

Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (San Francisco: Harper Perennial Reprint Ed., 2004). Reviewed by Andrew Lumpkin.

Timely for her insight into the psychology of religious militarism, Jessica Stern investigates the factors that create terrorism. Written in narrative format, the author interviews members of several militant movements in order to understand how religion can be used as a tool of violence. By dividing the book into two parts, Stern first examines the factors leading to religious terrorism, and in the second part of the book, she studies typical terrorist organizational structures. Written in the last two years, Stern concludes with public policy implications to counter the rise of religious terrorism.

In each chapter in the first part of her book, Stern interviews religious militants from differing religions in order to uncover the factors that increase the likelihood a person will join and remain in a terrorist organization. Although “fun and profit” (5) provide incentives for religious militancy, Stern believes five other factors influence the decision to join in a jihad. Whether real or perceived *humiliation*, terrorist leaders have learned to harvest the outrage youth feel against occupying powers. Because of the oppression of these powers, terrorist organizations set up legitimate charitable organizations to ease the suffering of the oppressed class. Youth join terrorist organizations to strike back against their oppressors because of their alienation and humiliation, and out of a sense of obligation to return the favor to those terrorist organizations that provide charitable relief to their families.

Ethnic *demographics* also play a key role in terrorism. When a government creates a “policy [that] deliberately shifts an ethno-religious mix” (62) (i.e., a migration policy), the power of the once dominant ethnicity becomes weakened. As a result, the privileges this group once received begin to diminish, and this group seeks to reestablish its authority. Eventually, a “holy war” is called, and militants flock to either side believing they are fighting an eternal struggle. Ancient *history* can be a “powerful weapon in extremists’ hands, including in their efforts to expand national boundaries and to seek redemption” (85). Terrorists use a selective reading of history and religious texts for justifying violence and mobilizing recruits. Disputes over *territory* also create an Us versus Them mentality, which helps establish a “clear identity and a definite purpose in life” (137).

Stern writes the second half of her book in an attempt to understand terrorist organizational structures. She believes terrorist organizations fall into four categories. Within each of these organizations is a tension between being able to withstand loss of members (resiliency) and the organization’s ability to optimize the destruction of the attack (capacity). First, terrorist organizations can be structured by an inspirational leader. In this type of organization, one leader headlines a movement, but does not give explicit orders or material benefits to his/her followers. The movement is tied together by a special narrative and language, and followers are

inspired to take violent action on behalf of the group.

Second, lone-wolf avengers use their own ideologies and agendas to fight for their own cause. The lone-wolf avengers cannot cause damage on a large scale, but at the same time, these terrorists provide difficulty for investigators, as networks are individualized.

Third, commander and cadre organizations provide a large hierarchical network that are highly destructive, and members of the organization and their families benefit from their large fund-raising efforts. Because of the structure of this organization, it can be easily penetrated, and this organization necessitates a large cash income.

Fourth, Stern examines Al Qaeda as an example of the ultimate organization. This organization has a hierarchical structure, but hires militants for specific geographical areas to use in one-time missions. This organization takes careful interest in planning its attacks, has allies in high governmental positions, and has the ability to acquire conventional, unconventional, and nuclear weapons. Recruitment and training are a high priority for this organization. This organizational structure vocalizes and articulates the grievance it wants addressed, advertises its mission, and has the patience and ability to

change its mission objectives. This organization is structurally a network of networks weakly tied together, optimizing resiliency. This organization receives incomes from licit and illicit businesses and charitable organizations, and it uses leaderless resisters, freelancers, and franchises to optimize its effectiveness.

In her concluding chapter, Stern explains the vulnerability of Islamic states to terrorism. America’s support for Israel, increasing globalization leading to lower standards of living, and the vulnerability of states transitioning to a democracy all increase the likelihood of terrorism in Islamic states. With this in mind, Stern closes with a handful of foreign policy suggestions. America must understand that violence against terrorism is partially effective, and violence provides terrorist organizations with the ability to recruit new militants.

Therefore, we need to learn to penetrate these organizations. We should not impose the death penalty on terrorists. We should not use torture during interrogation, and we should purchase the expertise of unemployed terrorists. America should also promote and develop alternative educational methods in Muslim nations, combat infrastructures that mobilize recruits, and make it more difficult for terrorist organizations to obtain weapons.