

# Book Review Essay

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*Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* edited by Christopher C. Harmon, Andrew N. Pratt, and Sebastian Gorka. McGraw-Hill, 2010, 448 pp., \$82.81.

Textbooks are designed to serve a number of purposes and users. For the professional educator, they should offer convenience in that a course can be logically and readily built around the materials included. A good textbook should fill an identified gap in the market and serve as both anchor and departure point for a course. As an anchor, such works should introduce students to core concepts and ideas.

Textbooks can serve other unintended purposes. They can act as mirrors, reflecting the prevailing social norms or political currents. They can also chart how policies or academic understanding of a subject change over time. This is especially the case with the American and Western European understanding of terrorism since 11 September 2001. The title of one of the first textbooks to appear after the attack, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment*, reflects a society and policy community confronting what it perceived as a paradigm shift to national security.<sup>1</sup> This textbook was spearheaded by the staff at West Point's nascent Combating Terrorism Center and contained an eclectic mix of classic articles and book excerpts on various aspects of terrorism (by such notable experts as Bruce Hoffman, Martha Crenshaw, Mark Juergensmeyer, Magnus Ranstorp, and Walter Reich, among others) as well as cutting-edge conference papers, reports, and original research chapters. These were quickly followed by textbooks on defeating terrorism,<sup>2</sup> terrorist groups and law enforcement responses,<sup>3</sup> the relatively undefined but emerging growth industry of "homeland security,"<sup>4</sup> and one of the capabilities which could potentially make "new" terrorism so devastating: weapons of mass destruction.<sup>5</sup> A subsequent revised edition of *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* reflected how policy and academic thinking on new terrorism has evolved, including chapters on al-Qaeda, suicide terrorism, cyber terrorism, genomic terrorism, civil liberties, and the linkages between terrorism and organized crime.<sup>6</sup> A more recent textbook offering relegates terrorism to one of a number of phenomena that share similar characteristics but are better described under the rubric of "armed groups."<sup>7</sup>

Another form of textbook related to terrorism is more pragmatic in nature—the functional manual. These are not designed to educate but rather to provide the necessary information to train those who must detect or respond to terrorism. There are two main purposes for such works—inform or scare. The best provide useful information on a panoply of subjects written in the plain, unambiguous

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language of the operator. Many restrict themselves to descriptions of groups, weapons, and behaviors to aid in the identification of terrorists.<sup>8</sup> Still others are handbooks for first responders to aid in securing areas and establishing procedures to save lives and preserve evidence useful in identifying and potentially convicting terrorists. Other functional manuals look beyond information and procedures to provide prescriptions in the form of unchanging laws or rule-of-thumb principles.<sup>9</sup> Such information is useful in dispelling some of the fear generated by terrorism, particularly fear associated with the unknown.

At the other end of the spectrum, some functional textbooks detail worst-case scenarios and offer questionable tips and guidance on how to survive the most destructive terrorist attacks. Consider the following advice from one such book: "If you are 10 miles within (*sic*) a nuclear attack, shelter in a basement or inner room for a day or two with a radio."<sup>10</sup> As terrorism analyst emeritus Brian Jenkins insightfully observed, America is "uniquely susceptible to nuclear terror" given our cultural "obsession with decline and doom" reinforced by popular culture in the form of fiction, television programs, movies, government messages of fear (including the ambiguous terrorist threat-level warning system), and the news media, which create a particularly acute sense of collective anxiety. Jenkins concludes, however, with a calm and sober assessment that nuclear terrorism is a "long-shot possibility" and, therefore, we must not allow ourselves to be ruled by our fears and give in to the doomsday fantasies perpetuated by manuals devoted to preparedness.<sup>11</sup>

The latest addition to this crowded field is another offering from textbook giant McGraw-Hill: *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*. This volume shares one thing in common with its predecessor, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism*—both textbooks are affiliated with counterterrorism (CT) programs at Department of Defense (DoD) institutions. *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, however, did not have its genesis on the banks of the Hudson or Potomac rivers but rather in Europe at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch, Germany.

