

Terrorism, Crime, and Public Policy

Terrorism, Crime, and Public Policy describes the problem of terrorism; compares it to other forms of aggression, particularly crime and war; and discusses policy options for dealing with the problem. It focuses on the causes of terrorism with the aim of understanding its roots and providing insights toward policies that will serve to prevent it. The book serves as a single-source reference on terrorism and as a platform for more in-depth study, with a set of discussion questions at the end of each chapter. Individual chapters focus on the nature of terrorism, theories of aggression and terrorism, the history of terrorism, globalization vs. clash, the role of religion, nonreligious extremism and terrorism, the role of technology, terrorism throughout the modern world, responses to terrorism, fear of terrorism, short-term approaches and long-term strategies for preventing terrorism, balancing security and rights to liberty and privacy, and pathways to a safer and saner twenty-first century.

Brian Forst joined the American University faculty after twenty years in nonprofit research, including positions as research director at the Institute for Law and Social Research and the Police Foundation. He is the author most recently of *After Terror* (with Akbar Ahmed, 2005); *Errors of Justice: Nature, Sources, and Remedies* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); and *The Privatization of Policing: Two Views* (with Peter Manning, 1999). He is a member of the American University Senate and chairs the Department of Justice, Law, and Society's doctoral program. He is also a voting member of the Sentencing Commission for the District of Columbia.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-67642-7 - Terrorism, Crime, and Public Policy
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American University



CAMBRIDGE
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA
www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521676427

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First published 2009

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Forst, Brian.
Terrorism, crime, and public policy / Brian Forst.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-521-85924-0 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-67642-7 (pbk.)
1. Terrorism. 2. Terrorism – Prevention. I. Title.
HV6431.F667 2009
363.325'1561–dc22 2008008301

ISBN 978-0-521-85924-0 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-67642-7 paperback

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For Judith

Contents

| | |
|--|----------------|
| <i>Credits</i> | <i>page</i> xv |
| <i>Preface</i> | xix |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | xxiii |
| | |
| 1 The Nature of Terrorism | 1 |
| A. Introduction | 1 |
| B. Definitions and Typologies of Terrorism | 2 |
| 1. Definitions | 3 |
| 2. Typologies | 8 |
| C. Critical Distinctions: Terrorism, Aggression, Crime, and War | 12 |
| 1. Terrorism and Crime | 14 |
| 2. Terrorism and War | 16 |
| 3. Legal and Military Interventions | 20 |
| Discussion Questions | 20 |
| | |
| 2 Theories of Aggression and Terrorism | 21 |
| A. Introduction | 21 |
| B. Nature and Nurture | 22 |
| C. Normlessness and Alienation | 25 |
| D. Strain and Deprivation Theories | 26 |
| E. Routine Activities Theory | 29 |
| F. Gangs, Territory, and Honor | 31 |
| G. Strategic and Psychological Motives | 35 |
| 1. Motives of Leaders and Followers | 35 |
| | vii |

Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| 2. Rationality and Culture | 36 |
| 3. Rationality, Passion, and Shame | 38 |
| 4. Rationality and Deterrence | 40 |
| H. Other Theories of Aggression | 40 |
| I. Do Explanations of Terrorism Lend Legitimacy to It? | 41 |
| Discussion Questions | 42 |
| 3 A Brief History of Terrorism | 43 |
| A. Early Forms of Terrorism: Babylon and Rome, Asia, Europe, and America | 43 |
| B. Ethnic and Religious Terrorism in the Twentieth Century | 47 |
| 1. Turks and Kurds | 47 |
| 2. Sunnis and Kurds | 48 |
| 3. Sunni Arabs and Shi'a | 48 |
| 4. Russians and Chechens | 49 |
| 5. Basques and Spaniards | 50 |
| 6. Hutus and Tutsis | 50 |
| 7. English Protestants and Irish Catholics | 51 |
| 8. Tamils and Sinhalese | 52 |
| C. Emergence of the Suicide Bomber | 53 |
| D. Women in Terrorism | 62 |
| E. Post-9/11 Terrorism: Alienation Meets Advanced Technology | 64 |
| Discussion Questions | 71 |
| 4 Two Trajectories of Humankind: Globalization or Clash? | 73 |
| A. From Alexander the Great to Twenty-First-Century Globalization | 73 |
| 1. A Short History of Globalization | 73 |
| 2. Critiques of Globalization and Counter-Critiques | 83 |
| B. The Clash of Civilizations Theory | 87 |
| 1. Bernard Lewis | 87 |
| 2. Samuel P. Huntington | 88 |
| 3. Critiques of the Clash of Civilizations Theory | 91 |
| C. Reconciling the Irresistible Force of Globalization with the Immovable Object of Tradition | 97 |
| Discussion Questions | 99 |
| 5 Religion, the State, and Terrorism | 101 |
| A. The Major Religions: Origins, Scriptures, Followers, and Links to Violence | 101 |
| 1. Christianity | 104 |

Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| 2. Islam | 105 |
| 3. Judaism | 115 |
| 4. Hinduism | 117 |
| 5. Buddhism | 119 |
| 6. Taoism | 120 |
| B. Moderates, Fundamentalists, and Extremists | 122 |
| C. Religion and the State | 125 |
| D. Does Religion Cause Terrorism? | 129 |
| E. The Future of Religion | 135 |
| Discussion Questions | 136 |
| 6 Nonreligious Extremism and Terrorism | 137 |
| A. Extremist Ideologies | 137 |
| 1. Political Extremism | 141 |
| 2. Racist and Ethnic Extremism and Hate Groups | 143 |
| 3. Other Extremist Ideologies | 145 |
| B. Prominent Extremist Groups | 148 |
| 1. The German Red Army Faction | 148 |
| 2. The Italian Red Brigades | 149 |
| 3. The Shining Path of Peru | 151 |
| 4. Symbionese Liberation Army | 152 |
| 5. Earth Liberation Front | 154 |
| 6. Ku Klux Klan | 155 |
| 7. Home-Grown Extremists: Citizen Militias, Small Team Operations, and Lone Wolves | 156 |
| C. Dealing with Extremism | 162 |
| Discussion Questions | 164 |
| 7 Technology and Terrorism | 166 |
| A. Technology as an Instrument of Terror | 166 |
| 1. Weapons of Mass Destruction: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear | 168 |
| 2. Attacks on Technology Infrastructures and Critical Systems | 180 |
| 3. Cyberterrorism | 181 |
| 4. The Internet as a “Rage Enabler” | 189 |
| B. Technology as a Tool Against Terrorism | 191 |
| 1. Smart Identification Technologies | 194 |
| 2. Technology for Gathering Intelligence Data | 196 |
| 3. Technology for “Connecting the Dots” | 197 |
| 4. The Internet as Bridge Builder | 198 |

Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| C. The Limits of Technology | 199 |
| Discussion Questions | 200 |
| 8 Terrorism throughout the World | 202 |
| A. Terrorism in the United States | 202 |
| 1. Terrorist Groups and Acts of Domestic Origin | 203 |
| 2. Terrorist Groups and Acts of International Origin | 207 |
| B. From Mexico to South America: Narcoterrorism and Leftist Terrorism | 213 |
| 1. The Tijuana (Arellano Felix) Drug Cartel | 217 |
| 2. Colombian Drug Cartels | 218 |
| 3. The Zapatista National Liberation Front | 219 |
| 4. The Sandinistas in Nicaragua | 220 |
| C. Attacks in Europe and Russia | 221 |
| 1. March 2004 Madrid Commuter Train Attack | 221 |
| 2. September 2004 Beslan School Hostage Crisis | 222 |
| 3. July 2005 London Subway and Bus Attack | 224 |
| D. Asia | 225 |
| 1. Japanese Red Army | 225 |
| 2. Aum Shinrikyo | 227 |
| 3. Jemaah Islamiah and the Bali Bombings of 2002 and 2005 | 228 |
| E. The Middle East | 229 |
| 1. Al Qaeda | 229 |
| 2. Hezbollah | 230 |
| 3. Palestinian Terrorist Groups | 232 |
| 4. Libya | 235 |
| F. Prominent Contemporary Terrorist Leaders | 238 |
| G. Commonalities and Differences | 248 |
| Discussion Questions | 249 |
| 9 Responses to Terrorism | 250 |
| A. Investigative, Diplomatic, and Military Responses | 250 |
| 1. Diplomatic Responses | 251 |
| 2. Military Power | 252 |
| B. Just War Theory and Terrorism | 263 |
| C. Unilateral vs. Collective Responses | 268 |
| D. The Tactic of Torture | 270 |
| 1. What Is Torture? | 270 |
| 2. Is Torture Ever Justifiable? | 271 |
| 3. If Not Torture, What? | 277 |
| E. Covert and Other Special Operations | 281 |
| F. Dealing with Hostage-Taking | 285 |

