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**Daniel Byman. *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism*. Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN: 9780195391824 (hardback, \$34.95).**

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Introduction by Elliot A. Cohen, Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies

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Daniel Byman's *A High Price* straddles two literatures: that on Israeli military and security history, and that on the burgeoning field of counterterrorism studies. On the whole, one should say, it draws on the former to inform the latter, which explains some of the reviewers' reaction to it. It is of interest that counterinsurgency, as Americans understand it, is not part of Israeli strategic discourse: that reflects both the real Israeli predicament and how Israelis have understood it. Byman's own judgment about Israeli successes and failures tacitly acknowledges that the Israelis have never really believed that they can solve their security problem, only manage it.

The book, all the reviewers acknowledge, is as thoroughly researched as a work on Israel by a non-Israeli can hope to be. Indeed, it is as good as most books by native speakers of Hebrew could be. To be sure, when writing on contemporary security matters, particularly in Israel, scholars have to be aware of what is *not* out in public. For example, although scholars have written short articles about the *mista'arvim*, Israeli covert units that masquerade as Arabs for the purpose of snatches in the West Bank or Gaza strip, the full story of these and other special units which have been key to Israel's counterterrorism efforts is only known in outline. Still less is in the public domain on the *Shin Bet*, the Security Service, Israel's internal security agency (as distinct from *Mossad*, its external clandestine service, and the military intelligence bureaucracy, which is vast). There is nothing remotely like Christopher Andrews' *To Defend the Realm*, a superb history of Britain's MI-5 – as limited as even that work is.<sup>1</sup>

Still, Byman has drawn on both historical materials and extensive interviews to provide both history and analysis, going back to the creation of the state of Israel, but with particular emphasis on the last decade or more, which has witnessed two *intifadahs*, or Palestinian uprisings, as well as minor wars in Lebanon and the Gaza strip.

The largest question, addressed by all three reviewers but never fully resolved, is the relationship between Israeli tactics and strategy. As Byman himself points out, the Israelis are overwhelmingly tactical in their approach: they have (as I and my co-authors, Michael Eisenstadt and Andrew Bacevich pointed out in a monograph, *Knives, Tanks and Missiles: Israel's Security Revolution*)<sup>2</sup> ], a kind of 'bag of tricks' approach to the waging of war. But why? Because of the limitations of Israeli politics and politicians (this would seem to be Audrey Kurth Cronin's view)? Because of military culture? Or perhaps because of the limits of Israel's geopolitical predicament? Byman does not claim to write an account of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, let alone the broader Arab-Israeli conflict, of course, but unless

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, Michael Eisenstadt, and Andrew Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks and Missiles: Israel's Security Revolution* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998).

one has some view on Israel's real room for maneuver it is difficult to come to a conclusion on the question as to whether the Israelis are tactical because they have chosen to be so, because it is in their nature, or because it is their destiny?

Some of Byman's topics are particularly sensitive: two, in particular, attract attention from the reviewers, those of targeted killing and torture. Byman has rather more reservations about targeted killing, I think, than some of the reviews may suggest, but even if he does, what is remarkable is the extent to which Israeli doctrine and practice has been accepted, indeed, embraced, by the United States. The routine targeting not only of foreign nationals, but even an American citizen or two, for cold-blooded killing is now the central part of American counter-terrorism – a development that would have shocked even the unsentimental policymakers of, say, the Reagan administration. Some of the discussion that follows might usefully compare American and Israeli practice; and even the extent to which the superpower learned from the micropower ways and means, as well as doctrine for what is now the mainstay of American counterterrorism.

Torture, or whatever euphemism one cares to employ in its stead, is another topic which Byman handles forthrightly but in a sensitive way. As Ami Pedahzur notes, Israel really has faced the canonical "ticking bomb" problem; but how to deal with it, whether to legalize physical pressure in urgent settings, and what kinds of harsh treatment exist but are and will remain unreported, is one topic about which I suspect reviewers and commentators on the book will disagree.

One final issue which the author, reviewers, and readers alike may wish to ponder. Israel makes an unusual case for a study of this kind – a small liberal democracy coping with a variety of conventional and irregular security challenges – some of them existential - throughout its history. How much of relevance to other countries should be taken away from these unique circumstances is worth pondering.

### **Participants:**

**Daniel Byman** is a professor in the Security Studies Program in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and the research director of the Saban Center at Brookings. He received his Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his undergraduate degree from Amherst College. In addition to *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism*, recent books include *The Five Front War: The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad* (Wiley, 2008) and *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism* (Cambridge, 2005). He is currently beginning a book-length project with Benjamin Wittes of the Brookings Institution that examines U.S. counterterrorism involving U.S. citizens and U.S. residents.

**Eliot A. Cohen** is Robert E. Osgood Professor of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. He has served in a variety of roles in the United States government, to include most recently as Counselor of the Department of State (2007-2009), where he dealt with, among other issues, questions of

counterterrorism. His most recent book is *Conquered into Liberty: Two Centuries of Battle Along the Great Warpath that Made the American Way of War* (New York: Free Press, 2011).

