas in chapter three—“Impoverished Terrorists”—Jitka Maleckova solely focuses on the economic aspects of terrorists' profiles. Chapter four, titled “The Social and Psychological Characteristics of Terrorism and Terrorists,” frames the psychosocial underpinnings of terrorism and shows that the popular belief of terrorists, in general, being psychologically damaged is a misconception. The chapter is supplemented by the next—“The Socio-Cultural Underpinnings of Terrorist Psychology”—where Jerrold M. Post searches for unusual psychopathology in terrorists and delineates different types of terrorism. The focus moves from the types of terrorism to one of the

most nefarious ways of accomplishing terrorist acts in chapter six—“Social, Organizational, and Psychological Factors in Suicide Terrorism.” Ariel Merari depicts why terrorists are involved in suicides and opposes the notion of religious fanaticism. Chapter seven—“Palestinian Resistance and Suicide Bombing”—complements its preceding chapter by portraying the motives behind the Palestinians’ increased involvement in self-sacrifice. In chapter eight—“The Roots of Terrorism in the Middle East”—it has been argued that a multi-dimensional methodology must be adopted to understand the causes of terrorism in the Middle East. Chapter nine portrays how state oppression and pluralistic competition have resulted in the formation of National Separationists in a totalitarian state. The book continues further and, in chapter ten, looks for the root causes of terrorism by switching focus from the Gulf and the Middle East to an Asian terrorist group—the LTTE—in the chapter labeled “Root Causes of Terrorism.” The next chapter concentrates on right-wing terrorism and provides a structural model for understanding the reasons behind the far-right ideology. The direction of the book turns toward Latin American and European social-revolutionary terrorism in chapter twelve, which explains that individuals’ dire personal life leads them toward terrorism. Chapter thirteen sketches the differences between organized crime and terrorism and outlines that though these two sometimes get intermingled, they differ based on their ideologies. Chapter fourteen—“Patterns of State Failure”—depicts why and how states fail to control their subjects. Together with that, the chapter exhibits different degrees of state failure. On the contrary, chapter fifteen provides an insight into the way states perpetuate terrorism. The next chapter points out the underlying causes of state terrorism and looks for the reasons that engender these causes by stating different forms of state terrorism. How-

ever, a framework for resolving terrorism has been provided in chapter seventeen. Joshua Sinai states that a new counter-terrorism measure that focuses on grievances is required if existing measures fail to succeed. Another approach—multi-pronged—of preventing terrorism has been described in chapter eighteen. Illustrating a typology of terrorism, Alex P. Schmid outlines the eight categories from the toolbox of measures developed by the UNODC to prevent and suppress terrorism. Before Tore Bjørgo makes concluding remarks in chapter twenty, Andrew Silke describes the role state countermeasures play behind terrorism and suggests solutions to that issue. The writer argues that harsher counter-terrorism measures spawn more terrorism. He suggested that understanding the psyche of the terrorists provides a clear understanding of what to do.

The book is a mine of intelligible data on terrorism. Tore Bjørgo cut to the chase in the first chapter without making the issue of terrorism more dubious. As he notes, terror has been used by both the states and the rebels for their accomplishment. Besides, diverse terrorist groups use terrorist means in different manners to attain unique goals. Definitions of terrorism, as shown, are subjective. Hence, the definitions involve varied variables that depict distinct causes of terrorism. The causes of terrorism have been grouped among structural, facilitator, motivational, and triggering causes. Structural causes are inherent in the societal apparatus and are prompted by the facilitator causes that make terrorist acts an easy endeavor. Ideologues and demagogues use motivational factors to entice people who are deprived of their needs. They are triggered by provocative circumstances. The second chapter depicts that people who are on their beam ends engage in collective actions for their group and self-prosperity using rationality that results in both personal and group