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| G. Reward (Bounty) Programs | 287 |
| H. International Collaboration in the Investigation and Prosecution of Terrorism | 288 |
| I. Economic Sanctions | 290 |
| J. The 9/11 Commission: Findings and Recommendations | 293 |
| 1. What Went Wrong? | 293 |
| 2. How Can Future Attacks Be Prevented? | 295 |
| K. Ending the War on Terror | 296 |
| Discussion Questions | 297 |
| 10 Fear of Terrorism | 299 |
| A. Fear of Terrorism: Basics | 299 |
| 1. The Significance of Fear | 300 |
| 2. Short- and Long-Term Consequences of Excessive Fear | 301 |
| 3. Fear of Crime, Fear of International Violence | 302 |
| 4. Community-Oriented Interventions to Reduce Excessive Fear | 303 |
| B. The Anatomy of Fear and Its Relationship to Risk | 303 |
| 1. The Nature and Sources of Fear | 304 |
| 2. The Universality of Fear | 305 |
| 3. Fear and Risk | 306 |
| 4. Subjective vs. Objective Assessments of Risk | 307 |
| C. Media and Fear | 310 |
| 1. Do the Media Exploit Our Sense of Powerlessness? | 312 |
| 2. Reliable Media Accounts, Invalid Risks | 317 |
| 3. Media Objectivity | 318 |
| D. Exploitation of Fear by Politicians | 323 |
| E. Fear and Public Policy | 329 |
| 1. Managing Fear | 329 |
| 2. Finding a Balance | 333 |
| F. An Agenda for Reducing the Social Costs of Fear | 334 |
| Discussion Questions | 337 |
| 11 Preventing Terrorism: Short-Term Approaches | 339 |
| A. Introduction | 339 |
| B. Dealing with a Thinking Adversary | 340 |
| C. The Role of Intelligence | 341 |
| 1. Integrating Intelligence Activities | 342 |
| 2. Collection, Processing and Analysis, and Dissemination of Intelligence | 344 |
| D. Public Prevention: Homeland Security | 350 |
| 1. Department of Homeland Security | 350 |

Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| 2. Terrorism and Natural Disasters: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina | 353 |
| E. Financial Interventions | 362 |
| F. The 9/11 Commission and the Intelligence Gap: Findings and Recommendations | 366 |
| 1. Intelligence Shortcomings and Goals | 366 |
| 2. Need for Coordination | 367 |
| 3. Criticism of the 9/11 Commission Report | 368 |
| G. State and Local Initiatives | 370 |
| Discussion Questions | 373 |
| 12 Preventing Terrorism: Long-Term Strategies | 375 |
| A. Introduction | 375 |
| B. From Clash of Civilizations to Dialogue | 376 |
| 1. Why Dialogue? | 376 |
| 2. What Is Dialogue? | 377 |
| 3. Dialogue and Social Capital | 377 |
| 4. Barriers to Dialogue | 382 |
| 5. Understanding What Works in Dialogue: A Research Agenda | 390 |
| C. Government Initiatives: Soft Power | 392 |
| 1. Ambassadors, Consulates, and Embassy Staffs | 392 |
| 2. Peace Processes | 394 |
| 3. Public Diplomacy | 395 |
| 4. Creative Public Initiatives | 400 |
| D. Private Initiatives | 401 |
| E. Building Trust and Community | 403 |
| 1. The Importance of Culture | 404 |
| 2. Tolerance and Trust | 404 |
| 3. Good Government and the Rule of Law | 407 |
| 4. Strengthening of Civil Associations | 410 |
| F. Reducing Dependence on Foreign Oil | 411 |
| G. Further Perspectives | 411 |
| Discussion Questions | 412 |
| 13 Balancing Security and Rights to Liberty and Privacy | 414 |
| A. The Problem and Its Historical Precedents | 414 |
| B. How Terrorism Alters the Balancing Act | 415 |
| C. The Tradeoff: What Is Given Up? What Is Gained? | 417 |
| D. Profiling of Terrorists | 423 |
| E. The USA Patriot Act | 430 |