**Max Abrahms** is a postdoctoral fellow in the department of political science at Johns Hopkins University. Previously, he has held fellowships at Dartmouth College, Stanford University, Tel Aviv University, the West Point Military Academy, and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. His research focuses on political violence, especially terrorism. Abrahms has published extensively in this area: "The Credibility Paradox: Violence as a Double-Edged Sword in International Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* (2013); "Why Terrorists Overestimate the Odds of Victory," *Perspectives on Terrorism* (Summer 2012); "The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism Revisited," *Comparative Political Studies* (March 2012); "Does Terrorism Really Work? Evolution in the Conventional Wisdom since 9/11," *Defense and Peace Economics* (November 2011); "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Spring 2008); "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists," *Security Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Spring 2007); and "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Fall 2006).

**Audrey Kurth Cronin** is Professor at the School of Public Policy, George Mason University in Arlington, VA. She is the author of many articles and books on terrorism, most recently including *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Demise and Decline of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton University Press, 2009). Her research interests include all aspects of international relations, war, strategy and statecraft, with a particular focus on how conflicts end. She is currently writing a book on strategic responses to cataclysmic attacks by non-state actors, as well as a series of articles on regional exit strategies for Afghanistan.

**Ami Pedahzur** (Ph.D., University of Haifa, Israel 1999) is a professor at the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin. His latest books include: *The Triumph of Israel's Radical Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), with Arie Perliger) and *The Israeli Secret Services and the Struggle Against Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). He is currently working on a book manuscript entitled: "Super-Soldiers: The Evolution and Proliferation of Special Military Forces since WWII".

**A** *High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* is itself a major triumph. With his access to high-level officials and deep knowledge of counterterrorism, Daniel Byman offers us perhaps the best book on the subject to date. It provides a lively, empirically accurate history of Israeli counterterrorism that is current, comprehensive, judicious, even-handed, and long overdue. Although the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in many ways *sui generis*, Byman's analysis also provides insight into a larger debate gripping the academic community—the debate over the political value of violence.

Byman makes clear that Israelis believe military force enhances their security. The book title hails from a statement by the first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, which captured his strategic philosophy: “unless we show the Arabs that there is a high price to pay for murdering Jews, we won't survive” (1). This viewpoint did not die off with the birth of the Jewish State. When Fatah operatives crossed into Israel from Jordan in the early 1970s, Yitzhak Rabin, the Chief of Staff, authorized credible counterattacks “to make it clear to Jordan, and to the population collaborating with Fatah, and to Fatah members themselves, that as long as this side of the border will not be quiet, no quiet will prevail on the other side” (44). Similarly, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon explained the strategic logic of Israeli counterattacks in the Second Intifada, “the Palestinians must be hit and it must be painful. We must cause them losses, victims, so they feel the heavy price” (140). Even more recently, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) described their countermeasures as a “message to terrorists and their accomplices in terrorism that their acts come at a [high] price that will be paid by everyone taking part in hostile terrorist activity” (166). According to an IDF official featured in the book, the purpose of Palestinian bloodshed and indignities is to “let Arabs know this is what happens when you fuck with the Jews” (203). Unfortunately for Israelis, though, polls show that most Palestinians believe that terrorism also pays (138).

Ironically, *A High Price* illustrates that meting out pain is costly for both sets of actors notwithstanding their mutual belief in the utility of force. Byman emphasizes the perils of “A tough Israeli response to violence [which has] only fueled the anger on which terrorism feeds” and “provoked hatred and hostility towards Israel” (365, 167). More specifically, “hard-hitting Israeli methods have at times weakened Palestinian moderates, empowered radicals, reduced Palestinian government capabilities for fighting terrorism, soured the Palestinian population on concessions, and created difficult facts on the ground for negotiators” (348). Byman peppers his book with such admonitions, “through killings, arrests, checkpoints, and other aggressive measures Israel has simply replaced one generation of angry Palestinians with another...” (365). This trend is not limited to the dyadic conflict between Israelis and Palestinians; in combating Fatah, the IDF inadvertently helped to create not only Hamas, but also Hizbollah, which continues to prosper under Israeli reprisals (70, 133). In Operation Grapes of Wrath, for instance, the controversial sixteen-day campaign in April 1996 “increased Hizbollah's popularity” and “led to an increase in the number of attacks” (238-9). A decade later, Israel tried to finish the job in Operation Specific Gravity. But the violent campaign again boosted the Party of God's

popularity and lethality (253). Not only has Israeli muscle frequently backfired against terrorists, but it has eroded the international support which is essential for countering them (2, 356).

Palestinian terrorism is also a strategic liability. It has “outraged Israelis,” “stiffened Israeli resolve,” “led voters” to embrace Sharon and other hardliners, “pushed” Israeli governments “to respond in kind,” made it “difficult to avoid retaliation,” boosted IDF support to “far higher levels than usual,” encouraged Israel “to effectively abandon negotiations,” and for many tragically “silenced any remaining hope that the peace process might be revived” (24, 52, 130, 140-141, 145). Critics of the “special relationship” often complain that Washington fails to bridle Israeli relations with the Palestinians.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the Israeli government tends to adopt a softer response to the Palestinians than the public would like following terrorist attacks (142). Still, “Israel’s history suggests that when terrorism is rampant, trust disappears and Israeli politics dictate a return to arms until the threat abates” (348). In these ways, Byman underscores, Palestinian terrorism impedes progress on reaching a political compromise with the Israelis. Moreover, Palestinian violence also incurs audience costs because “internationally, terrorism harms the legitimacy of the Palestinian cause while strengthening that of Israel.” Among Americans in particular, “Media images of brutal attacks on children and old people [have] tainted the Palestinian struggle” (49). Attacks by Jewish terrorists fare no better politically as they typically “strengthen calls to dismantle settlements and rein in these extremists” (294).

