

Pedahzur, Ami and Arie Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), Pp. 225, US \$29.50 (hard cover).

Academic theories of non-state political violence and terrorism have traditionally emphasized either cultural explanations, which focus on religious and mentality differences, or rational-choice explanations, which focus on conditions such as the struggle for resources, territory, or political influence. In their new book *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger offer an alternative framework for explaining terrorism and non-state political violence, one that focuses on socialization and network structures.

Pedahzur and Perliger challenge the common notion in the field that terrorism is mostly an organizational action. Treating terrorist groups as organizations facilitates the examination and analysis of the phenomenon, because it allows for the use of organizational theory. However, the authors argue that this is largely a false categorization, as terrorist groups often “lack certain fundamental qualities of organizations, such as clear-cut structures, a hierarchy, regulated mechanisms that interact with the external environment and, above all, a tendency toward institutionalization.” (p. 160). Rather, the authors believe that it is often more useful and accurate to examine terrorist groups under the more flexible sociological perspective of social networks. Using this framework, they argue that religious terrorism often originates from counterculture communities based on totalistic ideologies and a sense of communal identity.

The historical examination of Jewish terrorism in Israel serves Pedahzur and Perliger as a case study for this theoretical framework. Following a brief introduction, the authors take us through the history of Jewish terrorism. The first chapter provides a concise and historically-informed account of ancient Jewish terrorism, focusing on the Hashmonai family guerrilla warfare against the Hellenistic rule during the Second Temple era and on the Sicarians’ political terrorism. Chapter two reviews Jewish terrorism in the first part of the Twentieth Century and in the first decades after the establishment of Israel. Although it does not provide many new insights beyond other historical accounts of the main events, it does present a coherent and succinct narrative on the development of Israeli radical right.

Chapters three through seven form the heart of the book, examining the most prominent Israeli radical right wing groups and individuals which have used terrorism since the 1980s. Chapter three tells the story of the Jewish Underground, Chapter four is devoted to the Kahanist counterculture (Kach), Chapter five describes the Yigal Amir Group, responsible for the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Chapter six focuses on the Second Intifada and the Bat Ayin Underground, and Chapter seven brings the story of more eccentric Jewish groups and individuals (lone wolves) who committed terrorist acts. Throughout the book, Pedahzur and Perliger seek to underline the network structure that led to the creation and maintenance of these various groups. They emphasize the shared elements of these groups, which grew out of counterculture communities based on totalistic ideologies, grouped around a central figure, and recruited new members through informal ties.

Together with the detailed historical account, this theoretical framework is the main strength of the book. The authors present an impressive mosaic of the various fragments that make up Israeli radical right, while demonstrating their claim that the various terrorist groups can hardly be characterized as standard organizations. However, this novel claim does not appear in the book's introductory part, and is only fully stated in its strong concluding chapter. This is an unfortunate organizational decision, because the historical account presented in the various chapters often lacks sufficient contextualization and is not tied clearly enough to the theoretical argument. Throughout the book, the authors often choose to focus on the historical facts and do not offer enough personal in-depth interpretations of the events. In the introduction they state that they have conducted many interviews with former terrorists, politicians, and spiritual leaders, as well as comprehensive surveys of communities where terrorist groups originated and participant observations in these communities. Unfortunately, only a small fraction of this rich data they have collected found its way into the book, which could have profited from more first-hand and personal accounts of the groups and their motivations.

Despite these shortcomings, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* is an important and highly illuminative book, which addresses a lacuna in the field. Pedahzur and Perliger demonstrate the importance of informal networks in accounting for the formation and maintenance of religious terrorism, and in the concluding chapter they demonstrate that network analysis is useful in the examination of

other terrorist groups outside Israel. The book is compelling and well written, and the insights are revealing, rendering it a significant addition to the academic literature on religious terrorism, as well as an engaging reading for those interested in Israel's political history and culture.

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