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***The Test of Terrorism: Responding to Political Violence in the Twenty-First Century.* Edited by Alastair Finlan. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.**

Alastair Finlan, a Senior Lecturer in Strategic Studies at the Department of International Politics of Aberystwyth University in the United Kingdom, has gathered an eclectic collection of essays written by subject matter experts originally published as a special issue of *Defense & Security Analysis*. Each essay takes a unique perspective on modern terrorism worthy of a graduate lecture or senior policy discussion. While not easy reading, the book is a rewarding, albeit brief, tome that deserves a place on the shelf of any serious terrorism analyst.

By way of introduction, the opening essay states that as terrorism has grown into a regular element of the current zeitgeist, the books and studies examining it have grown exponentially. High profile terrorist attacks and plots in 2001 (9/11 and would-be shoe bomber Richard Reid), 2004 (Madrid), 2005 (London), 2006 (liquids and gels plot), 2009 (Detroit), 2010 (the cargo plot), 2012 (Benghazi), 2013 (Boston), and 2014 (Nairobi) have shown an increase in radicalization and an evolution in tactics, techniques, and procedures.

The next essay examines terrorism in terms of a philosophical discourse. It poses the question of whether terrorism is an act of war or a crime. The author demonstrates that terrorism belongs in the war, not the criminal arena. After dissecting Clausewitz' famous dictum of war as the continuation of politics by other means, he examines the difference between politics in the age of reason and today's environment. The modern climate includes religious fundamentalism and ethnic extremism. Religious terrorism is an inherently complex topic in that it introduces an ideological dimension that is inherently subjective. As a result, discussions or analysis can become more emotional than rational. As terrorism is a result of an ideological conflict, it becomes difficult to define. As a result, there is no universally agreed upon definition in common use. The essay examines definitions used by the United Kingdom, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to illustrate the myriad ways to delineate the topic.

The author states that terrorism is an act of war with a political motive enacted without regard for victims or bystanders, using coercive means for ideological ends to intimidate a target population. As an act of war, the author

describes it as a weapon of the weak undertaken for the “greater good,” articulating an extreme position, with little popular support. As it is (to the author’s mind) an act of war, force is the best means to counter it. In addition to kinetic terrorism, recent developments point to cyber acts of terror as well.

The next essay examines an incident in which British police, thinking a Brazilian immigrant was about to detonate a suicide vest, killed him with close range shots to the head using hollow point bullets. The man was in fact innocent, as a subsequent inquiry concluded. He was mistaken for a suicide bomber in the wake of multiple attacks on the London subway in July 2005. Using this as the philosophical point of discussion, the author points out that although terrorism is a very real and present danger, nation states must be wary of adapting a one size fits all wholesale approach to counter terrorism. The author underscores that in a liberal democracy, a system of checks and balances is a vital means to ensure accountability. In the realm of public safety, the author suggests that perhaps a policy of *shooting to wound* vice *shooting to kill* may be a viable alternative.

Another essay undertakes an examination of Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. Using the Iraq and Afghanistan wars as a starting point, the author discusses the crucial importance of organizational learning in a military organization to be able to adapt doctrine and tactics in a dynamic, every-evolving operational environment. The intrinsic difficulty lies in how to measure through empirical studies success in COIN and organizational learning. The essay’s final analysis was that while learning did occur at the platoon and company level, lessons learned did not always filter up to the brigade level.

The following essay undertook a quantitative analysis to answer the question of whether increased spending resulted in increased public safety from terrorism. This included an examination of increased spending for critical infrastructure protection (airports, ports, trains). One of the factors considered was that while the public was amenable to expenditure of public funds to ensure public safety, it should be within established budgetary parameters, not increased taxation or spending. A finding in the research was that government tends to be cautious and projects a worst case scenario, which is more expensive and less likely to occur. Examples cited included \$725,000 for port security in landlocked Tulsa, Oklahoma, and \$1.5 million for biohazard suits in Grand Forks, North Dakota. After studying the United Kingdom and the United States (Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration, National Counterterrorism Center),

the conclusion was that increased spending to protect the public resulted in a safer environment.

Al-Qa'ida's (AQ) *jihad* was the topic of another essay. Is AQ's *jihad* legitimate struggle or wanton murder? Using Qur'anic verses and proofs from the Hadith, the author demonstrates that modern jihadists have twisted Islamic doctrine to suit their own ends. Classical *jihad* means striving in the path of God to be a better person. Today, AQ has justified *jihad* through prohibited practices such as suicide attacks and killing women and children. In AQ's zero sum game, coercion, conversion, and conquest are stated goals through whatever means necessary to accomplish this desired end state of a modern caliphate.

This collection of essays brings vital perspectives to the field of terrorism studies. The essays are meant to be thoughtfully digested vice quickly gobbled and will provide a valuable resource for the terrorism analyst for years to come.

Mark Roberts is a subject matter expert in the security and counter-terrorism field