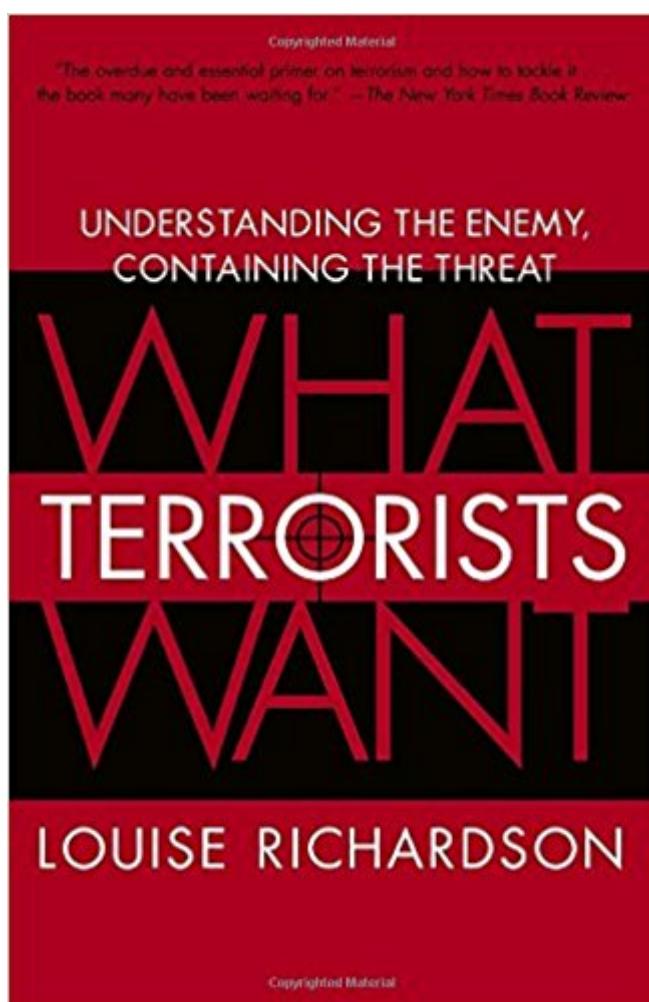


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# What Terrorists Want: Understanding The Enemy, Containing The Threat



## Synopsis

“This is at the top of my list for best books on terrorism.” Jessica Stern, author of *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* How can the most powerful country in the world feel so threatened by an enemy infinitely weaker than we are? How can loving parents and otherwise responsible citizens join terrorist movements? How can anyone possibly believe that the cause of Islam can be advanced by murdering passengers on a bus or an airplane? In this important new book, groundbreaking scholar Louise Richardson answers these questions and more, providing an indispensable guide to the greatest challenge of our age. After defining once and for all what terrorism is, Richardson explores its origins, its goals, what’s to come, and what is to be done about it. Having grown up in rural Ireland and watched her friends join the Irish Republican Army, Richardson knows from firsthand experience how terrorism can both unite and destroy a community. As a professor at Harvard, she has devoted her career to explaining terrorist movements throughout history and around the globe. From the biblical Zealots to the medieval Islamic Assassins to the anarchists who infiltrated the cities of Europe and North America at the turn of the last century, terrorists have struck at enemies far more powerful than themselves with targeted acts of violence. Yet Richardson understands that terrorists are neither insane nor immoral. Rather, they are rational political actors who often deploy carefully calibrated tactics in a measured and reasoned way. What is more, they invariably go to great lengths to justify their actions to themselves, their followers, and, often, the world. Richardson shows that the nature of terrorism did not change after the attacks of September 11, 2001; what changed was our response. She argues that the Bush administration’s “global war on terror” was doomed to fail because of an ignorance of history, a refusal to learn from the experience of other governments, and a fundamental misconception about how and why terrorists act. As an alternative, Richardson offers a feasible strategy for containing the terrorist threat and cutting off its grassroots support. The most comprehensive and intellectually rigorous account of terrorism yet, *What Terrorists Want* is a daring intellectual tour de force that allows us, at last, to reckon fully with this major threat to today’s global order. *KIRKUS*- starred review “The short answer? Fame and payback, perhaps even a thrill. The long answer? Read this essential, important primer. Terrorist groups have many motives and ideologies, notes Richardson (Executive Dean/Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study), but they tend to similar paths: They are founded by mature, well-educated men but staffed by less learned and certainly more pliable youths; they are fueled by a sense of injustice and the conviction that only they are morally equipped to combat it; they see themselves as defenders and not aggressors; they often define the terms of battle. And, of

