

Title: 'We Love Death as you Love Life: Britain's Suburban Terrorists'
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This excellent book, drawing on various methods including interviews and published sources, provides the first extensive history and background behind the UK's domestic Jihad.

Current literature either illustrates operational and motivational realities behind Islamic extremism¹; documents the history of groups, specific individuals or the counter terrorism responses to Islamic extremism from a state or collection of states. This book eloquently combines all three elements to present a flowing, accurate narrative of British Jihadism. Through the central theme that British Jihad is a unique phenomenon, the book expands current literature, which primarily presents militant Islam or Jihadism as a more generalised phenomenon².

The book signals the unique Britishness of the phenomenon through two primary means. Firstly, the terrorists are established as Britons - for instance Mohammed Siddique Khan, (leader of the 7/7 London bombings) is mentioned speaking in a strong West Yorkshire accent. Secondly, by situating the terrorists and the wider support networks, directly within various British cities and towns, (Bradford, Luton, Exeter, London etc.), the analysis becomes more than simply abstract, thus reinforcing it to the reader.

The author widens the book's inclusivity through introductory summary of major background themes and concepts. Moreover, without weakening the narrative flow, the book concisely documents historical migratory patterns into the UK from South Asia, Arabia and parts of Africa and associated influences of terrorism, politics, religion and conflicts such as Kashmir, which impact upon British streets. Further exploration details how foreign radical groups link with the UK domestic Islamic extremist scene. The book provides wider context within which the Jihadism movement in the UK evolved, through description of reactions of non-Islamic domestic groups. Finally, the development of British counter terrorism is also presented from initial problematic appeasement and even assistance to becoming fully cognisant of the threat. As such, the social environment is well painted.

The Jihadist narrative, characteristics and radicalisation processes are accurately developed. Jihadism is portrayed as a cult with heavy leader influence/appeal, providing spiritually fulfilling social order, tapping into martyrdom and the power of dreams – both symbolically powerful. The analysis contrasts strong Jihadist motivations with declining operational effectiveness. The book also provides several important illustrations: that 'Islam' of the young differs markedly from that practised by older generations, that jihadist ideas are developing beyond the traditional Islamic communities in the UK. The writing also details key points in the UK Jihadist story: the initial justificatory debates to attack the UK and violence.

The general background and characteristics of the terrorists is clarified, specifically that they are often blighted by drugs, crime, familial problems, menial employment or unemployment; that they find religion later in life (and therefore lack wider religious context, and so fall victim to this distorted Islam) and are drawn to the glamour and danger of it.

1 Husain, 2007; Nawaz, 2013

2 Kepel, 2006; Hegghammer, 2010; Aslan, 2010

Finally, the analysis is situated in changing international realities – most notably the Syrian civil war, because as Pantucci correctly identifies - terrorism in Syria – for instance, may develop different narratives and become worthy of a stand alone analysis and research.

The author does however include discussion of lone wolves as a future element of British Jihad. This is problematic given the phenomenon has not yet been conclusively proved and in any event, the examples cited: Nicholas Roddis and Nicky Reilly etc., suffered from mental health problems at the time of their attacks.

Overall however, it is the sheer detail and accurate depiction of the UK Jihadism that enables this book to provide an insightful, original analysis. Anyone interested in the development of the UK Jihadist phenomenon is advised to read this.

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