

## Book Review

# Terrorism and homeland security

Gus Martin

*Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2011, 323pp., ISBN: 978-1412988025*

*Security Journal* (2015) **28**, 322–325. doi:10.1057/sj.2012.40; published online 13 January 2014

There are now numerous texts available on both terrorism and homeland security for both the undergraduate and graduate level. However, many university departments, especially in these days of tight budgets, offer courses that combine both an introduction to terrorism and an introduction to homeland security in one 10- or 15-week term. There are few texts available that can meet this need. Gus Martin's *Terrorism and Homeland Security* does so admirably. Martin draws together the plethora of issues and literature prevalent in the realms of terrorism and homeland security in a readable and reachable fashion. In doing so, he expands on his previous works, such as *The Essentials of Terrorism*, and fills a much needed gap.

*Terrorism and Homeland Security* is divided into four sections. The first three chapters make up the first section of the book – *Part I: Understanding Terrorism: A Conceptual Review* – and provide the reader with the basic tools and terminology needed to critically read and review any material dealing with terrorism. Chapter 1, *The Nature of the Beast: Defining Terrorism*, tackles the difficult task of defining terrorism and distinguishing between terrorism and other types of political violence. In particular, the chapter begins with an excellent description of political extremism and emphasizes that while terrorism is almost always based on some form of extremism, not all extremism results in violence or terrorism. In this chapter, Martin also describes the obstacles inherent in defining terrorism, provides a sampling of the many available definitions in both academia and government, and discusses the different ways the literature has characterized terrorism by type.

Chapter 2, *The Past as Prologue: Historical Perspectives and Ideological Origins*, draws students' attention to the idea that terrorism did not 'arise from a political vacuum' (p. 27) nor did it spring full-blown into existence on September 11, 2001. Martin begins this chapter by looking at the classical ideological origins of terrorism and extremism. In doing so, Martin expands on the idea introduced in Chapter 1 that terrorism is based on some type of extremist ideology or belief system. After providing a historical overview of the origins of terrorism from antiquity through nineteenth century Europe and Russia, Martin introduces the concept of the 'New Terrorism', highlighting its loose cell structure, more vaguely defined goals and tendency toward significantly higher casualty rates.

Chapter 3, *Beginnings: Causes of Terrorist Violence*, is the final chapter in Part I. In it Martin reviews a number of the scholarly approaches to explaining how and why terrorism occurs. He identifies three types of explanations for the causes of terrorism: the political explanation, the sociological explanation and the psychological explanation. Martin emphasizes that the myth that terrorists act out of insane or irrational manifestations is just that – a



myth. Martin also returns to the theme introduced in his first chapter, that terrorism stems from extremist belief systems and that while not all extremists turn to terrorism, terrorists often use those extremist belief systems to provide moral justifications for their actions.

The often emotionally charged subject of state terrorism begins Part II of the text, *Terrorist Environments*. In Chapter 4, *Terror From Above: Terrorism By the State*, Martin presents several models or frameworks with which to view terrorism involving states. He first distinguishes between the state patronage model (whereby a state encourages and takes an active part in terrorist activities) and the state assistance model (whereby state terrorist activity takes place mostly through the use of proxies). Martin then applies both these models to the domestic and foreign policy arenas using case studies in each category to provide examples of the wide variety and extent of violence states can and do engage in.

In the remainder of Part II – *Terror From Below: Terrorism by Dissidents* (Chapter 5), *Violence in the Name of the Faith: Religious Terrorism* (Chapter 6), and *Terrorist Spillovers: International Terrorism* (Chapter 7) – Martin focuses on non-state or dissident terrorism. Dissident terrorism is terrorism that takes place from below rather than above. Dissident terrorism can be either anti-state (weaker group against the state apparatus) or communal (group against group with or without state support). Martin further divides dissident terrorism by motivations – nihilist, revolutionary and nationalist – and notes that these categories can often overlap and can be found in both anti-state and communal dissident terrorism environments. He then expands on these concepts by focusing on the specific areas of religious and international terrorism. In Chapter 6, Martin looks at the modern manifestations of religious terrorism with an emphasis on its role as a driving force behind the New Terrorism. In Chapter 7, Martin looks at the groups – many of which had been introduced and addressed in earlier chapters – that have taken their actions across borders or targeted international symbols domestically (often both), examining the motivations and effectiveness of this ‘spillover’ tactic.

