



Journal of Terrorism Research

Volume 1, Issue 1

Audrey Kurth Cronin. *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*. Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 2009. pp. 330. \$29.95 ISBN: 978-1-4008-3114-2., Reviewed by Cheryl M. Graham, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK

Although the literature devoted to the phenomenon of terrorism is abundant, Audrey Kurth Cronin's latest contribution is welcomingly unique. While avoiding conventional approaches dedicated to the origins, ideology and behavioural patterns of particular groups, Cronin identifies and tackles the obvious, yet frequently overlooked, subject of 'How Terrorism Ends'.

Cronin begins the book by explaining how terrorist campaigns can be understood as a "triad" of interaction between three actors: the group, the government, and the audience. With this triad in mind Cronin then identifies six common patterns that have contributed to the ultimate demise of terrorist campaigns.

1. Capture or killing of a group's leader. (Decapitation).
2. Entry of the group into a legitimate political process. (Negotiation).
3. Achievement of group aims. (Success).
4. Group implosion or loss of public support. (Failure).
5. Defeat and elimination through brute force. (Repression).
6. Transition from terrorism into other forms of violence. (Reorientation).

Each of these pathways is then explained and analysed in consecutive chapters. One of the most impressive aspects of this book is that Cronin consistently assesses these pathways within the framework of the aforementioned triad. The wide range of terrorist campaigns used to support her arguments is also a notable contribution in terms of empirical value.

Chapter one studies the unique role played by leaders of terrorist campaigns before examining opportunities for disruption through decapitation. Case studies facilitating this assessment range from the Kurdistan Workers' Party to Abu Sayyaf. Chapter two shifts the focus from the leadership to the relationship between the state and particular groups before assessing the potential role negotiation can play in marginalising terrorism. After an analysis of both the Northern Ireland and Israeli-Palestinian peace processes Cronin determines that although negotiation is not necessarily a "tactical" answer to terrorism, it is "a wise and durable strategic tool for managing the violence, splintering the opposition, and facilitating its longer term decline." (P. 72)

Journal of Terrorism Research

Volume 1, Issue 1

Chapters three and four both utilise the full triad of group, government and audience interaction to assess the conditions under which terrorist campaigns either succeed or fail outright. Discussing the role of the African National Congress in the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, chapter three draws attention to the fact that terrorist ‘success’ usually coincides with broader geo-political changes, (in this case the ending of the Cold War). With regards to incidents of outright failure, chapter four discusses the internal dynamics of a group that can lead to implosion, infighting, and loss of operational control. The importance of terrorist constituents is also considered with regards to potential ideological irrelevance and public backlash.

The wide range of case studies identified in chapter five highlights the fact that attempts to end terrorism through repression can be identified in nearly every part of the world. However, despite the fact that the use of force is the most common response to terrorism, Cronin concludes that the ability of terrorist groups to leverage state power against itself renders such efforts relatively ineffective.

The final pathway is considered in Chapter six and relates to the groups’ transition from terrorist methods to other forms of violence such as guerrilla attacks and insurgency. Cronin warns that such an “end of terrorism is not necessarily the beginning of peace.” (P. 146)

After outlining these six pathways Cronin assesses their relevance with regards to Al Qaeda. What is particularly outstanding in this respect is that Cronin does not fall victim to the common misconception that Al Qaeda represents a unique threat without historical precedent and is therefore deserving of entirely new modes of thinking. Cronin is therefore well placed to argue that Al Qaeda is not immune to some of the pathways, though not all, that have been shown to contribute to the decline of its terrorist predecessors.

Overall this is a well-written and informative book that deserves to be read not only by academics and students, but also policy-makers involved in the field of terrorism and political violence. As Cronin explains, the only way that “the United States and its allies can effectively respond to twenty-first-century terrorism is to formulate their policy with an understanding of how terrorist campaigns end and then follow a path built on that understanding.” (P. 6)

This review was originally published on the 29/11/10 at <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~cstpv/journal/bookreviews/files/cronin-how-terrorism-ends.html>