benefits by dint of associated costs. That cause is not exclusive since every person who goes through that condition does not engage in terrorism. Hence, an expanded behavioral model that lists greed, ideology, and fear as motivation can be employed to explain the motives behind terrorism to some degree. The third chapter denies stereotyping the uneducated poor as terrorists or prospective terrorists. Listing empirical data, it has been shown that poverty has a weak connection with terrorism. Poor countries with less civil liberty do not produce terrorists. Whereas a certain degree of income accompanied by less civil liberty creates dissidents who are, certainly, suppressed by state or international politics. The fourth chapter expels the popular belief that terrorists are psychologically disturbed individuals. However, in reality, they are not. Terrorism is a political movement that utilizes media to disseminate its ideological position. In chapter five, the writer borrowed and modified Schmid's typology of terrorism from chapter eighteen to explain the sociocultural factors behind terrorist psychology. The generational pathways to terrorism provided in that chapter show that the national separatists are loyal to their disloyal parents. Whereas social revolutionaries are disloyal to their loyal parents. People go through a psychological process before engaging in terrorist acts. From the interviews with members of terrorist groups, the writer found that both ideological and personal factors such as self-fulfillment, honor, and feelings of independence and subservience motivated them to join terrorist organizations. Searching for more causes of terrorism, chapter eight outlines the causes of terrorism in the Middle East. Quoting Noam Chomsky, it has been said that terrorism has been studied by adopting the propagandistic approach that uses the interest of the powerful regime in defining and combating terrorism. It has been noted that inequality, oppression, and injustice re-

sult in terrorism. The visible difference between economic resources and employment opportunities motivates people to adopt terrorist acts. Psychological defects and non-lineage in the family also work as facilitators of terrorism. These causes prove that there is no singular reason behind terrorism. Hence, a multidimensional cause-effect methodology has been proposed. That methodology incorporates socioeconomic factors, literacy rate, democracy, and extremism as the variables that trigger terrorism, while American policy and Israeli occupation work as catalysts.

The book presents the function of ideology, poverty, psychology, religion, et cetera in a simplistic manner that shows their superficial connection with terrorism. A subtle and discerning search for the causes and their correlation could provide even greater insights into the sources of terrorism. Besides, some chapters used empirical data to prove or disprove a phenomenon. However, these empirical data are limited in number. If there were enough data and case studies, the relationship between different variables and terrorism could be made certain. Moreover, while ignoring state-induced terrorism, this book over-represents non-state actors as terrorists. Although some chapters summarized state-sponsored terrorism, that is insufficient for representing states as terrorists. In addition, aspects of modern-day terrorism, such as bioterrorism and cyberterrorism, have not been discussed.

However, the book stands out from other contemporary books on terrorism and security studies because of its multidisciplinary approach to explaining terrorism's triggering causes and humanitarian preventive methods. Contemporary writers, such as Mahmoud Masa'eli and Rico Sneller (2017), analyzed

theoterrorism in their book and concluded that religious terrorism is a mere act of subjective interest rather than religious dogma and needs lenient handling strategies. Noam Chomsky (2015) notes in his book, by giving examples, that states employ the propagandist approach to define terrorism and that world powers engage in terrorism in the name of retaliation. While speaking about counter-terrorism, Claire Hamilton's (2019) book outlines three countries' counter-terrorism strategies and that counter-terrorism measures are hegemonic and curtail the citizens' freedom, while Luiz Moniz Bandeira's (2019) book shows how rancor between two world powers, the US and Russia, and their thrive to crown as the most powerful nation have made them influence geopolitical matters worldwide. Another contemporary book by Stefan Goertz and Alexander Streitparth (2019) outlines terrorist recruitment strategies by mentioning the use of subjective religious tenets. Moreover, the book mentions that terrorists use technology more and exercise new strategies as the West advances technologically. All these contemporary books' commentaries about terrorism have been crafted aptly by Tore Bjørgo in his book *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways*

Forward. The book does not speak only about a particular aspect of terrorism, which most contemporary books do. Tore Bjørgo's book provides a holistic idea about terrorism, and that makes it a classic in terrorism discourse. Moreover, it is worthwhile for readers because they can delve into the book and gather ample knowledge about terrorism, which they can hardly get after reading several contemporary books.

The contents of the book, as already mentioned, provide biblical information on terrorism. They have precisely depicted the issues about which the readers might be at the sea. The book can help readers get a foothold in the area of terrorism. The formation of the book makes it more perceptible. The current price of the book, as offered by the publisher online, is around £32 for paperback and e-book, and the price seems adequate compared to its voluminous information. The availability of the book, even after almost twenty years, proves its worth as well. Scholars, students, practitioners, and policymakers who are interested in comprehending issues related to terrorism must read the book to expand their understanding.

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