Part III – *The Terrorist Trade* – consists of two chapters that together examine the common tactics, targets and tools used by today’s terrorists. In *Tools of the Trade: Tactics and Targets of Terrorists* (Chapter 8), Martin examines the different approaches of conventional and New Terrorism. This chapter also provides an overview of different types of weaponry and their relevant advantages and disadvantages, including that of weapons of mass destruction. Martin finishes this section by examining one of the most important tools for both terrorism and counterterrorism: the media. Throughout *The Information Battlefield: Terrorist Violence and the Role of the Media* (Chapter 9), Martin raises important questions about the role of the media – does it use terrorists or is it used by them – and the extent to which regulation of the media, both voluntary and not, should be pursued.

In the final section of the book, Martin tackles the rapidly growing field of *Homeland Security*. He begins in Chapter 10, *Domestic Terrorism in the United States*, by examining terrorists groups originating and operating in the United States from approximately the mid-twentieth century to the present day. He divides the chapter between left-wing and right-wing groups; once again moving down a continuum from extremist belief systems to violence in the name of those belief systems. Finally, Martin provides an overview of single-issue terrorist groups such as anti-abortion, animal rights and environmentalist groups.

The first of three chapters dealing specifically with homeland security issues, Chapter 11, *Homeland Security in Perspective*, starts with identifying the conceptual framework underlying the term ‘homeland security’, especially since 2001. An underlying theme running throughout the chapter is that homeland security as a term and a government function ‘is an

evolving concept' (p. 284). Martin uses detailed organizational charts as well as the textual material to address the distinction between a law enforcement and a national security approach to fighting terrorism. He shows students how the approach emphasized has fluctuated over time and challenges them to come to their own conclusions as to which approach is more appropriate.

Martin begins Chapter 12, entitled *Homeland Security Agencies and Missions*, with a definition and comparison of the terms counterterrorism and antiterrorism. Martin then uses these definitions as a guide when describing the wide variety of US government agencies and missions involved in homeland security, going into more depth regarding some of the organizations and institutions introduced in Chapter 11. A theme throughout this chapter is that homeland security in the United States is an 'amalgamation of many functions of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, as well as branches of the military' (p. 288).

In the final chapter in the book, *Civil Liberties and Securing the Homeland*, Martin explores two main themes: first, how nations often pass new and stricter legislation in response or reaction to a political or national security crisis, and, second, how these responses force into the open questions regarding the proper balance between security and liberty. These responses include extraordinary renditions, questions regarding the definition and use of torture, and the use of modern surveillance technologies with their associated potential threat to individual privacy.

The main text is supplemented by a number of features useful to both student and instructor. Each chapter is followed by a list of key terms and concepts, recommended websites, a recommended reading list covering the major works in the subject area, and a series of web exercises. The web exercises provide an interactive way for students to engage with the material, and would work especially well as a way to generate discussions in an online or hybrid course. Access is also provided to the text's website that provides a number of study tools such as flash cards and chapter outlines. For instructors, a resource CD is available with power points, an updated test bank, and activity and lecture suggestions. An appendix includes a series of maps and selections from the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate. Finally, Martin provides an excellent timeline of key terrorist incidents from the first century to the present. Given that incident databases, while widely available, are spread across a number of government agencies and academic/think tanks, having such a list in one place will be extremely helpful for undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty and researchers alike.

According to Martin, *Terrorism and Homeland Security* is 'designed to be a resource for university students and professionals who require fundamental expertise in understanding terrorist violence and homeland security' (p. xiii) and in this goal, it succeeds quite well. If there are critiques of this work to be made, they are minor in comparison to its positive features. First, Martin includes a significant number of theories and models in each of his chapters – a function of the need to cover a great deal of material in a limited space – and sometimes the connections between these models are not always clear, especially for an undergraduate audience. For example, in Chapter 3 Martin discusses different perspectives of dissident terrorism, dissident terrorist environments, and different types of communal terrorism, but could be more specific as to how each of the categories relate to each other. Second, many terrorist groups overlap among different types and categories, and as a result, a number of groups are discussed in multiple chapters. Although time consuming to put together, the text might benefit from a table in the appendix that charts in one place



---

all of the main groups discussed in the text, the different categories the groups can be placed in and the key incidents the groups are most famous for.

On the whole, *Terrorism and Homeland Security* is well worth the read. Its logical organization, length, readability, and extensive use of examples and case studies make the book especially relevant for undergraduate courses as the main text that can then be supplemented with material on more specific subtopics. For graduate students and professionals, *Terrorism and Homeland Security* provides an accessible introduction to this area. Individual chapters can also be used as a reference tool with the recommended readings following each chapter serving as starting points for further research.

Stephanie Mizrahi  
Division of Criminal Justice, California State University,  
Sacramento, California, USA