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-67642-7 - Terrorism, Crime, and Public Policy
Brian Forst
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| F. Toward a More Informed Balance of Security and Liberty | 434 |
| Discussion Questions | 435 |
| 14 Toward a Safer and Saner Twenty-First Century | 436 |
| Discussion Questions | 440 |
| <i>Notes</i> | 441 |
| <i>References</i> | 451 |
| <i>Index</i> | 479 |

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Preface

Terrorism was a fringe subject in the fields of criminal justice, political science, public administration, and public policy prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Suddenly, it emerged as the most critical problem of our time. The 9/11 disaster shocked, mystified, and angered people. It awakened us to the reality of a world becoming more aware of itself and more connected than ever before and, at the same time, much more perilous. Although the shock has subsided – at least, until the next such event – much of the mystery and confusion remains. This textbook aims to demystify the event and its aftermath and provide clarity about the prospects for public interventions and private initiatives and actions that may serve to prevent further acts of terrorism.

The purpose of this text is to serve two primary audiences: undergraduate and graduate students interested in a comprehensive reference source of essential information about the nature of terrorism, its causes, and interventions that respond to terrorism and work to prevent it. For students wanting to understand terrorism and learn how to cope and deal with it, the text should thus serve as a source of useful information. For students wishing to pursue a career in antiterrorism, it should be more than useful, providing an essential foundation on which to build more specialized information about how to understand terrorists and terrorism, protect targets, improve our ability to manage fear and prevent terrorism from occurring in the first place, and minimize the damage when those efforts fail. Students of criminal justice will find it useful as a source that recognizes the relevance of, and limits to, criminology and criminal justice theory and practice to the problem of terrorism. No prior foundational material should be required for a course that uses this text as a primary resource.

Preface

A central idea of this book is to satisfy the interests of both scholarship and public policy. It describes the nature of terrorism; distinctions among terrorism, crime, and war; the sources of terrorism; and interventions aimed at preventing and responding to terrorism, and it attempts to do so in an interesting and occasionally provocative manner. The text is based on a course that proved successful when introduced in the School of Public Affairs at American University in the Spring 2004 semester, a course that has been substantially refined and updated over subsequent semesters.

The approach of the book is multidisciplinary – much like the approaches of criminology and criminal justice; it is not driven by a single theoretical perspective. Terrorism, like crime, simply cannot be dealt with adequately through the lens of a single discipline. Accordingly, the text draws from the literature of criminology, psychology, political science, public administration, economics, and related disciplines to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the problem and prospective solutions and to avoid the problem of reductionism common to treatment under a single perspective. The intent has been to present the material in a critical, yet clear and balanced, manner.

Students with pet theories about terrorism will find their theories subjected to scrutiny. Each chapter ends with a set of discussion questions, and additional questions are found at various places throughout the text. The overview that opens each chapter aims to get the student thinking about the central issues to be addressed in the chapter. The questions in and at the end of each chapter can serve either for classroom discussion or written homework assignments or both, at the discretion of the instructor. All questions are designed to induce the student to engage actively with the text material. The boxes are designed to reflect on and amplify issues raised in the text, occasionally drawing material from essays appearing in major newspapers, periodicals, and scholarly journals. Tables, photographs, and graphs are used to illustrate and complement material in the text and boxes, give life to abstractions, create substantive variety, and break the monotony of a text-only format.

A few words are in order about what this book is not. It is not a how-to manual on the investigation of acts of terrorism. For that, you should consult textbooks on criminal investigation and forensic science, as well as training manuals of agencies involved in the homeland security network. Nor is it a book that attempts to prove either the superiority or wrong-headedness of any particular point of view or doctrine on terrorism. For that, you should subscribe to any of a vast array of publications of the political left or right.