Byman is no Neville Chamberlain, however. He stresses that not all forms of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are unproductive. An important exception is targeted killings, which slay terrorist leaders with limited impact to the local population. Byman implies that although civilian harm risks spawning new terrorists (201), “force is still necessary against the hard-core of the organization” and “focusing counterterrorism efforts on a small number of skilled operators pays off” (366, 377). This approach “works” less by coercing Palestinian accommodation through fear than by attriting the pool of terrorists, which, contrary to common opinion, is neither infinite nor inexhaustible (312).

His analysis accords with a growing body of research on the importance of target selection. Steven David agrees that targeted killings are an effective tool for knocking off militant leaders without needlessly punishing and thereby inflaming the Palestinian populace.<sup>2</sup> In a recent statistical study in *International Security* that is unrestricted to the Israeli case, Patrick Johnston presents additional empirical evidence that decapitation strikes impede attacks by eliminating hard-to-replace terrorist leaders.<sup>3</sup> Broadly, these studies also

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “The Israel lobby,” *London Review of Books* 28 (2006): 3-12.

<sup>2</sup> Steven R. David, “Israel’s Policy of Targeted Killing,” *Ethics and International Affairs* 17 (2003): 111-126.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Johnston, “Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation in Counterinsurgency Campaigns,” *International Security* 36 (forthcoming 2012).

cohere with Robert Pape's research on aerial bombing, which finds that governments are more likely to prevail when they target military personnel than civilians—an assessment upheld in subsequent statistical analysis.<sup>4</sup> More recently, Kathryn Cochran and Alexander Downes exploit variation in the use of civilian victimization campaigns on interstate war outcomes from 1816 to 2007. Their results show that politicians and military leaders err in thinking that civilian punishment pays. Though obviously successful in offing countless civilians, indiscriminate bombings, sieges, missile strikes, and other painful methods against the population do not boost government outcomes regardless of the physical costs.<sup>5</sup> Together, these findings reinforce Byman's assessment that greater restraint—or at least selectivity—will enhance Israeli counterterrorism effectiveness.

Additionally, his view of Palestinian terrorism dovetails with other research on the costs to non-state actors of targeting civilians. Stathis Kalyvas has developed a rationalist framework that predicts a negative political return for militant groups engaged in indiscriminate violence.<sup>6</sup> In a recent statistical paper in *Comparative Political Studies*, I analyze the political outcomes of 125 violent non-state campaigns. All else being equal, non-state violence significantly lowers the odds of coercing government compliance when directed against civilians as opposed to military personnel.<sup>7</sup> Economists are finding complementary results using public opinion instead of policy outcomes as the dependent variable. Without exception, their research shows that terrorism does not cow citizens of target countries into supporting more dovish politicians. Quite the opposite, the indiscriminate bloodshed systematically raises popular support for right-wing leaders, who are typically less amendable to negotiating with adversaries. In a couple of statistical papers, for instance, Claude Berrebi and Esteban Klor find that terrorist fatalities within Israel significantly boost local support for right-bloc parties opposed to accommodation, such as the Likud.<sup>8</sup> Other quantitative work demonstrates that the most lethal terrorist attacks in Israel are the most likely to induce this rightward electoral shift. The authors conclude that heightening the pain to civilians tends to “backfire on the goals of terrorist

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<sup>4</sup> Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Michael Horowitz and Dan Reiter, “When Does Aerial Bombing Work?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45 (2001): 147–173.

<sup>5</sup> Kathryn McNabb Cochran and Alexander B. Downes, “It’s a Crime, but Is It a Blunder? The Efficacy of Targeting Civilians in War,” Working paper: Duke University, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria,” *Rationality and Society* 11 (1999): 243–285.

<sup>7</sup> Max Abrahms, “The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism Revisited,” *Comparative Political Studies* (forthcoming 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Claude Berrebi and Esteban F. Klor, “Are Voters Sensitive to Terrorism: Direct Evidence from the Israeli Electorate,” *American Political Science Review* 102 (2008): 279–301; and Claude Berrebi and Esteban F. Klor, “On Terrorism and Electoral Outcomes: Theory and Evidence from the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50 (2006): 899–925.

factions by hardening the stance of the targeted population.”<sup>9</sup> These trends appear to be the international norm, not Israel-specific. Christophe Chowanietz recently analyzed variation in public opinion within France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States from 1990 to 2006. In each of the target countries, terrorist attacks shifted the electorate to the political right in proportion to their lethality. More anecdotally, similar observations have been registered after mass casualty terrorist attacks in Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, the Philippines, Russia, and Turkey.<sup>10</sup> In a summary of the literature, RAND concludes: “Terrorist fatalities, with few exceptions, increase support for the bloc of parties associated with a more-intransigent position. Scholars may interpret this as further evidence that terrorist attacks against civilians do not help terrorist organizations achieve their stated goals (Abrahms 2006)”<sup>11</sup> These studies strengthen Byman’s narrative that any strategic benefits of Palestinian terrorism have long expired.

