Terrorism: Theirs & Ours

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In 1985, President Ronald Reagan received a group of bearded turban-wearing men who looked like they came from another century. After receiving them in the White House, Reagan spoke to the press, referring to his foreign guests as "freedom fighters." These were the Afghan mujahideen. In August 1998, another American president ordered missile strikes from the American navy based in the Indian Ocean to kill Osama bin Laden and his men in the camps in Afghanistan. The terrorist of yesterday is the hero of today, and the hero of yesterday becomes the terrorist of today. In Terrorism: Theirs and Ours, Eqbal Ahmad holds up the concepts of "terrorist" and "freedom fighter" to U.S. foreign policy. What do these terms mean? Where do they apply? How can the roots of political violence be stemmed? An invaluable primer.

Terrorism: Theirs & Ours Details

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From Reader Review Terrorism: Theirs & Ours for online ebook

Paul says

From the perspective of someone from South Asia (Ahamd was from Pakistan), this book looks deeper at this thing called terrorism.

There are several aspects to the official approach to terrorism. First, terrorists change. Yesterday's terrorist is today's freedom fighter, and vice versa. Second, there seems to be no such thing as an "official" definition of terrorism. Explanations are designed to arouse our emotions, instead of stimulating our intelligence. Third, government officials may not be able to define terrorism, but they know that it must be stamped out worldwide.

Fourth, it's supposedly possible to tell the difference between a terrorist and a freedom fighter. Fifth, the official approach ignores the causes of terrorism. Cause? What cause? Sixth, the moral revulsion against terrorism needs to be selective. Terror from disapproved groups needs to be strongly condemned, but terror from allies or approved groups can be ignored.

Why do groups commit terrorist acts? Getting their grievances heard through regular channels hasn't worked, so, to them, terrorism is the only way to be heard. Terrorism is an expression of anger and helplessness, and also a sense of betrayal. Through the spread of modern technology and communications, terror has become globalized. Everyone is a target.

The author recommends several approaches for America. Stop with the double standards. Don't condone some terrorism, and condemn others. In the present situation, such an approach will not work. Also, America should actually consider the causes of terrorism. It's a political problem; seek a political solution. The author also recommends reinforcing the framework of international law. Try going through the International Court of Justice.

This is an excellent book. It's short, and written from a non-American perspective. It does a fine job looking at the background behind terrorism, and it's well worth reading.

Rana Saadullah says

A very convoluted and dated conception of how terrorism develops, with familiar and uninsightful comments on how the United States government itself commits acts of terror. Also, there is a very bizarre insistence on how tribal culture has everything to do with Muslim fundamentalism, which just goes on to show how little knowledge Ahmad had of the demographics in the ranks of Muslim fundamentalists.

Tammam Aloudat says

It's is the first time I read Eqbal Ahmad and I find he is in the same school of Chomsky and Said in terms of

having a close understanding of the American hegemony and being open and direct in criticizing and exposing it.

In this booklet, there is a transcript of a speech he gave and a long interview he was questioned in. Both are revealing and interesting and make me want to read more of his work.

What is interesting to know is how much of a problem Osama Bin Laden was for the US who made him in the first place a decade before 9/11 which we tend to forget.

... says

short but great

Efad says

In short interviews with Eqbal Ahmad, Barsamian accomplishes what mainstream journalists fail to achieve with hours and hours of air time and popular exposure.

Billie Pritchett says

Eqbal Ahmad's *Terrorism: Theirs & Ours* is barely a book, more like an essay with an interview addendum. Still a good, enlightening work, where Ahmad suggests that the United States government ought not be hypocritical about what it identifies as terrorism. For instance, in the 1980s, when the Ronald Reagan administration was waging war against the U.S.S.R., the U.S. government was supporting Osama Bin Laden and the mujahideen. There is even an interview and photo op that Reagan conducted where Reagan identified these men as 'freedom fighters.' When the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan and were angered at the U.S. government for not fulfilling its promises, these men became 'terrorists.'