Rather, the intent of this text is to provide a survey of essential information on the nature and sources of terrorism and interventions that can serve to remove its causes. The driving idea is that we can prevent terrorism and respond to it most effectively when we understand what it means, what are

Preface

its roots – why people choose to engage in acts of terrorism in the first place – and how we can protect the targets that are susceptible to attack. The text makes use of analytic frameworks designed to give a balanced presentation of critical perspectives on all significant sides of major issues of contention and often sharp contentiousness, including the role of religion, balancing security with rights to privacy and liberty, and the role of terrorism in the U.S. invasion of Iraq and in the Israel-Palestine struggle. The book aims to serve as a single-source reference on terrorism and as a platform for more in-depth study, with each chapter ending with a set of discussion questions and a list of further readings on the topics covered.

One of the great challenges in creating this book has been that of finding a balance between the goals of universality and relevance. We look for principles that are universal and immutable, but the world is not so tidy. We look for real-world events to bring abstractions down to earth, but events change, and as they change, so too do the lessons learned. We try to make sense of important events without appreciating their fluidity and uniqueness and the prospect that reasonable people will often disagree on their significance and the implications for policy. My intention throughout has been to find the most salient aspects of terrorism and bring them to life with the richest examples I could find, recognizing the limitations inherent in both generalizations and particulars.

Acknowledgments

I wish, first, to thank my research and teaching assistant, Kelley Moulton, who has been an uncommonly dedicated, intelligent, well-organized, and delightfully good-humored collaborator. Her fine-toothed reviews of early versions of this book, her diligence in getting permissions for copyrighted material, and her many thoughtful suggestions have improved the work beyond measure both substantively and stylistically. I am extremely fortunate to have found such an extraordinary person.

My colleagues and friends Jim Lynch and Jack Greene have helped to validate several key ideas that relate core concepts of criminology to real problems in terrorism, and they have induced me to rethink and reshape others. Their willingness to expand these suggestions with contributions of their own and enlist others in this enterprise in the form of an anthology that complements this textbook has enriched this project substantially and made it all the more useful.

Deirdre Golash, Meg Weekes, and Bill LeoGrande, my good and conscientious colleagues in the School of Public Affairs at American University, have been especially supportive in encouraging me to do this work and ensure that it finds its way to our outstanding students. These three individuals are living proof to the proposition that effective teachers and scholars can be equally effective as administrators.

My good friend Tom Brady has been a most willing and effective sounding board all along the way. He has persuaded me to reconsider and refine many of the ideas in this text while they were still in one stage or another of development, and to find ways of presenting them more clearly and compellingly.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Akbar Ahmed for planting some of the book's central ideas on the power of dialogue and the goal of mutual understanding as antidotes to clashes among civilizations, cultures, religions,

Acknowledgments

nations, tribes, and individuals. He is an inspiring friend, an eloquent scholar of remarkable scope and depth, and a tireless warrior in the noble campaign to find lasting alternatives to war and solutions to the sources of alienation that breed terrorism. He has persuaded me that we need not consign ourselves to self-fulfilling prophecies of doom as inevitable, that if we must be in the business of making self-fulfilling prophecies it will be much more sensible to commit ourselves to healthy ones, while remaining vigilant to the reality of living in a world that includes dangerous fanatics.

Each of these generous people has contributed in a unique and palpable way. None is in any way responsible for lapses in this book that may have gone undetected or unattended to.

My publisher, Cambridge University Press, lived up once again to the stellar reputation that drew me to them in the first place, several years ago. Acquisitions editor Ed Parsons exercised the keen judgment, stewardship, and advice, and project manager Mary Cadette at Aptara, Inc., and her copy editor contributed the superior support, for which Cambridge is renowned and respected among criminologists worldwide.

This book is, above all, for the students. I will be forever grateful to those who have taken my courses to learn about terrorism. They have provided the strongest possible motive for me to understand an extremely complicated subject and work to make it understandable to them and others.

I wish, finally and foremost, to express deep gratitude to my wife, Judith, who not only has shown patience with yet another obsession of mine – four years' worth for this project – but has also been an active and interested partner in reviewing drafts and offering valuable suggestions. I dedicate this book to her, and I very much look forward to spending more time enjoying the rest of our lives together.

~ Brian Forst