In theory, violence should dwindle when it proves counterproductive. Already, several new empirical studies suggest that violence is indeed at historic lows internationally.<sup>12</sup> When, then, will Israelis and Palestinians also desist, particularly against the populace? Only when they, too, determine that civilian harm comes at a prohibitively high price not only to adversaries, but to themselves as well.

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<sup>9</sup> Eric D. Gould and Esteban F. Klor, “Does Terrorism Work?” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 125 (2010): 1507.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, John Mueller, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats and Why We Believe Them* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 184; Peter R. Neumann and Michael L.R. Smith, *The Strategy of Terrorism: How It Works and Why It Fails* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 587; and Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 52.

<sup>11</sup> Claude Berrebi, “The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism: What Matters and Is Rational Choice Theory Helpful?” in P.K. Davis and K. Cragin (eds.), *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together* (Santa Monica, Calif: RAND, 2009), 189-190.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011); and Joshua Goldstein, *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (New York: Dutton, 2011). For the related argument that nonviolence outperforms violence at least in non-state challenges, see Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict,” *International Security* 33 (2008): 7-44; and Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia Press, 2011).



With his characteristic sense of good timing, Dan Byman has delivered for an eager audience a clear-eyed analysis of Israel's counterterrorism. On a topic primarily characterized by polarization and vitriol, this is a brave book. The shock of the 9/11 attacks sent American military and intelligence leaders on a quest to understand the best practices of counterterrorism. Al-Qaeda's Islamist credentials and tactics, combined with the storied reputation of Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the Shin Bet (Israel's domestic intelligence service), briskly drew attention to Israel's controversial practices and potential lessons for the United States. Byman's *A High Price* is a welcome contribution to forceful debates over effective counterterrorism.

Byman's interesting and well-written examination of Israel's counterterrorism policies fills a yawning gap in a field flooded with narrow studies of phenomena such as suicide attacks, usually analyzed innocent of their historical, cultural or political context. With his intelligence background, language skills and strong knowledge of the Middle East, not to mention entrée to high-level Israeli officials, Byman delivers a sophisticated book cognizant of the Israeli government's challenges within a dangerous neighborhood. While appropriate for a general audience, the book is targeted at "soldiers, intelligence officers, and peacemakers" (381) not academics. Its new information arises mainly out of interviews, with primary sources overwhelmingly Israeli not Arab (as Byman acknowledges, p. 6); but the imbalance is mitigated by the author's in-depth regional expertise, and extensive use of public statements and secondary sources. Gripped by new details and personal accounts, I read the book straight through, learned a lot by doing so, and plan to re-visit it in years to come.

*A High Price* is organized both chronologically and thematically, a structure with strengths and weaknesses. The first two sections (more than half the book) flow chronologically, from the founding of the modern state of Israel in 1948 to 2009, including the Oslo peace process, the rise of Hamas, and the Second Intifada. From here, the narrative shifts to a thematic study of each enemy, with four chapters on Lebanese Hizballah (1982-2006) and two on Jewish Terrorism (1967-2009), retracing some years of the chronology. The concluding section covers today's hot-button issues such as Interrogation (Chapter 20), Targeted Killings (Chapter 21), and the Security Barrier (Chapter 22), ending with an insightful set of policy recommendations.

The division of the book into sections that align with Israel's enemies—Hamas, Hizballah, Jewish terrorism—suits specialists who concentrate on individual groups; but it is an unpromising framework for analyzing the efficacy of Israeli counterterrorism overall. Indeed, the compartmented structure encourages the very behavior that the book eloquently decries: a failure to integrate counterterrorism tactics into effective strategy. In the introduction Byman observes: "Many of Israel's problems come down to the issue of tactics versus strategy. The Israelis are usually strong tactically.... At the same time, however, Israel often blunders from crisis to crisis without a long-term plan for how to solve the problem once and for all" (5). I wish that Byman had addressed this problem

consistently throughout the pages that follow. It is easy for the reader to be drawn into fascinating accounts of individual episodes, tactics and operations and yet remain unconscious of the broader strategic priorities of the country as a whole.

Especially given the subtitle (“*Triumphs and Failures*”), it would have been helpful if the meaning of “success” and “failure” in Israel’s counterterrorism were tackled directly at the outset. Given vigorous disputes within the field about these concepts—and especially among those who formulate U.S. counterterrorism policy—this question is important to the targeted audience; yet the concept shifts in different sections.<sup>1</sup> Among other things, “success” is described as a reduction in terrorist attacks (366), enabling ordinary people to live their lives without fear (344), or avoidance of military casualties (338). With no clarity about Israel’s objectives, it is hard to evaluate costs and benefits in reaching them.

