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Editor's Shelf

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Editor's Shelf

For decades, indeed centuries, terrorists have been quietly gathering support throughout the world. But it took the events of 9/11 and the resulting global war on terror to turn the oblivious heads of most Americans to the recognition that the Salafi jihad now targeting the Western world has for centuries been slaughtering thousands of people from every race and religion around the globe. Resultant of this recognition is an entirely new genre of publications purporting to bring order to the public rhetoric related to terror, its application, causes, impact, and future. Of the books that now cross this editor's desk, two out of every ten are in some way related to terrorism. Of these, there are a very few that deserve our attention.



Headlining three of the more deserving works is former Russian premier Yevgeny M. Primakov's *A World Challenged: Fighting Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*. The book is a collaborative effort between The Nixon Center and the Brookings Institution Press presenting a candid, sobering account of the menacing threat to international security posed by disparate terrorist organizations. Primakov concludes with two major recommendations—that the global community initiate a comprehensive Charter on Terrorism that will facilitate the prosecution of terrorists, and that Russia and the United States revitalize their shared efforts regarding emerging terrorist threats. The second book in this troika is Marc Sageman's *Understanding Terror Networks*. A professor of psychiatry and ethno-political conflict at the University of Pennsylvania, the author draws on his experiences as a Foreign Service Officer during the Afghan-Soviet war to dispel prevalent theories related to the motivation of individuals who join terrorist organizations. Dr. Sageman challenges the traditional theories that emphasize poverty and religious devotion as the inspiration for joining such groups. The author examines the motivations of over 150 members of different terrorist organizations and contrasts these against previously published views of so-called "experts" to conclude that America is truly not competitive in the war for the hearts and minds of hundreds of thousands of prospective terrorists. Michael Ignatieff, director of Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights, makes a sophisticated argument for not abandoning the principles of equality and dignity in our response to terrorism. *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* is the author's attempt to outline a middle way for a democratic response to the current terrorist threat. Ignatieff suggests that any loss of the freedoms and rights provided by a democracy must be only temporary in nature and absolutely necessary to ensure security. While advocating that democracies not shrink from the use of violence in response to terror,

For details on publishers and prices of books mentioned, see "Off the Press" in this issue or call *Parameters* at 717-245-4943 (e-mail: Parameters@carlisle.army.mil).

the author concludes that the greatest threat to any liberal democracy is a response that violates, on a sustained basis, the dignity and equality of its people.

Walter Laqueur examines the history of violence and terror as tools for political change in *Voices of Terror: Manifestos, Writings and Manuals of Al Qaeda, Hamas, and Other Terrorists from Around the World and Throughout the Ages*. This edited work is a comprehensive anthology examining the morality, psychology, and ethics of violence in the struggle for political change. The only narratives accompanying the individual presentations are a short introduction and limited explanatory text. This book is designed as a reference for the more serious students of history and the use of terror.

Jeremy Black, the noted British historian, provides five new chapters in a completely revised edition of his earlier work, *War in the New Century*. The new volume, *War and the New Disorder in the 21st Century*, again examines the realities of war in a globalized world, but the author has expanded the content to include the events of 9/11, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Black believes the growing prosperity of America and the West only increases the likelihood of challenge and conflict in a world already characterized by the failure of Western models for globalization. The author concludes that the threat is not globalization, but a growing lawlessness across much of the world, particularly in the societies of sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America.

Harlan K. Ullman reminds us that terror is a symptom or tactic, not a cause, in his pragmatic analysis, *Finishing Business: Ten Steps to Defeat Global Terror*. The author provides a coherent, insightful description of the threat America faces in its war on terror and the steps required for victory. Ullman tells the reader that America will be successful only if it understands the underlying causes of this insidious threat and takes decisive action to modify our current objectives and strategy. Providing resounding endorsement of Ullman's thesis and recommendations are a Foreword by Newt Gingrich and an Afterword by Wesley Clark. This is a must read for anyone seeking a strategic-level understanding of Jihadist extremism and the steps required to defeat it.

In a departure from our policy of not reviewing or recommending works of fiction or novels, I am obligated to direct our reader's attention to a sumptuous literary tapestry, an intricate weaving of history and fiction, *Natural Affinities* by James Ryan. The author utilizes the backdrop of 1915 and The Bronx in New York City to paint a picture of a robust German culture challenged by Irish paranoia, hatred, and street politics. It was a challenge that threatened the very social and economic fabric underpinning The Bronx, New York, and the nation in this pre-World War I "golden age." Told through the diffuse voices of priests, politicians, bartenders, spies, patriots, and journalists, this is a story of a world long ago that most in America have never known or long forgotten. Ryan leaves the reader with an uneasy feeling that the acts of hatred and vindictiveness that characterized this particular era in American history are amazingly reflective of life within many of today's metropolitan areas. The author has produced a classical narrative, rich in detail and interlaced with just the right amount of history to keep the reader impatiently turning pages until the very last word. — RHT □