course, this commonality: "Terrorists have elevated practices that are normally seen as the excesses of warfare to routine practice, striking noncombatants not as an unintended side effect but as a deliberate strategy." Thus massacres, suicide bombings and assassinations are all in a day's work. Richardson argues against Karl Rove, who after 9/11 mocked those who tried to understand the enemy, by noting that only when authorities make efforts to get inside the minds of their terrorist enemies do they succeed in defeating them, as with the leadership of the Shining Path movement in Peru. Still, as Rove knows, if terrorists share a pathology, then so do at least some of their victims: Once attacked, people in democratic societies are more than willing to trade freedom for security. Richardson closes by offering a set of guidelines for combating terrorism, with such easily remembered rules as "Live by your principles" and "Engage others in countering terrorists with you." *Observing, in passing, that the Bush administration's attack on Iraq and subsequent occupation will likely be remembered as serving as a recruiting poster for still more terrorists.* How to win? Develop communities, settle grievances, exercise patience and intelligence. That said, watch for more terrorism to come: "We are going to have to learn to live with it and to accept it as a price of living in a complex

world."

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— "Louise Richardson . . . has now produced the overdue and essential primer on terrorism and how to tackle it. *What Terrorists Want* is the book many have been waiting for." • *The New York Times Book Review* (Editor's Choice) "Lucid and powerful, Richardson's book refutes the dangerous idea that there's no point in trying to understand terrorists. . . . rich, readable." • *Los Angeles Times Book Review* "The kind of brisk and accessible survey of terrorism-as-modus operandi that has been sorely missing for the past five years . . . [What Terrorists Want] ought to be required reading as the rhetoric mounts this campaign season." • *The American Prospect* "Richardson is one of the relative handful of experts who have been studying the history and practice of terrorism since the Cold War. . . . This book is a welcome source of information. It's written by a true expert, giving her measured thoughts." • *Christian Science Monitor* "Richardson's clear language and deep humanity make *What Terrorists Want* the one book that must be read by everyone who cares about why people resort to the tactic of terrorism." • Desmond M. Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus "This is a book of hope. Terrorism, like the poor, will always be with us in one form or another. But given sensible policies, we can contain it without destroying what we hold dear." • *Financial Times* "A passionate, incisive, and groundbreaking

argument that provocatively overturns the myths surrounding terrorism.â€œMary Robinson, former president of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rightsâ€œIn its lucid analysis and summary, [What Terrorists Want] is simply the best thing of its kind available now in this highly crowded area.â€œThe Evening Standard â€œIf a reader has the time to read only one book on terrorism, What Terrorists Want is that book. Extensive historical knowledge, personal contacts, enormous analytic skills, common sense, and a fine mix of lucidity and clarity, make of this work a most satisfying dissection of terroristsâ€œ motives and goals, and of the effects of September 11, 2001. Richardson also offers a sharp critique of American counterterrorism policies, and a sensible plan for better ones.â€œStanley Hoffmann, Buttenwieser University Professor, Harvard University â€œAn astonishingly insightful analysis by one of the worldâ€œs leading authorities on terrorism, this book is filled with wisdomâ€œbased not only on the authorâ€œs extensive and long-term study of terrorism but also on her experience growing up in a divided Ireland.â€œJessica Stern, author of *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* â€œA wide-ranging, clear headed, crisply written, cogently argued anatomy of terrorist groups around the world.â€œPeter Bergen, senior fellow, New America Foundation, and author of *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al Qaedaâ€œs Leader* â€œAmong the numerous books published on terrorism after the 9/11 attacks, Louise Richardsonâ€œs stands out as an unusually wise, sensible, and humane treatise. An engrossing and lucid book, which hopefully will be read by many and spread its unique spirit of realistic optimism.â€œAriel Merari, Professor of Psychology, Tel Aviv Universityâ€œThoughtful and stimulating . . . Controversially, and indeed courageously, [Richardson] argues that, instead of regarding the terroristsâ€œeven al-Qaeda typesâ€œas mindless and irrational creatures motivated by dark forces of evil, it would be more constructive to examine and seek to moderate some of the grievances that drive previously normal and even nondescript characters to kill and maim innocent people they donâ€œt even know.â€œThe Irish Timesâ€œA textbook and a myth-buster . . . [Richardson] is calling for nothing less than a total re-evaluation of how we consider, and react to, terrorism. . . . What Terrorists Want ought to be on the bookshelf in every government office. Certainly, for any student of international affairs it is an essential reading.â€œThe Atlantic AffairsFrom the Hardcover edition.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Richardson, executive dean of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, set out to write a single-volume, nonpartisan explanation of "terrorism in all its complexity." Her reach, however, exceeds her grasp in an evaluation that leans more on theory than practice and is unrelenting in its attack on current policy. In fact, she's certain that the war on terrorism cannot be won and advises that we limit ourselves to "containing the threat." Richardson (When Allies Differ) follows two converging threads: Part I seeks to demystify terrorism; Part II outlines a proper response to the terrorist threat. There is much valuable information, but Richardson is too quick to dismiss or oversimplify issues: "there is no single cause of terrorism

