

# Anderson, Sean and Stephen Sloan. *Historical Dictionary of Terrorism*. Metuchen, NJ and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1995.

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**Anderson, Sean and Stephen Sloan. *Historical Dictionary of Terrorism* . Metuchen, NJ and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1995.**

Sean Anderson and Stephen Sloan have produced a solid look at the hundreds of terrorist groups that have made their stain on history throughout the years. The volume can comfortably sit on the reference shelf of anyone looking for a quick description of such groups. However, the book is only an introduction; readers should look elsewhere for detailed discussions of individual organizations. My criticisms below are only suggestions for improvement for the second edition, which I also intend to add to my library.

The volume provides five main sections: a list of abbreviations; a chronology; an introduction; the dictionary; and a bibliography. The *list* essentially offers a teaser for the main part of the book groups mentioned herein receive detailed treatments in the text. While 14 pages of abbreviations is impressive, the codebook for the ITERATE dataset lists many more hundreds of names offered by individuals claiming credit for various terrorist attacks. This points up a central feature of this volume it is illustrative, but not encyclopedic.

The *introduction* covers the academic debates on the definition of terrorism. While necessary for a volume of this sort, readers already familiar with these issues will probably skip this section and get to the meat of the discussion.

The *chronology* attempts to highlight the major terrorist depredations that have occurred from AD 66 (the sicarii movement) to the 15 August 1994 arrest of Carlos. However, in many cases, the reader will find similarly noteworthy incidents buried in the descriptions of the major groups. It is unclear what criteria were used in selecting specific incidents for mention in either section. The reviewer's ITERATE database, which the authors draw upon, currently lists over 10,000 incidents from 1968 through 1995. While I agree with the authors on most of their inclusion decisions, there are numerous major incidents not mentioned, including Mir Aimal Kansi's attack at the CIA front gate in January 1993; the arrest of Shaykh Umar 'Abd-al-Rahman's team that planned a major terrorist campaign in New York City in June 1993; the 1994 bombing of the AIMA facility in Buenos Aires; and the 11 December 1994 bombing of a Japanese Air Lines plane by Ramzi Yousef, successor to Carlos as the world's most notorious terrorist.

In using the *dictionary* readers should consult all sections of the book to ensure that they have captured all of the relevant incidents of interest to their research (even the introduction includes material on the Mossad vs Black September war that does not appear perhaps more appropriately in other sections). Readers should also be wary of the potential contradictions in descriptions. For example, the chronology lists the December 1988 bombing of Pan Am 103 as probably the work of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine -General Command (PFLP-GC); the dictionary correctly notes that the case now centers on two Libyans. The volume, by the way, gives the impression that the case is a dispute between the US and Libya. The authors do not mention that

imposition by the United Nations Security Council of sanctions against Libya for harboring the fugitives suggests that it is not a bilateral case.

The description of the groups is done competently, and considering its global sweep, the authors are to be congratulated for a fine piece of scholarship. However, the volume is silent on key entities that have been active recently the Sierra Leone RUF, Chechen rebels, and UNABOMBER (who has been around for 17 years) among them. As the authors venture beyond discussing groups, and include individuals, incidents, tactics, and concepts, one wishes that they had also included anti-terrorist measures. The major international legal conventions, multilateral and bilateral agreements, and Sloan's pioneering work on simulation of negotiation scenarios go unmentioned.

The *bibliography* attempts to cover seminal works, although it can be faulted for being outdated on volumes issued by the Department of State, the Rand Corporation, and the present reviewer. The authors also do not cover films, videos, Internet postings, and thousands of conference papers that have made key contributions.

A difficulty which the authors of these types of reference works face is the fleeting nature of the phenomenon. While the volume well demonstrates that terrorism has been with us a long, long time, the fortunes of the individual groups ebb and flow. Dealing with terrorism is a fast-paced endeavor, which in turn erodes the book's operational utility to those attempting to combat terrorism. The fortunes of the Irish Republican Army and Middle Eastern terrorists have changed dramatically since the book was published. Incidents that caused the most concern during 1995 the Aum Shin Rykyo sarin attack in the Tokyo subway, the Oklahoma City bombing were conducted by entities not known at the time the book was written. Attacks by the "Afghan Arabs," support to terrorists by Sudan, and Ramzi Yousef's campaigns receive minimal mention, although they have become top priorities for anti-terrorist forces. To maintain the dictionary's utility beyond the purview of historians, the authors might consider putting the volume on-line, and updating it as appropriate.

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