The problem is starkest with Byman’s unqualified defense of Israel’s targeted killings: “Given the drawbacks, why does Israel continue with targeted killings? The reason is simple: targeted killings work. The strikes have disrupted Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, and other Palestinian terrorist groups; they have depleted the number of skilled operatives; and they have forced the remaining militants to spend more time in hiding than in plotting future attacks. Targeted killings are not the only important tool in Israel’s arsenal, but when these killings are combined with the security barrier and an increased ability to arrest suspects, the number of Israeli deaths from terrorism declines precipitously” (312). Long-term costs are unaccounted for here, arguably including (in the example of Hamas) the undercutting of moderates, election of a Hamas government in the Gaza strip and the absence of a credible negotiating partner for the future.<sup>2</sup> This is surprising, especially given Byman’s earlier, more-nuanced writing on this topic.<sup>3</sup> It is hard to argue that targeted killings have made Israel more secure—i.e., whether they “work”—without a more serious strategic analysis of Israel’s interests over the long-term. The point is of particular concern because of the obvious parallels with expanded use of drones by the United States since 2008: “Targeted killings are a necessary tool of Israeli counterterrorism and can be useful for other countries fighting terrorists based out of sanctuaries they do not control,” Byman writes (323).

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<sup>1</sup> On the meaning of success and failure in terrorism and counterterrorism, see, inter alia, Alan Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works: Understanding the Threat, Responding to the Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Nadav Morag, “Measuring Success in Coping with Terrorism: The Israeli Case,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol. 28, No. 4 (July-August 2005), pp. 307-20; Max Abrahms, “Why Terrorism Does Not Work,” *International Security* 31, No. 2 (Fall 2006), pp. 42-78; and “Success,” Chapter three of Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 73-93.

<sup>2</sup> See, inter alia, David Kretzmer, “Targeted Killing of Suspected Terrorists: Extra-judicial Executions or Legitimate Means of Defence?” *European Journal of International Law* 16, no. 2 (2005), pp. 171-212; Yael Stein, “By Any Name Illegal and Immoral: Response to Israel’s Policy of Targeted Killing,” *Ethics and International Affairs* 17, no. 3 (2003), pp. 127-137; Mohammed M. Hafez and Joseph M. Hatfield, “Do Targeted Assassinations Work? A Multivariate Analysis of Israel’s Controversial Tactic during Al-Aqsa Uprising,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, No. 4 (June 2006), pp. 359-82.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Byman, “Do Targeted Killings Work?” *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 2 (March-April 2006), pp. 95-111.

Israel is changing, and these changes both contribute to and result from the wrenching challenges of counterterrorism it has faced. The state is experiencing a sharp shift to the Right in its domestic politics. The old guard that established the Jewish state, secular pioneers who built the kibbutzim and spoke in terms of shared gain and sacrifice, are being overwhelmed politically by a shifting post-Cold War demographic with greater orthodox religiosity and different priorities. Jews emigrating from the former Soviet Union and its satellites are generally more conservative in their views than are the Europeans who settled in the aftermath of the Second World War. Perhaps more important, the youngsters who grew up in the shadow of the two intifadas, with the images of September 11<sup>th</sup> dominating the international headlines, now divided from the day-to-day contact with Palestinians that Israel's older citizens once had, are increasingly intolerant and conservative in their views. As Byman points out, this societal shift inevitably affects the military, with a growing proportion of IDF officers and members of elite units coming from the conservative sectors of Israeli society. One result is increasing ideological support for the settlers' movement and its muscular progress in establishing new outposts, some of which enjoy generous funding from abroad and are remarkably affluent. Secular military officers, including heroes from Israel's wars, privately worry about the effects on the army of having to defend these outposts—or worse, to police or dismantle them. As the settlements expand, prospects for any sort of peace settlement with a 'Palestinian state' contract and there is no vision for the future. Byman quotes one Israeli expert saying, "we are the best tacticians in the world, but Israelis don't understand the word *strategy*" (346). I disagree. Like it or not, Israel's long-term strategic thinking is being done by the settlers.

The Israelis are arguably the best counterterrorist tacticians in the world. No one can fault them for wanting to remove the threat of rocket and terrorist attacks so as to protect civilians within this small, close-knit state. Indeed, their beating back of terrorist attacks in recent years is impressive. With a reduction in incidents, many Israelis understandably want to keep things as they are now; yet broader factors undermine their stability nonetheless. Israel will not achieve strategic security until it grapples with the Palestinian question in the occupied territories, and confronts economic and political discrimination against Arab Israelis at home. Recent episodes of right-wing violence against African Jews are also very worrisome. Some worry that the foundations of Israeli democracy are being eroded domestically, even as the sweeping changes of the Arab spring and winter unfold. Israel is increasingly isolated and threatened regionally and internationally.

But over and over, Israeli counterterrorism seems to be driven mainly by anger and fear. In Lebanon, for example, Byman argues, "Public anger more than strategic logic drove massive military operations against Hizballah in 1993, 1996, and 2006" (374). On the 2008-9 Gaza war, he writes: "Keeping Israel's goals vague allowed Israel's leaders to avoid messy fights about what, exactly, they wanted to accomplish. Ambiguity also made it harder to paint the conflicts as a failure should things go wrong. But it didn't make a coherent strategy likely. This strategic confusion resulted in operations objectives that were just as murky" (195).

