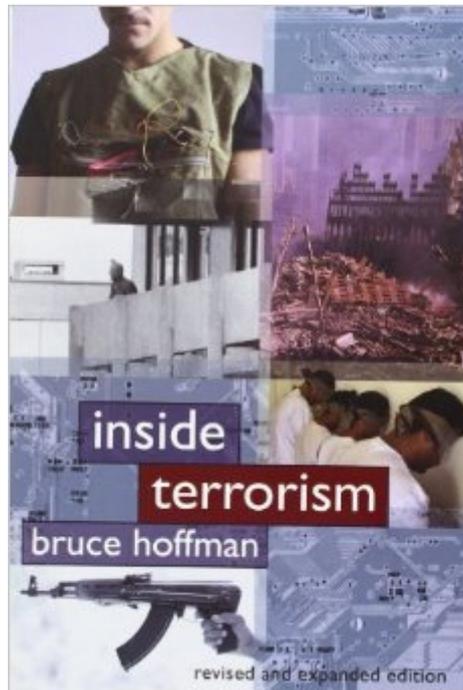


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# Inside Terrorism (Columbia Studies In Terrorism And Irregular Warfare)



## Synopsis

Bruce Hoffman's *Inside Terrorism* has remained a seminal work for understanding the historical evolution of terrorism and the terrorist mindset. In this revised edition of the classic text, Hoffman analyzes the new adversaries, motivations, and tactics of global terrorism that have emerged in recent years, focusing specifically on how al Qaeda has changed since 9/11; the reasons behind its resiliency, resonance, and longevity; and its successful use of the Internet and videotapes to build public support and gain new recruits. Hoffman broadens the discussion by evaluating the potential repercussions of the Iraqi insurgency, the use of suicide bombers, terrorist exploitation of new communications media, and the likelihood of a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear terrorist strike. Closer to home, Hoffman reconsiders the Timothy McVeigh case and the threats posed by American Christian white supremacists and abortion opponents as well as those posed by militant environmentalists and animal rights activists. He argues that the attacks on the World Trade Center fundamentally transformed the West's view of the terrorist threat. More relevant and necessary than ever, *Inside Terrorism* continues to be the definitive work on the history and future of global terrorism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Bruce Hoffman, long one of RAND's key terrorism-wallahs and an affiliate of St Andrews University has written an excellent book on a controversial topic. There was a fair amount of literature on

terrorism prior to September 11th and, my, but there's even more now. A lot of it was a load of old rubbish prior to September 11th and even more of it is now. Hoffman's book is a work of substance which in itself puts it ahead of much of the pack. "Inside Terrorism" covers a variety of areas. It opens with a discussion about the lengthy (and continuing) debate that surrounds the issue of defining terrorism - an issue which has stumped everyone from academics to the UN. What and who exactly IS a terrorist? Hoffman doesn't provide a clear cut, definitive answer but he does provide clear coverage of what is framing the argument, along with some of the possible answers which are being put forward. Whether you consider this level of debate to be self-indulgent and ivory tower or not (as I increasingly do, interesting thought it is) it is important to know that the debate does exist and what it's all about as it goes to the heart of some real-life anti-terrorism policy making, especially with regard to multilateral attempts to curb terror groups. Hoffman moves on to cover Post-colonial ethnic or nationalist terror groups, international terrorism, Religion and terrorism, Terrorism, Media and public opinion, Terrorist methods and mindsets and the potential future of terrorism. All in all, it adds up to a fairly comprehensive introduction to the subject. Some of Hoffman's conclusions aren't to everybody's tastes, but terrorism is an inherently controversial and hotly debated issue, it's the nature of the beast. Overall, this is an excellent overview and introduction to the subject of terrorism. Certainly better than the recent work of Walter Laqueur. The newcomer to the subject would also be well advised to check out Christopher Harmon's "Terrorism Today" as well, along with Paul Wilkinson's "Terrorism and Democracy". Ken Booth's "Worlds in Collision" is an excellent collection of essays by various authors that is ideal for somebody with an interest in the post-September 11th world. Hoffman's writing style is not immediately engaging (I found the book far more digestible on a second reading), but this is still an excellent work for the beginner. In a field that is both crowded and shallow, Hoffman has produced a book of genuine substance and for that he deserves credit.

I found Inside Terrorism extremely readable, yet with the obvious authority of high quality research. Hoffman draws in the reader with skill I rarely see in nonfiction writing. This extremely complex issue so often in the forefront of today's world is dealt with in a unique yet straightforward manner. This is a 'must read' for anyone that travel, reads the newspaper or watches the evening news. The initial chapter on 'defining terrorism' helped me start to extract from the media over-usage of this term, the relevant issues that differentiate 'terrorism' from other forms of violence. The evolutionary nature of the term is profiled showing the historic development of what is now seen exclusively in a pejorative sense. Understanding the background, historic development and indeed, the elements that makeup

the essentials of terrorism, will allow the reader to evaluate the news from an informed, rather than agenda driven position. Having provided an understanding of what the real issues are, the author moves the reader through the various types of terrorism, explaining them in adequate but not suffocating detail. Like an NFI highlight film, the reader is taken through a historical framework that keeps the readers interest while exploring the salient points. The examples read like the Sunday paper as the vivid reality jumps out at you. There is a feeling of 'insider information' without the talk show hype. This provides at last, a basis for real understanding of the frequent news stories that become such a blur of tedious detail. This book went much further than a historic recount of terrorism. While dates and incidents are included, they serve as interesting and helpful examples of the issue and don't become a tedious history text. Particularly interesting to me was the description and explanation of the different ideological styles. Left and right wing, ethno-nationalist, millenarian, separatist and religious motivations are unraveled in a systematic and clear manner. Similarities and differences are made evident and the importance of these aspects become clear. In Short, this book dealt with a complex and confusing issue in a way I could understand, remember and use when I read or listen to the news.

In the wake of the 9/11 disaster a plethora of books has been published on the nature and structure of the terrorist threat. Some are quite good, but others are absolute nonsense. Interestingly, some of the best books on both terrorism and counter-terrorism predate 9/11 and were written before counter-terrorism became the cottage industry it is today. This book by Bruce Hoffman in cooperation with the Rand Corporation was published in 1998 and remains one of the best books available on the nature of terrorism. Hoffman provides a useful and on the whole an accurate explanation of the differences between secular, religious, transnational, and state sponsored terrorism providing useful examples of each. He also provides a good deal of probably accurate information on terrorist motivations and operational procedures. Finally he was prescient enough to recognize that the phenomenon represented by Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda represent an ideological movement rather than a structured organization. After four years of the so-called, 'Global War on Terrorism' this fact is slowly sinking into U.S. Government circles. Hoffman only lightly touches on the related issue of the al Qaeda financial structures, but notes the relatively small amounts of money actually required for most terrorist operations. As indicated Hoffman does not limit this book to Islamic religious terrorism but also delves into motivations and operations techniques of secular terrorism as well. Perhaps most importantly given the July 2006 Near-East crisis, he uses Hezbollah as an example of the dangerous nature of state sponsored terrorism. All in all a sound

book that contains markedly better information on terrorism than many more recent books and reflects the fruits of sound scholarship.

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