Unsurprisingly, *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* is roughly organized along the same lines as the Marshall Center's terrorism curriculum. This offers a number of advantages as well as constraints. The textbook is divided into four units of study: the problem [of terrorism] and its history; law, force, and the military option; instruments of national power; and case studies on or related to terrorism. Much like other textbooks, each unit of study is subdivided into chapters on related subjects, and most will be discussed in detail below. The first unit discusses the problem and its history and features three chapters. The first chapter is on the evolution of terrorism from its past through to its future. The second looks at how and why terrorist groups either succeeded or failed in the twentieth century. The last chapter in this unit, on cooperation against terrorism, looks at international and interagency methods as the solution to the problem. The discerning reader will divine that the first two chapters fit well thematically with the unit of study, while the third seems out of place—it discusses a solution to the problem rather than the problem and history of terrorism per se. The second unit on law, force,

and the military option features four chapters, while the third unit features eight on subjects ranging from diplomacy to managing crises. The last unit on case studies contains five chapters. This imbalance in the number of chapters is an observation rather than a criticism, as some subjects within terrorism are more complex, or have a less-developed literature base, and require deeper and broader coverage. This observation, however, is a symptom of the underlying problem with most edited volumes, including *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*—the lack of a perceivable unifying theme and vision for the work and firm editorial control to knit the chapter threads and sections together. For a scholarly edited volume, this is the rule rather than the exception, as many of the articles are on esoteric topics. For a textbook designed to appeal to a broader audience, and in particular undergraduate or graduate-level courses of study outside of the Marshall Center, a lack of unity can become problematic.

The reason for this trenchant general critique is that *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* is not the only textbook which takes a wider policy- and security-oriented view of terrorism. In 2004 Georgetown University Press published a textbook edited by Audrey Kurth Cronin and James Ludes with the muscular title *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, which is still in print. Cronin and Ludes compiled chapters by leading scholars such as David Rapoport, Martha Crenshaw, Timothy Hoyt, Adam Roberts, and Carnes Lord and policymakers and former counterterrorism officials such as Lindsay Clutterbuck, Paul Pillar, Michael Sheehan, and Daniel Gouré on subjects ranging from sources of terrorism and the issues raised by strategy and grand strategy through discussions of the various policy instruments that could be applied against it. The quality of each essay is very strong, but two features make *Attacking Terrorism* work as a textbook: a firm yet indistinguishable editorial hand and a succinct introduction that explains the overarching logic of the chapters and the unifying theme and a conclusion that weaves the chapter themes together into a discussion of the subject of the book—grand strategy. For better or worse *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* and its component chapters will inevitably be compared in some manner with its competitor volume. The good news is, *Attacking Terrorism*, despite its advantages, has two problems of its own. First it is in need of updating to stay contemporary and relevant. Second it does not contain many of the features increasingly demanded by publishers, educators, and students such as short case studies or explanatory text boxes and graphics as well as additional online resources such as detailed case studies, questions for discussion, and visual aids.

*Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* is significantly different from *Attacking Terrorism* in that its primary audience is not the policymaker or the general student but rather the counterterrorism practitioner. It is strongest when it speaks to its audiences on their terms. For the CT operative, this is best done in a direct and unequivocal manner. The fundamental approach is ultimately pragmatic and functional, as opposed to philosophical and academic. There is little room for the broader, and in some cases self-indulgent, questions that vex the study of terrorism, such as the pejorative and subjective nature of the term or discussions of the

root causes and underlying motivations (save for a grudging two-page homily), among others. One example is the implicit question contained in the statement “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.” Rather than let students grapple with this question and provide them with fodder to reach an answer, as in a civilian academic institution, Nick Pratt runs directly over it when he says, “Although fashionable at conferences and cocktail parties, this expression serves at best as a weak lecture transition sentence or merely an empty witticism between neophytes. Murderers of young children are never ‘freedom fighters’.”<sup>12</sup> *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, as a whole, is not concerned with the primary strategist’s questions of “why,” “who,” and “when,” but instead cuts at those of greatest concern to the operator: “what” and “how.”

Nowhere are the needs of the operator more directly addressed than in James Q. Roberts’ chapter, “Building a National Counterterrorism Capability.” Roberts is principal director, Special Operations Capabilities, in the Pentagon and has served in uniform in special forces and in a number of senior government counterterrorism positions. He quickly zeroes in on the focus of his chapter, which is the “benchmark for a competent counterterrorism capability.”<sup>13</sup> This benchmark is the ability to conduct a successful hostage rescue operation. Roberts makes the argument that competence is reached when there is an alignment between the three components of what he labels as an “Iron Triangle” of CT decision making. These components are: a “hammer,” or specialized rescue forces; the “eyes,” specialized intelligence and investigative components that establish the conditions for rescue success; and the “brains,” the national political leadership. For each of these components, Roberts goes into their specific functional requirements. In the case of rescue forces, these include specialized selection, training, and equipment; necessary skills; and rotation rates, among others.<sup>14</sup>