Effective counterterrorism must place short-term gains within a long-term strategy. Byman's strongest policy recommendation at the end is that Israel should develop an integrated decision-making process that will help government officials think through the long-term implications of their approaches: "this disjuncture between Israel's superb military and intelligence services and its poor decision making shows up on almost every important issue related to counterterrorism" (346). This is excellent advice, but is it urgent? As the United States seems to follow the Israeli lead in its counterterrorism tactics, the issue extends beyond one country's experience. After reading the book, I am not sure whether Byman believes that Israeli counterterrorism is succeeding or failing *strategically*. In short, is Israel's 'high price' paying off?

**D**aniel Byman is a gifted author. His engaging style turns this academic volume into a fascinating book. In the first section 'Early Years' (chapters 1-3) Byman sets the stage for the subsequent three sections in which he offers a meticulous analysis of the main theatres in which Israel engaged in counterterrorism operations (Palestinian terrorism, the Lebanese arena and Jewish terrorism). Each of these sections is structured in a chronological fashion and offers a detailed and fascinating historical narrative. The combination of the exotic topic and Byman's engaging writing style constitutes a winning formula. So far the book had drawn the attention of broad audiences and generated enthusiastic reviews from leading figures in the field.

Another significant element of this winning formula is the quality and accuracy of the research. The history of the Israeli security apparatus in general and its counterterrorism experience in particular tends to be tainted by urban legends, which in many cases find their way into academic works. Byman did not fall into this trap. His research is meticulous, as indicated in the detailed footnotes. Byman used only reliable sources both in English and Hebrew. However, in my opinion, the most significant empirical achievement of the author stems from his fieldwork. Oral history serves as a focal source in any study of contemporary clandestine issues. As an Israeli who has studied the topic, I must admit that as I read the book I became increasingly envious. Byman succeeded in putting together a fascinating mosaic which is based on a large number of interviews with policy makers, practitioners and academics from Israel, the U.S. and the Arab world. While I was not surprised that Byman managed to gain the trust of American and Arab officials, I was humbled by his ability to access the highest echelons of the Israeli security community and to secure interviews, a task that I found Sisyphean. As he had already proven in his previous works, Byman has a unique talent for conducting interviews and attaining information even on the most sensitive topics. I doubt that there is any single scholar who can provide a more detailed and reliable account of this interesting story.

I would like to focus on the last part of the book which includes six chapters. In this concluding section Byman offers a broad, sophisticated, dispassionate and analytical discussion of the dilemmas which are inherent to the struggle against terrorism. Although the discussion relies on Israeli counterterrorism experiences, it has broad implications for other countries including the U.S.. This section is a must-read for academics who are interested in theory formulation as well as for every policymaker and civil servant who encounters the complex challenge of responding to terrorism. Chapters twenty to twenty-three are especially significant for policy makers in the U.S.

Chapter twenty, which is properly entitled 'Interrogations Dilemmas,' deals with the intrinsic tension between the necessity to obtain information, sometimes under severe time constraints, on the one hand, and the expectations that security forces of democratic regimes should not cross some moral and constitutional boundaries. The worst case scenario, which unfortunately was realized in Israel more than once (see for example the case of Bus 300, 303-4), is when those who are responsible for counterterrorism become

dangerously similar to the terrorists themselves. Thus, they undermine the very principles that they vow to protect. Such dilemmas have preoccupied scholars of counterterrorism for decades.<sup>1</sup> Unlike most scholars, who approach issue from a legal, philosophical or deductive theoretical perspective, Byman chose an inductive historical approach. He offers a comprehensive discussion of the dilemmas that accompanied the State of Israel since its very first days and have recently become an integral part of the American political discourse. Notwithstanding the differences between the two cases, American scholars and policy makers will find the story highly insightful. Hopefully, they will also draw conclusions from the long and in many cases frustrating attempt of the State of Israel to find the balance between defending the state from the threat of terrorism and at the same time minimizing the subversion of its democratic foundations by its own agents.

Chapter twenty-one, 'Targeted Killings: Kill or be Killed,' is as relevant. Byman, who established a reputation as a leading authority in the field,<sup>2</sup> argues that from an operational perspective, Israel's policy of targeted assassinations has caused its adversaries significant setbacks and thus has proven its effectiveness. Furthermore, oftentimes an assassination of a formidable figure in a terrorist group boosts the morale of the terrorized population that otherwise feels helpless. However, this tactic comes at a high price and must be assessed in a broader context. As Byman demonstrates, such operations are never as surgical as we would like to believe. In many instances 'bad guys' are surrounded by innocent civilians, including children, who by default become collateral damage. Beyond the fact that the killing of non-combatants is horrific and subverts the moral and legal foundations of the democratic state, it also feeds the flames of the conflict. Furthermore, senior policy makers and security officials who are suspected of being involved in the formulation and execution of such operations can become targets themselves. While in the 1970s Israel and the Palestinians were caught up in a cycle of assassinations and counter assassinations that took place mostly in Europe, today the center of gravity has moved to the legal arena. Israeli officials face a growing risk of being indicted in various countries around the world for the perpetration of war crimes. They can also be subjected to civil suits. The lessons that Byman draws from the Israeli experience are invaluable for policy makers in the United States today. Over the last decade the U.S. intelligence community and armed forces were presented with the complicated challenge of confronting elusive non-state enemies. These adversaries usually operate beyond the reach of the American criminal justice system. These facts do not reduce the level of expectations posed by both the public and politicians on the security establishment. The counterterrorism community is expected to