Richardson grew up immersed in the troubles of Northern Ireland, and her academic research in "terrorism studies" has been fueled in part by proximity to her research subjects and independence from governmental counterterrorism efforts. With this book, she joins the chorus of commentators criticizing the current administration's "war on terror." Eradicating each terrorist movement, she argues, cannot defeat terrorism; however, it can be contained by measures that appreciate the factors driving terrorists and aim to deprive them of what they want. What terrorists want, according to Richardson, is the "three Rs"--revenge (for perceived injustices), renown (the attention of the world), and reaction (disproportionate enough to perpetuate a sense of moral outrage). Although her policy prescriptions are essentially similar to those of many commentators critical of current efforts,

her arguments for such methods are studded with historical examples, including many that may be new to readers new to the topic. This book may lead readers to *The Roots of Terrorism*, a forthcoming three-volume opus edited by Richardson. Brendan Driscoll Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

An informed view on extremism, especially among ordinary citizens like you and me, is key to make this world a safer and better place for us and our future generations. Louise Richardson, now an expert in terrorism, grew up in rural Ireland in the 1960s “with a passionate hatred of England.” In “What Terrorists Want,” a primer on the subject, Dr. Richardson started the discussion with a reminiscence about her adolescence when many of her friends joined the IRA. She herself also attended meetings and discussions, but didn’t join the terrorist group at the end, as she “had concluded that killing people was not the right way to advance the cause of reuniting Ireland.” “Those who did join were like me in almost every respect. They were young idealists wanting to do their part for their country as their forebears had (or as they thought their forebears had). They were motivated by a desire to right wrongs and to do their best for a noble cause. They knew that they were likely to suffer personally from their decisions. They justified the use of force on the grounds that it was the only way to make progress toward the legitimate goals they sought,” she wrote. Throughout years of research at Trinity College and Harvard, she dug out documents and other evidence about terrorist groups and their activities. She also interviewed people who were and ARE from those groups. Dr. Richardson’s background and painstaking research render this book a very compelling read. She said our “complicit society,” where economic and political inequality is pervasive, could be a fertile recruiting ground for terrorists. That was when I felt this book is a must-read for all of us. Also, interaction with a subject is the first step toward dispelling the fear of it.

This is an excellent book. Even though it was written in 2006. The theory was correct then. The theory is correct now. As you read the comments, some of them quite emotional especially regarding Robert Steel’s comments, keep in mind all of this was too were written ten years ago. Now, fast forward to 2016. Dr. Richardson points have been proven. If you want additional understanding, read Scott Atran’s “Talking to the Enemy” -- he’s been on the ground and in harms

way doing his research. War ain't what it used to be. Read Col TX Hammes, USMC, "The Sling and The Stone. This is the gouge on 4th generation warfare. All of these references track together to describe, explain, predict and prescribe alternatives to the "bomb them into the stone age" paradigm.

Explains everything with relevant support material, including comparisons with earliest Groups, Religions, Sects, etc with more recent, and current examples including IRA, Red Brigade, Tamil Tigers, and inevitably, Al Quaida, Hamas, and Isil. I Wish I had read this book sooner. It makes it easier to understand why the mindset of so many Western Politicians needs to change if we have any wish or hope to live together in harmony.

Nothing new in here. Another fairly standard academic treatise. For insight into why people become terrorists, better to read Anne Speckhard's Talking to Terrorists: Understanding the Psycho-Social Motivations of Militant Jihadi Terrorists, Mass Hostage Takers, Suicide Bombers & Martyrs.

Brilliant book that really makes you think. Should be required reading for everyone in security studies and anyone wanting a better understanding of terrorism.

Very good but to get a theoretical understanding of terrorism. A little dated now but a great place to start.

Long before most of us were thinking about this subject, the author was thinking very deeply indeed about it. Slogans and chest-thumping are behaviors suitable for a gorilla who thinks his command of the high ground is threatened, political leaders ought to be in cognitive engagement with what might actually reduce the threat.

I remember debating back in 2001 how best to handle 9/11. I wish this book were around then...or that the Bush Administration had consulted with the author. The book is a thoughtful and thought-provoking book as to how we should be handling the threat of terrorism.

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What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat [ Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation[ PLAYING THE ENEMY: NELSON MANDELA AND THE GAME THAT MADE A NATION ] By Carlin, John ( Author ) Jul-01-2009 Paperback Dance

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