The strengths of Roberts’ chapter lie in his ability to convey his knowledge and experience in a forthright manner to CT operators. In particular, his central message is that counterterrorism success is not just a function of individual or unit skill but also rests on the quality of the intelligence and investigative apparatus and the education and wisdom of the political authority. He concludes with advice on how to build a governmental CT team and when and why it should meet. In Roberts’ own words, he is seeking to provide “a ‘cookbook’ for operators, intelligence personnel, negotiators, and policymakers.”<sup>15</sup>

Those looking for practical advice, lessons learned, basic principles, and other “cookbook” elements will not be disappointed with *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*. While some of the recipes in this textbook are short on descriptions of the required ingredients—such as Roberts’, which would have benefited from examples and illustrations—other chapters provide these in considerable detail. For example, Christopher Harmon’s chapter, “Illustrations of Discrete Uses of Force,” also focuses on hostage rescues, which he labels as “the most challenging and intriguing of all forcible counterterrorist actions.”<sup>16</sup> After a brief introduction and discussion of a number of such rescues—including “Dragon Rouge” in the Congo (1964), the “Entebbe Raid” in Uganda (1976), Mogadishu in Somalia

(1977), De Punt in the Netherlands (1977), and the Lima Embassy siege and rescue (1996–1997)—Harmon treads some of the same ground as Roberts on the importance of intelligence and offers a number of principles for the use of force in counterterrorism.<sup>17</sup>

Other chapters provide other sensible fodder for the practitioner. The chapter on “Intelligence and Counterterrorism” provides “Tools of the Trade” and “Lessons Learned and Signposts for the Future.”<sup>18</sup> The next chapter, “Following the Terrorist Money Trail,” outlines terrorist financing methods, strategies to combat terrorist financing, and the steps and elements required to allow nations to combat terrorist financing on their own or in conjunction with the United States or the international community.<sup>19</sup> The chapter on cyber terrorism does not provide advice but rather advocates steps that countries must take to operate more effectively in the virtual realm. The section on cyber CT—divided into discussions of particular technical, legal, structural, rehearsal, global/strategic, and offensive issues—is written in terms that call to mind an action or decision memorandum. Seventeen paragraphs begin with action or decision verbs that range from the useful (“Maximize Use of Reporting Software to Benefit Law Enforcement”) to the common-sense and insipid (“Ensure Use of Security Software” and “Adequately Fund Cyber CT Efforts”).<sup>20</sup>

Despite its no-nonsense, matter-of-fact approach, *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* does contain a number of constructive departure points and scholarly chapters, which make it useful for more academic environments. Despite its rather gruff approach (in addition to the example quoted above, consider his use of the term *wacko-perp*) and occasional offhand conclusions, Andrew Pratt’s chapter methodically walks through a thought-provoking list of seven examples that question “was this an act of terrorism or some other form of violent activity?”<sup>21</sup> This is perhaps more important than Pratt realizes. To this day, some Americans, including serving officers (in the author’s experience), equate the attack of 11 September 2001 and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 as acts of terrorism.

Christopher Harmon’s chapter, “How Terrorist Groups End,” is remarkable for its clarity, breadth, and utility. Harmon manages in 42 pages to provide a handy overview of terrorism in the twentieth century; a framework for analyzing terrorist groups’ successes, failures, and longevity; and numerous points for classroom discussion. In his chapter, “Ideas Matter,” Patrick Sookhdeo offers one of the most cogent explanations of the ideology and worldview of Islam that is informative, nuanced, and accessible. Most troublesome for Western, and in particular American readers, is his conclusion that “the war against the ideology that drives al-Qaeda and similar radical Islamist jihadi groups is of necessity a long and many-sided one. The search for quick fixes, for easy methods, for compromise and appeasement serves only to strengthen the extremists.”<sup>22</sup>

Despite its functional focus, Celina Realuyo provides the exemplary textbook chapter. She introduces core concepts, makes the complicated seem accessible and even simple, provides examples and graphics to assist students in understanding

ideas, and walks the reader through a case study which, in turn, utilizes the organizational framework of the chapter. Particularly noteworthy is her attention to detail; for example, the graphic she provides on page 213, compiled from numerous sources, makes the nebulous *hawala* financial system almost immediately understandable. Also noteworthy is Tom Wilhelm's chapter on the security architecture of Pakistan's tribal belt. Like Sookhdeo's chapter, Wilhelm provides a wealth of information not only on the security forces in Pakistan's troublesome frontier region but also their context—history, legacy, organization, and cultural customs and codes. All of the aforementioned chapters, and a number of others in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, delve into subjects not covered in *Attacking Terrorism*.

Other chapters in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* are ambitious in scope or nature but ultimately not as successful. A few, unfortunately, are in the section with the greatest potential value for educators—the case studies. The study on the German approach to effective multilateralism seems out of step with most of the rest of the volume. Whereas many chapters are written for and in some cases by (former) operators, this case study is written in academic language for other academics. In addition, the sober judgment of author Rolf Roloff throughout his chapter gives way to an oddly misplaced and wildly optimistic assessment of the counterterrorism progress made by the G-8 nations. Another case study deals with the intriguing question of how France has built its specific judicial and security system to counter terrorism. This system, which includes new laws, special judges, and extended detention powers, has proven remarkably successful, as this chapter suggests. One element curiously missing is a detailed discussion of the role played by paramilitary (*gendarmerie*) forces in France's security system, and in particular, the division of labor and issues related to the use of the *Gendarmerie nationale*, the *Police nationale*, and the French Armed Forces (*Armées françaises*). France in particular has relied on a hybrid of military and police forces as part of its CT successes. Two questions remain unanswered: (1) Are such forces necessary for CT success, or are they unique products of France's specific national context and the groups it has faced? And (2) are they still useful against modern terrorists, or are they anachronisms? More references and tighter linkages between some of the case studies and Harmon's chapter on how terrorist groups end might have answered these questions. A more troubling aspect of Jean-Paul Raffenne and Jean-Francois Clair's chapter is the clarity and style of the authors' prose. At times it is difficult to read: "Other than this, no specifically adapted legislation existed after 1981, while this type of terrorism was growing in effect, with the number of indiscriminate attacks and organizations implicated in acts of violence multiplying on our soil."<sup>23</sup> Here the editors and the publisher of this textbook must bear the responsibility. These examples point to a lack of consistency in style, format, and expression throughout the text. Another example illustrates this point: the term used to describe the current wave of terrorist violence in different chapters often appears to be a reflection of the author's personal preference. How should one label the current wave of global political violence we face? Is it "hyper-terrorism" (Gorka),

“Salafi-Jihadist” terrorism (Pratt), plain “jihadist terrorism” (Wither), “Islamist terrorism” (Sookhdeo), or “a global Salafist insurgency” (Cavoli)?

The difference in opinion over what to label global political violence is not a flaw unique to *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* but is instead symptomatic of a larger malady. This malady is significant disagreement, within policy-making circles and between allied nations, over the threat that global terrorism poses. At one end of the spectrum, represented most clearly by Sebastian Gorka in his chapter, “International Cooperation as a Tool in Counterterrorism,” is the notion that hyper-terrorism is a threat so different, diverse, and potentially damaging from previous terrorism that sweeping changes are required for organizations, forces, and processes. He concludes that “the only viable option is to radically reform our nation state-level instruments to make them more applicable to the new tasks at hand.”<sup>24</sup> Boaz Ganor, in the “Afterword,” echoes Gorka’s clarion call: “The threat is so great, that the international community must stop simply *managing* it, and start really *preventing* and defeating it—which requires agencies around the world, from diverse fields and disciplines, to unite their efforts, combine forces, and formulate a new strategy to combat terrorism.”<sup>25</sup> Under the rubric of what US Special Operations Command has termed a “Global Counterterrorism Network” (GCTN), counter-insurgency campaigns, including those in Afghanistan and Pakistan’s tribal belt, are related theaters of action in a broader global struggle as three of the chapters (by Christopher Cavoli, Michael Fenzal, and Tom Wilhelm) suggest. Diplomacy is not merely a tool, but as the subtitle of the chapter “Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism” suggests, it is “The First Weapon against Terrorism.”

Within a number of countries in Europe, where the Marshall Center is based, this vision and the sweeping changes it demands are not only a source of unease but also prove a difficult sell. Many of the European case studies in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* discuss the strides made domestically against terrorism since 11 September 2001 but are more subdued on the subject of international, multilateral, and coalition efforts. National preferences; historical, cultural, and legal legacies; and the success of law enforcement efforts lead to significant differences in opinion over the type of action to take. Evidence from Europe suggests that the leaders of some states remain wary of subscribing to the “long war” vision, which is prevalent in American CT circles, and the changes it demands. Senior political and military leaders in Germany have continued to refer to their operations in support of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan as “peacekeeping,” as opposed to “counterinsurgency” (much less “counterterrorism”) operations. Christopher Harmon puts into words this fundamentally different European perception: “Perhaps no democratic society can afford to be endlessly in a state of war, without becoming a thing ugly to itself, or a marvel of an unwanted archetype—what Sparta was among the ancient Greeks. For the same reason, a democratic society cannot enslave its citizens to a system of pervasive intrusion and intelligence gathering, citizen against citizen.”<sup>26</sup>

