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## Book Note

**Art, Robert J. and Louise Richardson, eds. 2007. *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press. xix + 640 pp. ISBN 1-929223-94-3 (hb), 1-929223-93-5 (pb). Price: \$65.00 (hb), \$35.00 (pb).**

Reviewed by Bjørn Møller [21 May 2007]

One would think that democracies would be better at dissuading terrorism than authoritarian states where opponents of the incumbent regime have few or no opportunities to voice their grievances or act on their political programs, making the resort to terrorist strategies and tactics seem almost inevitable. That this is not so is amply demonstrated by this anthology which is devoted exclusively to terrorist threats in and against democratic states.

The bulk of the work consists of case studies of democracies in Europe and the Third World. The European cases include the British struggle against the IRA in Northern Ireland, Italy's against the Marxist Red Brigades, Spain's against the Basque ETA, France's against the Algerian GIA, Russia's against the rebels in Chechnya, and Turkey's against the Kurdish separatism of the PKK. Three Latin American cases are included, namely the struggle against the Sendero Luminoso in Peru, FARC in Columbia, and the FALN-FLN in Venezuela. There are also two cases from South Asia, i.e., those of the separatist LTTE (Tamil Tigers) in Sri Lanka, and of Muslim and Sikh rebel movements in Kashmir and Punjab, respectively. Israel is represented by two case studies, the first devoted to its counter-insurgency war against the Palestinian movements Fatah and Hamas, and the second to the war against the Hizbollah in neighboring Lebanon. Altogether, this is an impressive and illuminating *tour d'horizon*.

As these movements and contexts differ widely in almost all respects, it comes as no surprise that the two editors are unable to come up with any "silver bullet" that would work against all kinds of terrorism. They have, however, been able to extract several lessons from the case studies, albeit mainly in the form of things not to do. For example, indiscriminate use of force and blatant violations of human rights such as Abu Graib are not only morally wrong, but also counterproductive; they tend to infuriate actual and prospective terrorists, as is also the case of military invasions of Muslim countries such as Iraq. When it comes to positive policy recommendations, the picture is less clear. In some cases social reforms intended to address the grievances motivating terrorism have been successful (e.g., in Venezuela and Peru) whereas in others they have either not been attempted at all or proved unsuccessful – or it has been possible to defeat terrorist groups without addressing their sociopolitical grievances as was the case with the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo and the Italian Red Brigades.

The counterterrorist strategy favored by Art and Richardson combines sticks (used discriminately and sparingly) with carrots such as socioeconomic reform. Acknowledging that it is difficult to prove whether social and economic reform actually undermines terrorism, this is nevertheless what they recommend. Alas, they also have to realize that such policies are unlikely to appeal to democratically elected political leaders as their benign effect will only show up in the long run, whereas the costs have to be shouldered within an electoral period. Even though such combined "sticks and carrots" strategies have so far only been implemented on a national scale against "homegrown" terrorists, the editors are also optimistic about the effects on the struggle against international jihadists such as al Qaeda. Considering that this organization has "transmogrified" itself into a loose network of Islamist groups around the world, it has become increasingly vulnerable to whatever might weaken its constituent parts, such as measures to strengthen moderate groups and measures to address the national and socioeconomic grievances of Muslim communities around the world.

**Bjørn Møller** is Senior Research Fellow at the Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, Denmark.