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<sup>1</sup> See: Laura K. Donohue, *The Cost of Counterterrorism: Power, Politics, and Liberty* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Emanuel Gross, *The Struggle of Democracy against Terrorism : Lessons from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006); Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (London: Macmillan, 1977); Amos N. Guiora, *Fundamentals of Counterterrorism* (New York, NY: Wolters Kluwer Law & Business, Aspen Publishers, 2008); Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> For other works on the topic see: Michael L. Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War: Torture, Assassination, and Blackmail in an Age of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

thwart the attempts by these unlawful combatants to launch attacks against the U.S. Recent technological developments, most notably in the realm of unmanned aerial vehicles, introduced new modes of operation. Over the last few years we have witnessed a steady increase in the execution of targeted killings by drones mostly in Afghanistan and Pakistan. While so far this tactic seems to be effective, Byman reminds us that we should not ignore its less desirable consequences.

Chapter twenty-two, 'Building a Security Barrier,' is also highly relevant for the U.S., but in a different context. Once again, Byman offers a balanced analysis of the debate in Israel over the erection of the security barrier in the West Bank as a countermeasure to the suicide bombings campaign which originated from the Palestinian controlled areas in the West Bank. In this case the gap between the Israeli and American cases is wider. Israel erected the barrier for the purpose of protecting its civilians from terrorist attacks and to a lesser extent to set facts on the ground by unilaterally drawing a border with a future Palestinian state whose route corresponds with the Israeli interest. In the U.S. the debate over the erection of an actual barrier on the border with Mexico is mostly confined, at least at this point in time, to the issue of illegal immigration. However, the most significant part of this chapter deals with other layers of defense against terrorism. While most scholars of counterterrorism tend to focus on offensive responses, a growing number of analysts believe that supplementing the offensive counterterrorism doctrine with defensive measures (aka anti-terrorism) is likely to yield better outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Thus, there is a growing tendency in the U.S. to observe and imitate the Israeli approach to airport and aviation security as well as to hardening soft targets.

Chapter twenty-three, 'Reorganizing for Counterterrorism' might be the most important one for the U.S. as well as other countries which historically have not had to cope with a continuous threat of terrorism. It would be unfair to compare Israel, a small country with a limited number of intelligence and security agencies to the United States, a superpower with a huge intelligence community, the strongest military in the world, and hundreds of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. Having said that, Byman's meticulous analysis of the obstacles that the Israeli counterterrorism community had to overcome which include, among other things, intelligence sharing, division of labor, and operational responsibilities, highlights some generic problems that are inherent to intelligence, military, and law enforcement agencies around the world. These lessons can serve as an important point of departure for those who are charged with the task of devising a counterterrorism doctrine and a corresponding apparatus in a highly tangled bureaucratic environment.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ashton. B. Carter, "The Architecture of Government in the Face of Terrorism," *International Security* 26, no. 3 (2001); Kiki. Caruson and Susan. A. MacManus, "Mandates and Management Challenges in the Trenches: An Intergovernmental Perspective on Homeland Security," *Public Administration Review* 66, no. 4 (2006).

<sup>4</sup> Richard. K. Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge and Power in American National Security* (Columbia University Press, 2009); Amy. B. Zegart, *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

To sum up, Byman's book is the definitive account of Israel's counterterrorism experience thus far. However, beyond its historical value, the analysis of Israel's long trial and error process turns this book into an invaluable manual of do and don'ts in the struggle against terrorism. It should become mandatory reading for counterterrorism analysts, intelligence officers, law enforcement agents and, most importantly, policy makers around the world before they assume office.



**Author's Response by Daniel Byman, Georgetown University and the Brookings Institution**

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I am grateful for the praise that Max Abrahms, Audrey Kurth Cronin, and Ami Pedahzur bestow on my book, *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism*. In different ways, all three scholars have influenced my thinking on Israel's efforts to fight terrorism and on counterterrorism in general, so their endorsement of my work brings me more than the usual happiness that comes with a positive review.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, my esteem for their work means that their assessments and criticism deserve more than the usual consideration.

Each scholar brings up several relevant critiques and draws interesting implications from my findings. Rather than engage in a point by point response, let me single out several areas that cut across their comments that I felt were particularly compelling.

Case comparability is a vital issue. Abrahms and Pedahzur both explain how Israel's experience is relevant for other countries and discuss whether the findings in my book on issues such as targeted killings and defensive measures against terrorists are supported by other research in the field. The differences between Israel and other democracies are indeed vast. Perhaps only India suffers from a comparable terrorism problem – one that involves multiple terrorist groups, state sponsorship, and varying levels of severity -- and that sprawling, billion plus, polyglot nation's characteristics contrast markedly with tiny, and far more homogenous, Israel. The United States too faces a different threat, most notably in that its biggest foe, al-Qa'ida, is based far from U.S. shores, and the danger that it poses is to U.S. allies ensures that Washington has plenty of cooperation. Al-Qa'ida is also more fanatical, and thus bloodier but less strategically formidable than Fatah, Hizballah, Hamas, and other Israeli foes. So both the terrorist threat and the means of fighting it vary widely.

