



Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction

Charles Townshend

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This book charts a path through the outpouring of efforts to understand and explain modern terrorism, by asking what makes terrorism different from other forms of political, military action; what makes it effective; and what can be done about it. It unravels complex central questions such as whether terrorists are criminals, whether terrorism is a kind of war, what kind of threat terrorism represents, how far media publicity sustains terrorism, and whether democracy is especially vulnerable to terrorist attack. It examines the historical ideological and local roots of terrorist violence, and the success of specific terrorist and anti-terrorist campaigns in the more distant as well as the recent past.

Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction Details

Date : Published 2003 by Oxford University Press (first published 2002)

ISBN : 9780192801685

Author : Charles Townshend

Format : Paperback 144 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Politics, History



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Ameen Alwan says

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PolicemanPrawn says

This is a limited account of terrorism. I think it should have been written by someone with a STEM degree, particularly someone with understanding of probability and statistics. It is heavy on the history and international relations, but, for example, there isn't statistics on how many terrorist attacks have occurred and so on. As expected, there is a downplaying of Islamic terrorism, which is disproportionately very high, and there are serious problems in every continent. It doesn't understand that religious terrorism is of a fundamentally different nature to political terrorism; political situations can change, but holy books generally don't. It even makes the argument that terrorism isn't a big problem in terms of people killed, not realising that terrorism is a fat-tailed phenomenon; terrorists are actively trying to kill large swathes of people whereas lawnmowers aren't, and we take strict precautions against terrorism but not lawnmowers.

Justin Evans says

A surprisingly good VSI. I've come close to losing faith with these things many times, but the cover design and lure of knowledge bring me back. And then things like this justify my decision. Townshend is reasonable and anti-reactionary: his sections on state terrorism are excellent, his sections on non-state terrorists are balanced, and he does a great job of splitting hairs between terror and terrorism, and, most usefully, between war (a coercive, fundamentally physical pursuit) and terrorism (a persuasive, fundamentally mental pursuit). If you use violence to disable enemy combatants, you're at war. If you use it on non-combatants, to change someone's mind about something, you're making terror. If you do the latter, and little or nothing else, in order to reach your goals, you're a terrorist.

Also, Townshend writes well enough, and has a terrific ear for other people's phrases, such as PJP Tynan's "men must be aroused... their eyes wounded with the truth, light thrown in terrible handfuls."

On the downside, the final chapter, 'Countering Terrorism,' isn't all that enlightening.

Foad says

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Tomasz says

Bardzo dobre, zwiezle wprowadzenie do tematyki terroryzmu. Autor zarysowuje historie pojęcia,

kategoriując rozne jego odmiany, a także zaznacza metody przeciwdziałania. Tak jak w innych książkach serii, na koncu dostajemy dluza lista dodatkowej literatury do dalszego zglebiania tematu.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions #78), Charles Townshend

This book charts a path through the outpouring of efforts to understand and explain modern terrorism, by asking what makes terrorism different from other forms of political, military action; what makes it effective; and what can be done about it.

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<http://www.hindawi.org/kalimat/84839519/>

Paul Bryant says

When I was in Spain once, a guy pointed a gun at my copy of Ulysses. The guy wasn't a terrorist, nor was he a literary critic with a grudge against modernism, he was a police, and he was dressed in a funny hat and had a real big machine gun. He thought I might be a terrorist and Ulysses might be full of Semtex. Well, I had long hair and I wasn't Spanish. I had to open up Ulysses - see? No Semtex! I refrained from quoting from Molly Bloom's soliloquy at that moment. In some circumstances, silence is golden. The terrorists this young police was after (he was about my age) were ETA.

Many years later me and Helen went to Jerusalem. Our luggage was pulled apart and fingertip-searched going into Tel Aviv airport and once again coming out. They thought we might be terrorists, Hamas this time. When we were in Jerusalem, we avoided taxis, they looked so rough and wrecked and dangerous, and we took buses. When I got back I found out that only a year before two buses had been blown up. And a year later, more buses.

About five years after that - we're in 1997 now - we went to New York and stood on the top of the World Trade Centre south tower, having taken that amazing 70-miles-an-hour elevator ride. We got some great photos. Helen wouldn't stand on the glass floor where you can look right down to the ground. Could. It was a beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky. Georgia was with us too that day, although she wouldn't be born for another six months. When we got back onto the street we walked around the towers gazing upon their immensity. I never saw anything that huge apart from a mountain.

Oh yes, how could I forget - four years later, we took another American holiday. Didn't visit New York, but we went to Washington DC and drove past the Pentagon - look! It's the Pentagon, Georgia! (She was nearly four by then). That was the last week in August 2001.

Apart from the usual holidays we go to London two or three times a year, it's only two hours away from Nottingham on the train. And when we're there, we always take the tube everywhere.

I guess we should really stop going to all these dangerous places.

From this packed little book we find that there are all kinds of terrorists. There are right wing ones, left wing

ones, religious ones, there are terrorists who succeed, a whole lot who get some kind of result, maybe not everything but enough to make it all worthwhile, and there's another whole lot who get nothing except the death they crave. There are intelligent terrorists and there are lunatics. There is our own government - oh yes, they do terrorism too. There is the terrorism which morphs into civil war and that which morphs into police death squads. 57 varieties from oxtail to mulligatawny to cockaleeky and plain old chicken. But all of them, however God-filled or Godless, left or right or up or down, all of them believe this:

"If the question is, is it possible to bring about liberation by means of terror? the answer is : no! If the question is, do these actions help to bring liberation nearer? the answer is: yes!"

(declaration by the Freedom Fighters for Israel, 1943)

Intikhab says

I found it true to its title: "Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction." It is really a very short introduction to a very complex topic. Charles Townshend handled the delicate topic with marvelous mastery. The book maintains a nice balance throughout the book. The book clears historic facts about some of the controversial issues Townshend discussed to put across his opinion. It is a rare work of its kind based on extensive research work. It clarifies many myths about the causes of current wave of terrorism the fundamentalist Islamic groups have unleashed to challenge the West's supremacy. It also serves as a good reference to read terrorism's history and the different phases it passed through.

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