

# Counterterrorism: Reassessing the Policy Response

By Benoît Gomis



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Counterterrorism: Reassessing the Policy Response promotes a more nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of current counterterrorism practices and the need for reform. It challenges government, media, and academic accounts that exaggerate terrorist threats, particularly in comparison to other threats such as organized crime. Author Benoît Gomis responds to the problem of overreaction with guidelines that address terrorism as a problem to be managed rather than as an existential threat that can be eradicated. He proposes a more realistic assessment of the threat from terrorism, domestic or international, by relating terrorism to broader security, social, and political contexts.

The book examines current issues in counterterrorism, including the opportunity costs of counterterrorism policies, their psychological impact, the role of the media and experts, and the risks associated with oversimplifying the challenges posed by terrorism. It also explores less prominent areas of terrorism studies such as right-wing extremism, links between terrorism and organized crime, and citizen privacy.

Case studies illustrate each chapter, with some detailing differences in counterterrorist policy between countries. The studies focus on Western countries, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The book also highlights the responsibility of nongovernmental actors in analyzing the threat and informing policies.

Counterterrorism: Reassessing the Policy Response is a timely commentary on contemporary developments in counterterrorist policy and practice, including drones, social media, and recent revelations on intelligence programs. It identifies potential dangers in technology and measures that can be taken to minimize them. More importantly, it provides guidance on how current policy

can be reformed to assume a more objective, measured, and effective approach against terrorism.



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Counterterrorism: Reassessing the Policy Response By Benoît Gomis Bibliography

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#### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

"Exceptionally rich and sophisticated in analysis, **Counterterrorism: Reassessing the Policy Response** is a much needed addition to the currently available literature and deserves to be read not only by students and academic specialists, but also by security analysts, policy makers and general readers." Professor George Kassimeris, University of Wolverhampton, UK

"Ineffective counterterrorism methods do not make us safer, they only divert security resources, undermine civil rights, and erode trust in law enforcement. Benoit Gomis challenges the flawed research, faulty methods, and bias that permeates counterterrorism studies and practice, and his book presents a clear public demand for reform that all governments need to hear."

?Michael German, Fellow, Brennan Center for Justice, NYU Law School

"In his book, **Counterterrorism**, Benoit Gomis eloquently places terrorism and CT-strategies into the wider context, challenging both policy makers and analysts alike. Cost-effectiveness and realism (or the lack of such) in CT-approaches are thoroughly addressed and the craftsmanship of the author is impeccable in this highly recommendable book.

?Cato Hemmingby, Norwegian Police University College

"Counter-Terrorism: Reassessing the Policy Response is essential and salutary reading for all those concerned to ensure that the problem of terrorism is handled proportionately and effectively. Meticulously researched, it provides some jaw dropping insights into the pitfalls of disproportionate responses: did you know that 'more Americans die in gun homicides and suicides in six months than have died in the last 25 years in every terrorist attack and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq combined'? Juxtapose this with the fact that the United States spent \$1 trillion on counterterrorism security measures in the years to 2011. Building on an account of the most salient violent movements and the nature of the problem they present, Gomis illustrates with restrained clarity the tendency to overreact to terrorism and its consequences. His writing combines a rare ability to capture complexity and detail in a forensic analytical style that remains readable while resisting sensationalism. As a result, his call for a rethink of counter-terror policy carries significant weight, and deserves to be taken up by policy makers, officials, media commentators and concerned citizens."

?Larry Attree, Head of Policy, Saferworld

"The book is an incredible resource of statistical data from around the world; each chapter includes an indepth reference page that provides insight into geographical regions and the impact terror has on everything from economies to public opinion. Major terror groups, significant acts of terror, and the associated policies are closely examined in an effort to determine their effects."

?Michael D'Angelo, Security Management, ASIS International

#### About the Author

**Benoît Gomis** is an international security analyst focusing on terrorism and organized crime. While writing this book, he was a visiting scholar at the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society (TSAS), based at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. He is an associate fellow with

Chatham House, a researcher at Simon Fraser University, and an associate faculty member at Royal Roads University. In an independent capacity, he is a consultant for organizations including think tanks, universities, NGOs and governments.

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