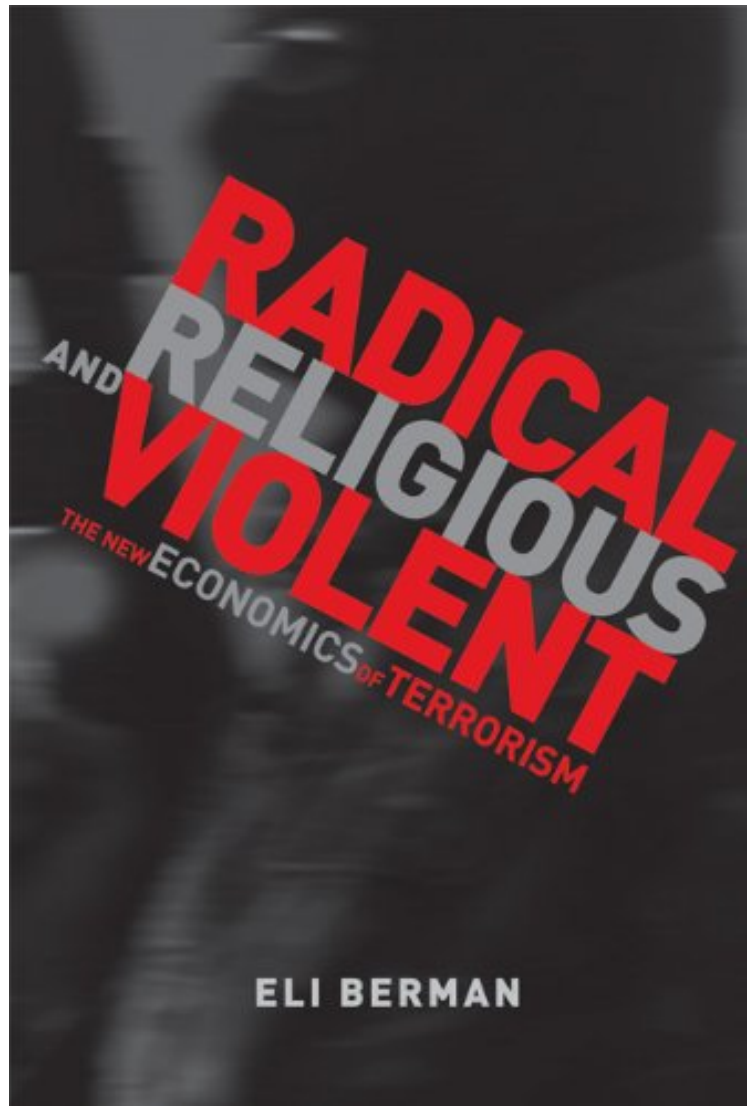


(Read now) Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism (MIT Press)

## Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism (MIT Press)

*Eli Berman*

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**Eli Berman : Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism (MIT Press)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism (MIT Press):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Radical, Religious, and ViolentBy Betty ReedRadical, Religious, and Violent by Eli Berman is a calm, reasoned, review of current terrorism. Read this book if you are interested in

factual data to counterbalance editorials and the evening news. This book looks at violence starting in the late 1500s (historical evidence) as well as hard data derived from recent (the last 50 or so years) to understand the current violence perpetrated by what we generally call terrorists. It is well written and is an easy read. It is not a series of data points but references that data if you want to dig deeper (I did not). It is written for the average reader and no economic background is required. Eli Berman uses short stories (truck drivers with valuable cargo on a dangerous road) to explain the dilemmas they face which, in turn, give rise to decisions they make, which in turn relates to the current terrorism situation. The book points out (and supports) how difficult the current situation is but it also provides supporting data for the one proven counteroffensive that has worked in the past. There is a way to end all this, but you will have to read to the book to find out. Personally, I am convinced he is right in his conclusion. The fact this book uses hard data, first making assumptions and then supporting those assumptions by facts (essentially proving the conjecture) is what makes it so compelling. This book is an excellent counterbalance to the evening news or the sensationalism we so often hear. There are nasty things going on in the world but there is a reason for them and understanding that reason is crucial to stopping it. This book provides that counterbalance. If you are interested in a fact-based understanding of the current rise in Islamic violence then read this book. Even if you think you already know the reason for the current violence, buy this book. It is an eye opener and, I think, will change your opinion of the current situation no matter what you currently believe. For me, this book removed some of the fear generated by terrorism. There is a reason for it, there are targets, there is a way out. It has become a "thing" to be approached as opposed to some difficult to define monster out to kill off the rest of the world. Read this book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Understanding some of the motivations for terrorism. By Dr. P. Sobey This book is a look at the economic motivators and limiters in violent organisations. It is a refreshing look beyond the rhetoric of terrorism and into the forces that allow clubs, especially religious clubs, to become violent. The authors also then look at how these forces can be diverted and dissipated so that clubs are unlikely to become violent. The conclusions are very similar to what I learned in Socialism 101 as what a socialist society should try to achieve. Good governance, government provision of adequate services to all (health, education, housing, etc), and basically creating a society where everyone feels they have a stake. There is a lot of material on the Israel/Palestine conflict, largely because there is more data on this conflict than others. This does not detract from the conclusions. On the contrary, it would be good to see the authors insights applied on the ground in this part of the world. There are a few errors in the graphs and diagrams but these are minor and do not detract from the whole. They are just annoying because they are so obvious and I am so pedantic! The Australian counter-terrorism expert Lieutenant Colonel Dr. David Kilcullen is cited several times to good effect. I found this book fascinating. It should be required reading for every soldier and NGO personnel in intervention forces.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Insightful to a challenging topic By AA In a topic as complex as terrorism, Dr. Berman elucidates key observations and thought provoking points about the social complexities that confront the United States abroad. His book is filled with fluid examples that articulate the motivations of violent and extreme individuals and provides a foundation to more fully understand the events of our recent past. Radical, Religious and Violent can be understood by the ordinary reader as well as academia.

