

The Geography of International Terrorism: An Introduction to Spaces and Places of Violent Non-State Groups. By Richard M. Medina and George F. Hepner. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2013. ISBN 978-1-4398-8686-1. Maps. Photographs. Sources cite. Index. Pp. xiii, 244. \$79.95.

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***The Geography of International Terrorism: An Introduction to Spaces and Places of Violent Non-State Groups.* By Richard M. Medina and George F. Hepner. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2013. ISBN 978-1-4398-8686-1. Maps. Photographs. Sources cite. Index. Pp. xiii, 244. \$79.95.**

Into the crowded arena of books on terrorism comes a novel methodology that helps the reader better grapple with the realities faced by homeland security, intelligence, and law enforcement professionals as they seek to understand terrorist thought and evolution. Authors Medina and Hepner are university geography professors who've utilized Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to analyze their topic. In so doing, they've brought a fresh approach to a topic covered *ad nauseum* in the years since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and provided a new optic through which to view terrorism.

The authors posit that much of the analysis regarding terrorism has centered on military or state security, thereby bypassing a more holistic examination of terrorism that incorporates the economic, social, environmental, anthropological, psychological, cultural and traditional factors. In so doing, such analyses fail to consider factors such as ethnicity, religion, geography, and natural resources into the "why" behind a given group's terrorist motivations. Although terrorists inhabit a geographic space, their motivations are geopolitical and psychological as well.

The authors begin with the example of Nigeria's terrorist groups Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and Boko Haram. The contextual factors driving MEND and Boko Haram include natural resources (oil), cultural differences, ethnic/tribal rivalries, religion, economic disparities, foreign commercial and corporate exploitation, environmental contamination, and land disputes for fishing and farming. Viewed through this prism, Nigeria's terrorism problem is not a monolithic one, but rather dependent on the relative geographies of the multiple physical and human environments.

With the Nigerian example as their starting point, the authors explain that defining terrorism or terrorists becomes dependent on who is attempting to define them. Each country defines terrorism differently (in Israel, propaganda is a terrorist act; in Pakistan, sexual assault can qualify as terror; in Italy, anything affecting democratic order is considered terror; and in the U.S., violations of the Patriot Act are terrorist offenses). Within the U.S. Government, each agency (FBI, Homeland Security, Department of Defense, etc.) defines terrorism based on their mission focus (criminal prosecution, prevent attack, force protection). Common terrorism factors include violence against non-combatants and inciting fear for political ends. The terrorists themselves view their cause as righteous and give themselves names to portray nobility and good intention (Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Palestine Liberation Organization, Basque Fatherland and Liberty, etc.). In the end, however, terrorism is a strategy to bring about violence and terrorists have embraced global technologies (financial and communications).

Different motivations drive different groups. Nationalist/separatist groups such as Hamas seek to force a change in Israeli policies for more sovereignty. Cultural/religious groups such as al-Qa'ida (AQ) seek to bring about a new social structure, in this case, a system of governance based on their interpretation of Muslim rule. In laying the groundwork, AQ has sought to dehumanize its targets, focus on spiritual (vice earthly) rewards, and emphasize violence as an

end in and of itself. Ideological groups such as the Aryan Brotherhood in the U.S. or Shining Path in Peru seek a new social order based on right/left political doctrine. Due to globalization and the Internet, they now have a more ubiquitous medium to propagate their message.

In tying all of these threads together, the authors define geography as spaces, places, and people. In addition, geography has physical and human components, which in turn are composed of environments/climates (physical) and politics and economics (human). The spaces are spatial, binding all components together— terrorists operate in spaces. The spaces can be physical (geographic), socioeconomic, and behavioral. Places exist within spaces and exist as locations in which people visit or have connections. Places are where things “happen.” People are terrorists, counter-terrorists, local populations, potential radicals, and anyone passing through the places. People are bound by social, financial and infrastructural connections. These connections form networks, which are comprised of people, social links, targets, and connective tissue (either physical roads that connect places, other transportation nodes, or the Internet as the connecting medium).

Within this context, the spaces and places are social constructs, in which people exist and interact. They evolve continuously and with the Information Age, their evolution rate is almost immeasurable. Virtual space becomes as significant as geographic space. Human interactions now occur geographically and virtually, altering the scope and nature of those interactions. In the virtual realm, places, activities, and interactions take on new degrees of subjectivity as perception becomes reality. In this domain, cyber-terror evolves as a new reality. Information Age terrorism now means that spaces of terrorism now become geographic, social, virtual, and perceptual.

These social innovations drive new patterns of behavior, which make possible non-physical terrorist safe havens. These virtual safe havens allow terrorists to participate in a virtual world of terror (blogs, social networks, chat rooms) and allows for a relative degree of security. Instead of waging physical terror in the known havens of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Yemen, or Somalia, a terrorist can now plan operations in the virtual realm and have social interaction with like-minded individuals anywhere in the world from anywhere in the world. Migrant communities also can find physical and virtual support networks, allowing them to connect with colleagues anywhere at any time.

The authors convincingly demonstrate the crucial importance of places, people and connections as they show how Muhammad Atta used all three to carry out the 9/11 terrorist attacks. An Egyptian, Atta went to Hamburg, Germany to study. There, he became involved with like-minded co-religionist associates from many countries, building physical, virtual, and ideological connections to AQ. Traveling to Pakistan and Afghanistan, he enlarged his professional circle of acquaintances and received intensive indoctrination and training for his eventual mission. Internet communications, electronic money transfers, and extensive coordination and communication laid the groundwork for what was to come.

Atta’s use of social networks, geographic location, wire transfers, and ability to navigate both human and physical terrain gave him decision advantage as he planned the attacks. The lethality of his networking skills, both virtual and physical, came to fruition in the suicide attacks he led.

Atta's prototypical use of hybrid spaces continues on over a decade after his death. Terrorist networks operate in both the physical and virtual realms, propagating ideologies and ideas to acolytes in all corners of the world. The Internet as the medium allows for myriad messages to promulgate in relative safety, depending on the terrorism laws and statutes of the country in which the persons reside. Terrorist havens, training, and radicalization now have a new way of continuing as a result of the Information Age.

The Geography of International Terrorism is a much needed, welcome addition to the body of work. The authors' cross-disciplinary approach to the topic provides a broader perspective to better understand the current realities of national security professionals. By incorporating physical and human geography as key elements of the terrorist's operating environment, the authors have provide a book that has great utility for the academic, policy analyst, policy maker, strategist, intelligence professional, law enforcement officer, or anyone seeking a more holistic appreciation of terrorism on the modern age.

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