BOOK REVIEW

Lee Clarke (Ed.) (2003). *Terrorism and Disaster: New Threats, New Ideas*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 141 pp., ISBN 0–7623–1043-X.

In *Terrorism and Disaster: New Threats, New Ideas*, Lee Clarke has assembled an interesting and provocative selection of critical essays. It is a noteworthy contribution to the growing literature on the implications of the new era of terrorism, and in this regard should be included in the libraries of analysts and students of the New Terrorism. Not everyone will agree with the premises of the writers, but the contributions should stimulate reasoned debate. In fact, this is perhaps the principal contribution of the book—so much has been written about the *threat* posed by the New Terrorism, that not enough scholarship has been devoted to critically think about the assumptions and responses of our leaders and policy makers. Worse, many shy away from their duty as researchers and scholars to present a dispassionate assessment of the modern environment, and then join in the debate on their findings and hypotheses. Such a critical discussion is much needed.

The premise of *Terrorism and Disaster* is that the attacks of September 11, 2001, pose many policy and cultural challenges that go beyond the simple question of 'what is to be done?'. Although the attacks are an example of a worse case scenario, there are many policy questions that necessarily must be investigated. Not all of these policy questions are discussed by American political leaders, and policy makers often base their responses on flawed assumptions. For example, as surprising and inexorable as the incident was, some of the sub-events could have been averted. Also, there is a question of whether elites have become sufficiently attuned to the true impact the attacks had on the American populace; in this regard, people have reacted to disaster as they always have—by adapting. Significantly, there is a justifiably critical question about whether the government's responses (such as creating more bureaucracy) will have an appreciable effect on terrorist behavior.

Overall, the selected articles are cogently written, and the authors' analyses are critical and provocative. They represent several disciplines, and bring together an eclectic range of perspectives. Orlando Rodriguez's essay, entitled 'A Civil Defense Against Terror', investigates what constitutes an appropriate response to the terrorist attacks. In his estimation, comparative value systems should guide the response. His argument is that violence is not an acceptable policy option. Ann Larabee argues that a fundamental climate of fear affects how the USA has responded to the terrorist attacks. In 'Empire of Fear: Imagined Community and the September 11 Attacks', Larabee discusses how an empire of fear is driving policy makers to make poor decisions that will negatively reflect on them in the future. An intersection of world perspectives exists between leaders in the Bush administration and the terrorists. In 'Disaster Beliefs and Institutional Interests: Recycling Disaster Myths in the Aftermath of 9–11', Kathleen Tierney has written a critical article on the biases of the disaster relief effort. She argues that elites benefit from these myths to the detriment of sound policy making. Bureaucracies such as the new Department of Homeland Security benefit from the creation of these myths.

James Mitchell is quite critical of the response of policy makers in the aftermath of September 11 in his essay, which is entitled 'The Fox and the Hedgehog: Myopia About Homeland Security in U.S. Policies on Terrorism'. The emphasis on using resources to protect infrastructure rather than people has in effect increased society's vulnerability. The overarching concept of 'national security' is an incorrect approach to the terrorist threat. Brent Marshall et al. present an interesting exploration of disaster response literature to discuss the lessons of modern responses to the post-September 11 environment. In 'Terrorism as Disaster: Selected Commonalities and Long-Term Recovery for 9/11 Survivors', the authors focus their attention on the implications of technological and workplace disasters. In essence, they contend that society's sense of community can become severely strained in the aftermath of disasters. In 'Reconsidering Convergence and Converger Legitimacy in Response to the World Trade Center Disaster', James Kendra and Tricia Wachtendorf report on their observations of the immediate aftermath of the attacks in New York City. They build upon research on convergence (gravitation of people to a disaster) to recommend that policy makers specifically plan to include non-professional disaster relief workers in their disaster response scenarios. Many people wish to legitimize their participation in disaster relief, and policy makers should make use of this phenomenon. Finally, the editor addresses the problem of panic in the wake of a disaster. His article, entitled 'Conceptualizing Responses to Extreme Events: The Problem of Panic and Failing Gracefully', assesses the 'myth' of panic. His theoretical contribution is to suggest a new theoretical understanding of how people respond to disaster.

One possible criticism of the reader—which this reviewer personally interprets as a strength—is that perhaps the themes of the essays should have been more narrowly focused on a particular aspect of the new terrorist environment. However, a strong counterpoint to this criticism is that one can easily become overly focused on the many micro-contextual issues that have arisen in the aftermath of September 11. Doing so runs the risk of subsuming the important challenge of interpreting the idiosyncrasies of the new environment within the equally challenging (and equally important) responsibility to design detailed contingencies for possible threat scenarios. A strong argument can be made that these tasks—interpretation of the new terrorist environment and designing threat contingencies—are of co-equal importance. This volume is, an interpretive work, and as such necessarily asks us to consider a plurality of perspectives on the new environment. Such an approach is a necessary and welcome contribution to the literature. *Terrorism and Disaster: New Threats, New Ideas* successfully meets the responsibility of provocative interpretation, and Clarke should be commended for this contribution to the literature.

Modern terrorism occurs within a new geopolitical and religious environment, and its tactics and characteristics have arisen differently and in contradistinction to the attributes extant during the terrorist environment of the recent past. In this new era, it is the responsibility of analysts and researchers to frame a clear understanding of the attributes and challenges posed by the new breed of terrorist. Dr. Clarke's compilation meets this responsibility.

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