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Book Note

O’Kane, Rosemary H.T. ed. 2005. *Terrorism*. Vols. 1-2 Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar. xxiii + 430 (vol. 1), viii + 516 pp (vol. 2). ISBN 1-84376-064- (hb). Price: £250.00.

Reviewed by Bjørn Møller [14 May 2007]

This is a work of monumental proportions: around 1,000 pages containing 46 articles on various aspects of terrorism, written from different academic vantage points. Geographically wide-reaching, it also spans a long time period: the oldest article is dated 1964, the most recent ones are from the early post-9/11 period. Its scope extends beyond what is today usually understood by “terrorism” to also include articles on state terror – e.g., that wielded by incumbent rulers of revolutionary France, Russia, and China, the “red terror” of the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia of the 1970s and 1980s, and the horrors inflicted on the Cambodian population by the Khmer Rouge regime.

While all of these are written by the editor herself, most articles are by other renowned academic authorities on terrorism. Martha Crenshaw is thus included with an article on revolutionary terrorism in Algeria, the causes of terrorism, and an organizational perspective on terrorism; Paul Wilkinson with one on the typology of terrorism; Walter Laqueur with a historical account of terrorism, and David Rapoport with his brilliant article (“Fear and Trembling”) on early instances of Hindu, Muslim, and Jewish terrorism such as the Thugs, Assassins, and Sicarii. An entire section is devoted to psychological approaches to the understanding of terrorism – a rather speculative academic domain because of the paucity of empirical data on terrorists. Other sections explore terrorism from sociological and organizational perspectives, looking among other things at the group dynamics at work within terrorists groups that can drive members to unspeakable acts of violence.

Unfortunately, the economic aspects of, or economic answers to, terrorism have not received the attention they would seem to deserve. The work contains one article by Henry Bienen and Robert Gilpin on the use of economic sanction for counter-terrorism, mainly intended to dissuade states from sponsoring or otherwise assisting terrorists; and an article by Todd Sandler, *et al.* on hostage negotiations in the context of transnational terrorism. The authors apply a rational choice model to both the terrorists and the targets of their actions, showing how the utility functions and constraints of both may be modified through skillful negotiation tactics – all presented with complex mathematical formulae and graphs.

The work thus contains a wealth of valuable material. The main concern may be whether there is still a need for this kind of compendia, considering that most academics in the western world have easy and free electronic access the relevant journals, e.g., via JSTOR and similar search engines. For those who do not have such access – mainly academics in the Third World – a work costing 250 pound Sterling will still be beyond reach.

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