

East in droves. In March 2012 the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia issued a fatwa stating that it was “necessary to destroy all the churches in the Arabian Peninsula.”

Will the world sit up and take notice? Otherwise, not too many years from now, Christian historians will write in pain and sorrow the story of the death of Christianity in Arab lands.



BEING HATED LESS

A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism, by Daniel Byman, Oxford University Press, 2011, 496 pp.

Reviewed by Justus REID WEINER

“Israel has faced virtually every type of foe in the terrorist pantheon. As terrorists developed new and more gruesome techniques, Israel countered with hostage rescue missions by elite units, targeted killings of terrorist operatives, aggressive interrogation measures, administrative detention, and other controversial tactics...under the glare of the world media, and diplomatic spotlight.” This book by Daniel Byman, a professor at Georgetown University and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution’s Saban Center, concludes that Israeli counterterrorism strategies are essentially hopeless.

As constant attacks on Israeli civilians have forced Israel to refine its counterterrorism strategies, Byman’s persistent theme is that the three components of the Israeli intelligence community (Aman, the military intelligence of the IDF; Mossad, responsible for overseas intelligence work; and Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security service) are superb at tactics, but overall strategy—as orchestrated by the Israeli government—is virtually nonexistent. This supposed failure to formulate a grand strategy undermines steps directed at ending the conflict as a whole and bleakly implies that “the best Israel can hope for is to be hated less.”

To navigate Israel’s counterterrorism policy, Byman’s book charts Arab/Palestinian violence against Jews and Israel’s responses from 1920 up until 2011. Ranging from Israel’s daring Entebbe Raid to the blundered assassination attempt on Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal, Byman describes generations of Israeli counterterrorism operations. Terrorist attacks against Israeli targets in the 1950s, primarily sponsored by Egypt and Jordan, engendered early Israeli retaliation policies. Byman notes that Moshe Dayan intended to “set a high price on our blood.” However, Moshe Sharett, Israel’s second prime minister, contended that “each [Israeli retaliatory] raid ignites afresh a sea of hatred.” This narrative—that Israeli retribu-

tion renews the violence it intends to prevent—continues throughout the book. Ultimately, Byman concludes that to a certain extent Israeli counterterrorism “fails on its own terms by fostering more terrorism.”

In Byman’s evaluation of the foremost proponent of Palestinian terrorism, Yasser Arafat, the author explains “almost from the start [Arafat’s group] Fatah attacked civilians.” Arafat believed that “people aren’t attracted to speeches but to bullets.” Described by George W. Bush as “a liar and a cheat,” by Bill Clinton as a distrustful “son of a bitch,” and by Byman as a “master manipulator,” *A High Price* accurately portrays Arafat cunningly maintaining his power base by sustaining the conflict with Israel.

Although it is clear that Israeli counterterrorism is far from perfect, Byman downplays how other actors affect the Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict. To Israel, the threat of violence has never been limited to the Arabs/Palestinians or, for that matter, any single identifiable group. The apparent failure to foresee the “political consequences of counterterrorism,” or hatch some kind of “long-term plan” may be due to the pervasive, unremitting hostility of Israel’s rough neighborhood. Byman correctly contends that “Israeli retaliation placed Arab governments in a bind from which they never escaped.” But to what extent did the Arabs/Palestinians bind themselves? Utilizing the Arab/Palestinian cause to divert civil unrest has repeatedly served as a handy political tool for Arab/Palestinian autocrats, thereby enabling the conflict to persist.

Terrorist groups (or national liberation movements for that matter) cannot exist without the material support and geographical sanctuary provided by sympathetic states. The United States learned this, but seemingly forgot it, in Vietnam. Hizballah, for example, enjoys a relatively secure sanctuary in Lebanon and is supported with armaments and funding from Syria and Iran, of increasing destructive power and sophistication, and by money, “...Iran gave Hizballah perhaps 5 to 10 million dollars a month [and] a billion dollars...to help it rebuild after its 2006 War with Israel.” Byman quotes Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, a specialist on the topic who contends that, “Even by Hizballah’s reckoning, it would have taken an additional 50 years for the movement to score the same achievements in the absence of Iranian backing.” State sponsors of terror clearly indicate that Israeli counterterrorism is not limited to a two-dimensional conflict nor to one enemy representing the Arabs/Palestinians. Therefore, a “grand strategy” or “long-term solution” cannot be easily conceived.

Additionally, Byman devotes an unjustifiably large segment of his book to Jewish terrorism. He states that “unfortunately the Israeli state often does not act against Jewish violence.” Although Jewish terrorism is a problem deserving attention, its frequency—relative to thousands of terrorist attacks against Israel—is negligible.

A High Price also carefully considers Israel’s targeted killings and the security barrier. Byman demonstrates that targeted killings are generally important, as they

disrupt organizational ability and eliminate highly skilled technicians and charismatic leaders, all of whom are hard to replace. An Israeli Supreme Court ruling suggested “guidelines” for the targeted killings that would be acceptable to a liberal, Western-style democracy; although Byman indicates that targeted killings also play into a martyrdom mentality that can radicalize and embolden terrorist groups. As Byman acidly notes, “In 2010 the Obama administration issued vaguer but related legal justifications for the aggressive targeted killing campaign it is conducting against al-Qa’ida in Pakistan.” Israel’s judicial oversight of targeted killings appears more comprehensive than that of the United States.

Regarding Israel’s security barrier constructed along the West Bank, Byman notes that “for many Palestinians the barrier is a sign that Israel rejects a peace deal.” Despite its political ramifications, the barrier has been the most effective counterterrorism strategy, essentially eliminating suicide attacks. Undoubtedly, the suicide attacks that catalyzed its construction did not cultivate gracious discussion either.

In 1979 Israel signed its peace treaty with Egypt. Fifteen years later a similar agreement was ratified by the Kingdom of Jordan. In the ensuing time, Israel has endeavored to close the book on its remaining conflicts. To this end, “conflict resolution” courses have been taught at Israel’s major universities. Yet some of those programs have been renamed “conflict management,” reflecting the discouraging prospects for a lasting peace agreement. Byman makes no mention of this. Moreover, he largely ignores the pervasive role of the Palestinian leadership in perpetuating the conflict, an apparent soft bigotry of low expectations that makes peace prospects deceptively one-sided. Byman ultimately concludes, as mentioned earlier, that “the best Israel can hope for is to be hated less.” He never suggests the possibility that a future Palestinian leadership might reject terrorism. He never offers up the possibility that these leaders could have—or might still—take this courageous step.

A final suggestion concerns the readability of Byman’s book. The type fonts employed in the two maps were too small to be legible. Using color (and/or fold-outs) would have helped considerably.

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