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## Terrorism: Documents of International and Local Control

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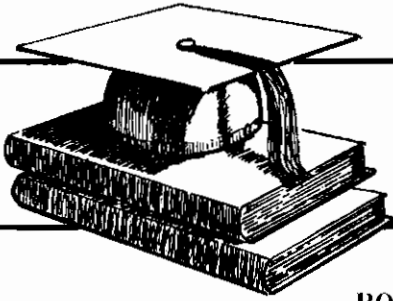
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# PROFESSIONAL READING

## BOOK REVIEWS

Friedlander, Robert A. *Terrorism: Documents of International and Local Control*. Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana, 1979. V. 1, 572pp., V. 2, 573pp.

The March-April 1979 issue of this *Review* included an article entitled "Reflections on Terrorist Havens," written by the author and editor of the volumes here being reviewed; and the May-June 1979 issue included an article entitled "Terrorists, Atoms and the Future," by Augustus R. Norton. The fact that two articles on terrorism were published in successive issues of the *Review*, and so recently, is some indication of the important position this problem presently occupies in the affairs of the world. Professor Friedlander's two-volume work contains a 200-page essay on the subject that gives the reader a historical overview of the problem, followed by a discussion in depth of its many facets, political, ideological, sociological, psychological, and legal; and ends with a not too encouraging look at the future. The balance of the two volumes contains approximately 1,000 pages of documents extending from the 1934 League of Nations debates that were generated by the assassinations of King Alexander of Yugoslavia and Foreign Minister Louis Barthou of France through the 1978 CIA report on *International Terrorism in 1977*.

Anyone who reads Friedlander's essay and the 102 documents reproduced in his work will probably have the same reaction that this reviewer had: "Never have so many said so much and accomplished so little!" (to borrow

from Winston Churchill). The total of 45 years of incidents, investigations, discussions, proposals, votes, etc., consists of: (1) three International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) conventions which certainly have not been very successful in eliminating, or even substantially reducing, aircraft hijackings, probably because this cannot be accomplished as long as there is even one country, like Libya, where the hijacker can find a refuge after completing his criminal act; (2) one regional convention drafted by the Council of Europe, all of whose member States which are potential victims of terrorism and hijackings and none of which gives asylum to terrorists; and (3) a few tongue-in-cheek resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, where a number of members, as the author points out, seems much more interested in protecting terrorists who purport to act for the benefit of national liberation movements than they are in protecting the innocent victims of acts of terrorism.

The commentary by Friedlander makes clear that there is a consensus among the serious students of terrorism that the attention the news media, particularly television, give to every incident contributes substantially to the problem. One of the major objectives of terrorist groups is publicity for their goals. When, for hour after hour, television cameras are trained on a building that has been occupied by armed terrorists who are holding innocent civilians hostage, the terrorists are

accomplishing exactly what they sought—worldwide publicity for their cause. Only when some means is found of reducing or eliminating this publicity will a major step have been taken toward the reduction or elimination of the illness itself.

Despite the comparative paucity of affirmative accomplishment with respect to terrorism by the world community, these two volumes undoubtedly will prove invaluable as concentrated guidance for those involved in this area of world problems, as well as educational for the average citizen in enabling him to better understand what has and has not been done, why more has not been done, and, perhaps, what might possibly be done in the future to solve one of the major world problems of the second half of the 20th century.

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Gelb, Leslie H. and Betts, Richard K.  
*The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1979. 387pp.

The output of books on the American experience in Vietnam has reached the proportions of a small industry. Peter Braestrup, in a bibliographical essay in the Spring 1978 *Wilson Quarterly*, brought us up to date but since then the cascade continues. There is little hope that there will be a letup soon. The best we can hope for is that a good percentage of the new works will be useful for the future historian, or useful to the present student of that long war. This book is worthwhile on both counts.

*Irony* is thoroughly researched, and draws heavily on the *Pentagon Papers*. The study from which those *Papers* came was headed by Gelb in the 1960s. The period covered in the book is the same as that study—from World War II until the Tet 1968 Offensive.

The title pretty much sums up the authors' thesis. Contrary to those who contend that U.S. decisionmakers blundered into the Vietnam quagmire, the authors contend that American leaders knew they were getting into a long struggle. They do not contend, of course, that the events of 1968 were foreseen, but they do say that U.S. leadership recognized victory might well be unreachable. After the Tet 1968 Offensive, LBJ decided to deescalate because the price of continuing was too high, and the key variable in that war of attrition, American public opinion, was itself victim of attrition. Through all of this period "the system worked," say Gelb and Betts.

The book is divided into five parts. Part One is a very useful review of U.S. decisions concerning Vietnam from the Roosevelt administration until LBJ's deescalation decision. Part Two, "The Imperative Not to Lose," is built around the proposition that U.S. leaders believed Vietnam not to be vital in itself, but rather feared the domestic and international implications of the "loss" of Vietnam in the wake of the "losses" of China and the Korean war.

The central proposition of Part Three is that the U.S. presidents involved did what they deemed minimally necessary to keep Vietnam out of Communist hands. Part Four expands on the following proposition:

The Presidents and most of their lieutenants were not deluded by reports of progress and did not proceed on the basis of optimism about winning a near-term or even longer-term military victory. This proposition will engender, no doubt, some controversy, depending on whom one considers presidential "lieutenants," and the year one is talking about.

Part Five, "Conclusions," is the authors' attempt to set forth the lessons of Vietnam—a brave effort for anyone. Here, as they were writing in late 1978,