How do radical religious sects run such deadly terrorist organizations? Hezbollah, Hamas, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and the Taliban all began as religious groups dedicated to piety and charity. Yet once they turned to violence, they became horribly potent, executing campaigns of terrorism deadlier than those of their secular rivals. In *Radical, Religious, and Violent*, Eli Berman approaches the question using the economics of organizations. He first dispels some myths: radical religious terrorists are not generally motivated by the promise of rewards in the afterlife (including the infamous seventy-two virgins) or even by religious ideas in general. He argues that these terrorists (even suicide terrorists) are best understood as rational altruists seeking to help their own communities. Yet despite the vast pool of potential recruits -- young altruists who feel their communities are repressed or endangered -- there are less than a dozen highly lethal terrorist organizations in the world capable of sustained and coordinated violence that threatens governments and makes hundreds of millions of civilians hesitate before boarding an airplane. What's special about these organizations, and why are most of their followers religious radicals? Drawing on parallel research on radical religious Jews, Christians, and Muslims, Berman shows that the most lethal terrorist groups have a common characteristic: their leaders have found a way to control defection. Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Taliban, for example, built loyalty and cohesion by means of mutual aid, weeding out "free riders" and producing a cadre of members they could rely on. The secret of their deadly effectiveness lies in their resilience and cohesion when incentives to defect are strong. These insights suggest that provision of basic social services by competent governments adds a critical, nonviolent component to counterterrorism strategies. It undermines the violent potential of radical religious organizations without disturbing free religious practice, being drawn into theological debates with Jihadists, or endangering civilians.

A brilliant study of terrorist violence, *Radical, Religious, and Violent* offers an innovative and powerful explanation for the lethality of violent religious groups. This is an important and compelling work by an outstanding scholar.

(Richard English, author of *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*) According to Eli Berman, author of *Radical Religious and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism*, violent radical religious organizations thrive by taking advantage of the absence of the State. By providing communities with important benefits in exchange for their loyalty, and at times their involvement, they are able to develop into highly efficient terrorist organizations. Interestingly, we find that various violent organizations shaping the politics of the Middle East today also rely on this very policy. (Paula Mejia *The Majalla*) I felt very privileged to be given an advance copy of Professor Berman's *Radical, Religious and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism*. I immensely enjoyed reading it... At the outset, Professor Berman poses the question: 'Why are religious radicals, who often start out appearing benign and charitable and generally avoid conflict, so effective at violence when they choose to engage in it'? He approaches this question from the perspective of the discipline of economics -- not in the sense of the influence of material or economic considerations, but from economics as a mode of reasoning. (Adrian Guelke *Critical Studies on Terrorism*) Professor Berman has written an engaging book that brings new insight to an extremely polarizing subject. He argues that many terrorists are actually more rational than we might like to think. And that, of course, is a chilling notion. The author is neither a pacifist nor an apologist for terrorists. He says, however, that if we stop looking at them as cartoon characters, we may do a better job of deterring them. (Devin Leonard *New York Times*) Professor Eli Berman deserves large credit for essaying a dispassionate analysis of the connection between religion and terrorism. Using the tools of his trade (microeconomics), he develops a plausible model for understanding some of those connections... [A] model of clear and accessible writing, accessible to a non-specialist without sacrificing rigor. (Aziz Huq *Just Books* (Brennan Center for Justice)) The most impressive effort yet comes from Eli Berman of the University of California, San Diego. In his new book, *Radical, Religious and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism*, Berman says we need to start looking at how terrorist groups function as economic clubs... Berman sets out to understand what makes for an effective terrorist outfit, and, no surprise, he learns more often than not these are radical religious groups. However, the effectiveness of these groups is not a function of theology but of economic organization... Competing with terrorist groups in the service-provision business is hugely expensive, but by Berman's calculation it might be cheaper than the untold billions spent by western governments "protecting domestic targets from the terrorist fallout of rebellions abroad." (Leonard Stern *The Ottawa Citizen*) This is first-rate social science, with a compelling theory, strong evidence, and an accessible style. (Sir Lawrence D. Freedman *Foreign Affairs*) To understand why suicide bombing has become more common, Berman contends, we need to stop focusing only on the motivations of bombers, and consider the 'hardness' of their target. As it becomes more difficult for terrorists to do damage, they are more likely to switch to suicide bombing... Unusually for a book about terrorism, Berman keeps it in perspective. Global terrorism is not the greatest threat to the world. Adam Smith's combination of markets, religious pluralism and tolerance are a winning combination. The more we can help poor governments provide basic services to their citizens, the less space we allow for radical rebels to fill the void. (Professor Andrew Leigh *Australian Financial*) Whereas other authors have focused on the obvious but peripheral issue of how religion inspires individual attackers -- it is rarely the primary motivation, as many studies have shown -- Berman tackles the pertinent question of what makes radical religious organizations so much more deadly than other groups. (Michael Bond *New Scientist*)

About the Author Eli Berman is Professor of Economics at the University of California, San Diego, and Research Director of International Security Studies at the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation.