

Psychology of Terrorists: Profiling and CounterAction

By Raymond H. Hamden. Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2018.
142 pp. \$67.16.

In the aftermath of terrorist attacks, we are often left wondering: How could someone do this? What sort of mind would allow for the killing of innocent civilians through willful action? In the book *Psychology of Terrorists: Profiling and CounterAction*, Dr. Raymond H. Hamden seeks to shed light on the mindset of a terrorist as an individual.

Psychology of Terrorists is organized into 11 chapters, starting with the historical perspective of terrorists, then discussing psychological defense styles. Types of terrorists are detailed next, with specific chapters devoted to each subtype. The author moves through techniques for interviews and interventions and understanding terrorist attacks. The conclusion of the book addresses profiling and its use in both counterterrorism and counteraction.

The book opens with a description of terrorism and the historical underpinnings of this topic. Emphasis is placed on the unique challenges present in defining the word “terrorism” and how various criteria are typically present when an action is labeled as such. The book accurately summarizes how matters of perspective can play a role in the labeling of terrorism, particularly when there is ambiguity between what is considered terrorism and what actions appeared justified to certain groups. The quote “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” encapsulates this interesting dynamic.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this work is the distinction between psychopathic, ethnographic, and retribitional terrorists. In the media, we are commonly exposed to the concept of an ethnographic terrorist, someone who upholds either a religious or a political cause and uses terrorism to further an agenda related to that cause. This differs greatly from the psychopathic terrorist, who may be hired to engage in terrorism but does not subscribe to an overarching religious or political schema. Retribitional terrorists can also be quite distinctive because they are motivated by a desire to right an actual or perceived wrong done to them or to a group with which they identify.

Psychology of Terrorists goes beyond simply introducing a classification scheme, though. The typologies interact with deeper considerations of the psychology of the individuals. For example, Dr. Hamden illustrates the defense mechanisms, profiling, and negotiation tactics within each of these groups, with stark differences in how some of the groups are approached compared with others. This differentiation makes sense, particularly in the negotiation portion of chapters, because different motivations lead to different areas of psychological focus.

The last part of the book discusses an understanding of terrorist attacks, including methods, tactics, and strategies, and how various interventions with those who commit acts of terror can have differing impacts. Hamden cautions against interrogation techniques because the information they might produce is suspect, but he introduces the reader to new ideas for using interventional strategies and “deradicalization.”

I found this book to be a very good overview of understanding how psychological theories apply to terrorists. For a forensic psychiatrist, this is an excellent primer and a valuable sampler of the various components of this topic. The structure of the book maintains interest and builds upon ideas introduced in earlier chapters. Discussions about defense mechanisms appear targeted to an audience already familiar with these concepts, allowing the text to strike a careful balance between being overly simplistic or overly advanced. *Psychology of Terrorists* is sure to inspire an interest in this area of study, both for use in expert evaluations and for future research.

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21 Lessons for the 21st Century

By Yuval Noah Harari. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2018.
372 pp. \$21.49.

In *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, Yuval Noah Harari lays out a chilling vision of humanity’s predicament. He argues that liberalism, which emphasizes the importance of liberty and freedom in political and economic life, became the predominant ideology of the