

**Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism, 2nd edition, by
James J.F. Forest and Russell D. Howard, co-editors. New York:
McGraw Hill, 2013.**

Jeffrey A. James Ph.D.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss>
pp. 84-85

Recommended Citation

James, Jeffrey A. Ph.D.. "Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism, 2nd edition, by James J.F. Forest and Russell D. Howard, co-editors. New York: McGraw Hill, 2013.." *Journal of Strategic Security* 6, no. 1 (2013) : 84-85. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.6.1.8>
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol6/iss1/1>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Strategic Security by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

**Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism, 2nd edition, by
James J.F. Forest and Russell D. Howard, co-editors. New York:
McGraw Hill, 2013.**

Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism, 2nd edition, by James J.F. Forest and Russell D. Howard, co-editors. New York: McGraw Hill, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-07-802622-5. Appendices. Index. Pp. 624. \$91.67.

Terrorism is hardly a new issue. Greek historians and essayists write of the terror of the Peloponnesian Wars, the ancient bloody struggles between Athens, Sparta, and the Persians. More recently the terrorism undertaken by the IRA against the British, and the ETA Basques against the Spanish government, serve as two contemporary examples of the use of terror as a tactic for ethno-religious or ideological gain. What is relatively recent on the international scene is the linking of terrorism with weapons of mass destruction, or WMD, a connection helpfully made in this volume, the second edition of the Forrest-Howard anthology. The two volumes chronicle the evolution of scholarship on the subject. "Regular" terrorism, and terrorists continue to exist, of course, but their potential acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction is a newer and more urgent worry. The Japanese terrorist group, Aum Shinrikyo, was among the first of such groups to use this form of terror-spawning weaponry, in their case with sarin gas in the subways of Tokyo in 1995.

Indeed, terrorism is now so common a subject of consideration by national security scholars it is almost routine. Somewhere in preparing this review I read the notion of the deceptively commonplace, "the prosaic ordinariness of terrorism"; not my words but capturing contemporary sentiment of some that the issue has evolved since 9/11 and become a more routine issue of discussion among security specialists, thus perhaps undercutting its full "terror" particularity. Yet it remains crucially important to all nations' national security posture and their citizens' individual peace. It is not a Western or industrial nation phenomenon, but has been an aspect of guerrilla warfare during the colonial period in Asia and Africa in the mid-20th century, an aspect of Robespierre's times during the French Revolution, (hence the Reign of Terror) and of course more recently in Europe and the United States.

Co-editors Forest and Howard have collected the almost encyclopedic papers of recent scholarship, and assembled them in the following general categories:

- A. Conceptual frameworks, including "definitions, trends and the concept of "New Terrorism";
- B. Weapons and munitions, the expected inclusion of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons available in greater or lesser degrees to the New Terrorist;
- C. Critical Infrastructure dimensions, addressing public arenas, modes of transportation, public utilities and water supplies, nuclear power plants and similar public activities or services affecting broad populations in their various locations;
- D. Responding to the threat, focusing on current thinking to counter the WMD terrorist, employing all available organizations, planning activities, technologies and predictive computer models to thwart such elements; and
- E. Assessing future WMD threats, including prediction probabilities using new approaches and technologies to anticipate and assess future likelihoods of social vulnerabilities to WMD terrorism.

It becomes apparent that the editors and their contributors have thrown their nets very widely, and successfully, it must be said, capturing the most salient issues of their subject without diluting the book's focus with irrelevancies and distractions. The book will serve as a principal reference to security scholars, planners, intelligence analysts, graduate students of security policy, and others for years to come; a virtual Baedeker of sorts on issues related to WMD-terrorist counter efforts. Updates can be expected as technologies, threats, and issues evolve. The volume is effective in capturing the essence of the terrorist/WMD phenomenon, but is insufficient for this reader in several areas of consideration that might also have received further scrutiny.

One area of weakness, for example, is that the book's subject is intrinsically of interest to intelligence agencies and matters relating to intelligence worldwide. All nations face these threats to some degree. Yet the section on intelligence, and all the processes related to the intelligence cycle, are modest and understated for this reader at least who sees this issue as perhaps the most important and germane to future avoidance of terrorist WMD attacks. And we know from recent experience in the United States,

and currently, that the American intelligence community is hardly optimized for productive intelligence gathering and sharing of terrorist information specifically.

Further, one might have expected a larger discussion of the political ramifications of WMD terrorism in democracies. We have witnessed pushback against even the revised Patriot Act in the United States, evidence of a public that remains uneasy about allegedly necessary measures needed by government officials to provide security by stymieing enemies of our domestic tranquility.

A final critical area of insufficiency is the book's serious inattention to the issue of cyber-terrorism. Sec. Panetta said in October of this year that cyber-terror is now an issue he raises with his counterparts in every foreign visit overseas that he makes. To not have dealt with this issue in much greater depth is an omission that is difficult to understand.

The book is already huge, at over 800 pages, and one cannot fairly attack authors for writing a book they did not intend to write. But perhaps others will recognize these lapses and share this view. The publication is a virtual cornucopia of recent thinking on the issue, and is excellent in so many ways, that its virtues far outshine these omissions, it can only fairly be said.

Students of terrorism will find engaging the authors' treatment of future threats of WMD terrorism and how they can be most strategically considered proactively. There is a refreshing non-partisan tone to most of these articles, to be expected in sound scholarship but difficult to avoid when dealing with such inherently ethically sensitive political issues.

In sum, the co-editors do the scholarly and intelligence communities a great service with this freshened and updated anthology. One cannot imagine anyone involved with this subject, whether professionally or as a concerned citizen, being competently informed about terrorism and its evil liaison with WMD without having read this collection. It will be a basic text in all graduate programs of national security, terrorism, intelligence, and perhaps international relations, for the coming decade or so.

Jeffrey A. James, Ph.D.