Another issue for Ahmad is that we needed to be clearer about what we mean by terrorism. He writes that we can just appeal to a basic dictionary definition for that and just be consistent in its application. Terrorism is, according to the *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, "the use of terrorizing methods of governing or resisting government." Ahmad writes that the benefits of this definition is that it does not appeal to intentions. The trouble with appeal to intentions, of course, is that no one knows what lurks in the hearts of men and women.

A few comments on the definition issue. As far as I know, there have been attempts to define terrorism, and they break the cardinal rule that Ahmad puts down in that they appeal to intentions. If memory serves, the U.S. State Department's definition of terrorism is the intentional targeting of civilians or a civilian population for the purpose of promoting a social or political cause. You can see why the State Department would favor this definition rather than a broader definition. If, for example, you're the American military and you're trying to target a perceived enemy in a town, and by destroying the enemy you have to destroy large parts of the town, you have, *according to definition*, not committed terrorism because you never had any intention to attack the civilians. Seems to me if the State Department wants to use this definition, fine, but definitions aside, that military action could still be worse than an instance of terrorism because in this military action even though the U.S. knew that civilians would be hurt, even if they weren't trying to target them, they did it

anyway.

I think the tactic of trying to attack terrorism definitionally might be a lost cause, but I do think that Ahmad's insistence that terrorism ought to be defined when it is used by the American government, military, and media outlets is something to be applauded. That way, we know what we're talking about and can evaluate it. Is terrorism the worst form of violent attack? Depends on what you mean by that word.

A says

I love this book.. its a really straight forward critic of American military and foreign policy - and why it doesn't work.

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b says

Le seul problème qu'a ce livre, c'est qu'il est très court. Le livre de Eqbal Ahmad est l'un des meilleurs livres qui traite "le terrorisme" dans toutes les dimensions, historiques, économiques, sociologiques, psychologiques, politiques... Il est un livre qui va positionner solidement et correctement votre perspective à l'égard de cette épidémie moderne. En se basant sur des faits hitoriques et réels, l'auteur fait en sorte de construire une approche objective du "terrorisme", en ce qui est lié aux racines et les sources qui l'ont engendré, aux raisons pour lesquelles il existe, les formes qu'a pris pendant notre histoire moderne, et d'autres aspects y afférents.

Je le considère comme l'un des meilleurs livres, jusqu'à mainetenant, qui traite ce type de sujet, tant sur la forme que sur le fond. Du premier, en ce qu'il est bref, minimaliste et expose les idées de manière simplifiée en faisant le résumé de tant de livres. Du deuxième, en ce qu'il est riche d'informations et faits réels et historiques qui lui confèrent toute son objectivité et authenticité.

L'avantage formel que le lecteur peut tirer de ce livre, c'est d'abord la brièveté et son caractère minimaliste, ce qui le laisse désiré en écartant l'ennui que peut engendrer la lecture. Ensuite, Eqbal Ahmed a exposé ses idées de façon organisée et bien formée, car l'aspect méthodique est toujours important pour assurer la clarté et la précision et accorde au lecteur la facilité dans la compréhension. Enfin, le fait que l'auteur ne traite pas toujours les détails et expose juste les données réelles et historiques de manière introductive, fait que le lecteur ait le désir et la curiosité d'approfondir ses connaissances à propos des sujets initiés pour mieux comprendre, ce qui m'a arrivé exactement en maintes reprises.

Pour le fond, je recommande vivement la lecture de ce livre.

Ashley says

This book changed my life. Honestly I think everyone should read it. It is helpful to understand the world that we live in today because no one will give it to us straight. This man is a genius. I have read this book over and over. Sadly I lent it to a friend and never got it back so I haven't read it in a year. But it's message has stayed with me. It is also good to know that the book is concise, probably around 60 pages, if I remember correctly.

Sakaguchi says

Front picture show exactry what the terorist,and how to make a enemy.and also who made tariban and all those Propaganda.

Audrey says

Book consists of an interview and a speech given in 1998. Very good and very insightful. Concise.