Yet I wrote this book on Israel with the experiences of the United States, and to a lesser extent other democracies, with their struggles against terrorism in mind. As Pedahzur points out, issues ranging from the use of heavy coercion in interrogation to defensive barriers and targeted killings – some of these counterterrorism practices confined largely to Israel – are now at the core of U.S. policy. Israel, having fought a range of foes in a range of ways, offers a useful, if at times painful, model for what works and what does not. This model must be amended to take into account the characteristics of the groups in question (al-Qa'ida is not Hamas, and Hamas is not Hizballah). And what works in Israel politically

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<sup>1</sup> All three authors have written extensively on terrorism and counterterrorism issues. For readers interested in some of their more recent works relevant to my own topic, let me single out: Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy" *International Security*, Vol. 32, no. 4 (2008), pp. 78-105; Max Abrahms, "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists," *Security Studies*, Vol. 16, no. 2 (2007), pp. 223-253; Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism," *International Security*, Vol. 27, no. 3 (Winter 2002-2003), pp. 30-58; Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, 2011); Ami Pedahzur, *The Israeli Secret Services and the Struggle against Terrorism* (Columbia, 2010); and Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* (Columbia, 2011).

and operationally may not work in other countries. But the richness of the Israeli experience, and the fact that it is often an early adopter, make it invaluable for study. As Abrahms points out, broader work on topics such as terrorism backfiring often corroborates specific findings on Israel. My own research suggests that many of the techniques that Israel first used may have a similar level of effectiveness, and face similar problems, in other countries should they adopt them.

Perhaps the most important criticism, raised pointedly by Cronin but suggested by Abrahms and Pedahzur as well, concerns the related issues of determining effectiveness and defining victory. When discussing whether Israel has succeeded or failed in its counterterrorism efforts, one is tempted to fall back on Chinese Prime Minister Chou En Lai's supposed response to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's query about the impact of the French revolution on Western civilization: "it's too soon to tell."<sup>2</sup> However neither policymakers, nor scholars, have the luxury of waiting centuries to render their judgments as to what does and does not work.

Cronin is right: I did not tackle these vital issues squarely in my work, and a more detailed examination would have enriched my findings.<sup>3</sup> In my introduction (3), I note that Israel's counterterrorism experience is often lauded as brilliant or lambasted as bungled. Going beyond this point, however, is difficult, since effectiveness and victory vary both historically and politically. The Israel of 1955, a poor country fearing war on multiple borders and having few strong states as allies, worried about its extinction and could 'absorb' deaths from terrorism as its leaders focused on the threat of interstate war. Israel today, far stronger and more secure, is also far more sensitive to lives lost and even to the return of the remains of its dead. So what worked at one historical period may be a political non-starter in another.

It is also vital to determine which criteria to use to judge effectiveness.. If the bar were an absolute one, based on whether a country can thrive and its citizens can live with (as opposed to in) the fear terrorists generate, Israel is doing well. But if the bar is based on continued attacks and the degree to which terrorism shapes other political decisions, then Israel's record is far poorer.

This question of success also gets a core political question: what does the state want? As Cronin points out, some groups like the religious nationalist settlers know what they want and have a plan for achieving it. What Israel's elected government wants, however, is often unclear. If the answer is peace with the Palestinians, then Israel must adjust counterterrorism to empower Palestinian moderates as well as to weaken violent voices

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<sup>2</sup> The legendary remark apparently stemmed from some confusion on Zhou's part. Kissinger was indeed asking about the 1789 revolution, but Zhou's response was referring to the unrest in Paris in 1968. Richard Macgregor, "Zhou's Cryptic Caution Lost in Translation," *Financial Times*, June 10, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> I don't think that not providing a definition of success or a systematic exploration is inherent to the structure I used for my work, as Cronin suggests. Indeed, that structure in a way risks redundancy, as I at times relate the same issues in a chronological and functional way.

like those in Hamas. If the answer is to preserve or expand the Jewish settlements on the West Bank, then counterterrorism success is about managing the inevitable anger this creates and reducing the resulting attacks. Twenty years ago, as Israel embarked on peace talks, the answer to this core question seemed clear, and the purpose of counterterrorism was to enable the peace talks to succeed while keeping Israelis safe. Today, as peace talks stagnate, Israel's long-term goals are uncertain, and counterterrorism often operates in a political void.

An important implication is that political leaders in general must at times stand up to their own public. Abrahms points out that in theory violence should dwindle as it becomes counterproductive. Yet so often it doesn't. The scars from one round of fighting may not heal fully, and they in turn foster a culture of violence and recrimination that brings the parties farther away from peaceful resolution of a conflict. Here, as academics, we must leave the crisp world of strategic analysis and rational models and venture into the fuzzier, more constructivist intellectual realm. Here we learn about path-dependent conflicts, where violence shapes narratives and worldviews that color an understanding of the world and how to respond. On both the Israeli and Palestinian side, there is a strong view that the other does not truly want peace, and this skepticism makes politicians on both sides far less likely to take the risks that a peace deal requires.

Counterterrorism must succeed if Israelis and Palestinians are to escape from this vicious circle. That success, however, has allowed Israelis to focus on other issues, ranging from social justice to the status of African immigrants. This shift in focus is often healthy and vital for Israeli democracy, but it should not come at the price of putting the Palestinian issue, and the peace process in general, on the back burner.

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