Despite its modest flaws, such as unevenness in the length and quality of and supplementary educational material within the chapters, *Toward a Grand Strategy*

*against Terrorism* is a welcome addition to the textbooks on terrorism. As mentioned above, this work is considerably different in scope and scale from *Attacking Terrorism*, despite some inevitable overlap, and many of its chapters provide contemporary perspectives and examples. Unlike the first wave of textbooks after 11 September 2001, which relied heavily on reprinted material, *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* consists entirely of original chapters. The pragmatic focus and functional approach of much of this textbook will appeal to those teaching courses for personnel inside and outside of government or those seeking to better understand the challenges and mechanics of counterterrorism. There is also enough interest on policy-related subjects for a wider audience, including those in European studies, given the heavy but not exclusively European flavor of the book. *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* may be a harder sell in the wider educational textbook market, particularly for undergraduate and graduate courses in civilian universities, considering its hard-nosed and unambiguous approach to terrorism. As an indicator or social and political barometer for how the professional CT community views the current terrorist threat, it is invaluable. For this reason the textbook may find a wider audience, if only as a useful contrast to other opinions (such as those offered by John Mueller and Ian Lustuck). It suggests that considerable differences of opinion remain in academic and practitioner circles and the gulf between how the threat of terrorism is perceived and what should be done about it may only be growing wider. The grand strategy demanded by some, and implied in this textbook, may be as elusive and far away as ever.

## Notes

1. Russell Howard and Reid Sawyer, eds., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment, Readings and Interpretations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).
2. Howard and Sawyer, *Defeating Terrorism: Shaping the New Security Environment* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003).
3. James Poland, *Understanding Terrorism: Groups, Strategies, and Responses* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 2004, 2010). The first edition of this textbook was published in 1988.
4. See for example Russell Howard, James J. F. Forest, and Joanne Moore, *Homeland Security and Terrorism: Readings and Interpretations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006) and the six editions of Jonathan White, *Terrorism and Homeland Security: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2006, 2009).
5. Russell Howard and James J. F. Forest, *Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007).
6. Howard and Sawyer, eds., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment, Readings and Interpretations*, rev. ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 75–85, 245–88, 303–9, 313–38.
7. Jeffrey Norwitz, ed., *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency* (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2008).
8. Examples include Malcolm Nance, *Terrorist Recognition Handbook: A Practitioner's Manual for Predicting and Identifying Terrorist Activity*, 2d ed. (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2008).



9. See for example Jane Bullock, George Haddow, Damon Coppola, and Sarp Yeletaysi, *Introduction to Homeland Security: Principles of All-Hazards Response*, 3rd ed. (Burlington, MA: Elsevier, 2009).
10. Michael Licata, *Citizens Terrorism Awareness and Survival Manual* (Flushing, NY: Looseleaf Law Publications, 2009), 59.
11. Brian Michael Jenkins, *Will Terrorists Go Nuclear?* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2008), 213–14.
12. Andrew N. Pratt, “Terrorism’s Evolution: Yesterday, Today, and Forever,” in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, eds. Christopher C. Harmon, Andrew N. Pratt, and Sebastian Gorka (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 7.
13. James Q. Roberts, “Building a National Counterterrorism Capability: A Primer for Operators and Policymakers Alike,” in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, 127.
14. *Ibid.*, 128–29.
15. *Ibid.*, 137.
16. Christopher C. Harmon, “Illustrations of Discrete Uses of Force,” in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, 108.
17. *Ibid.*, 115–17.
18. John Le Beau, “Intelligence and Counterterrorism: Examining the Critical Tools of Secrecy and Cooperation,” in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, 201–6.
19. Celina Realuyo, “Following the Terrorist Money Trail,” in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, 210–27.
20. John Kane, “Virtual Terrain, Lethal Potential: Toward Achieving Security in an Ungoverned Domain,” in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, 266–69, 271.
21. Pratt, “Terrorism’s Evolution,” 4.
22. Sookhdeo, “Ideas Matter: How to Undermine the Extremist Ideology behind al-Qaeda,” in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, 243.
23. Jean-Paul Raffenne and Jean-Francois Clair, “The French Counterterrorism System,” in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, 353.
24. Sebastian Gorka, “International Cooperation as a Tool in Counterterrorism: Super-Purple as a Weapon to Defeat the Nonrational Terrorist,” in *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism*, 79.
25. Boaz Ganor, “International Cooperation and the Dynamic Terrorist Threat,” in *Toward a Grand Strategy Against Terrorism*, 397.
26. Harmon, “Illustrations of Discrete Uses of Force,” 118–19.