Jonathan Matusitz. **Terrorism & Communication. A Critical Introduction.**Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2013 499 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4522-4028-2 (pbk), US $ 65.-

Reviewed by Alex P. Schmid

This book, written by Jonathan Matusitz, Associate Professor in the Nicolson School of Communication at the University of Central Florida, discusses in 16 chapters the central role of communication in terrorism. It is advertised as the "first single-author core text to introduce how to understand terrorism from a communication perspective" (blurb on back-cover). It focuses, inter alia - to list some chapter titles - on the audience, on framing terrorism, the social construction of reality, stereotyping terrorists, interpreting terrorism through rhetoric, euphemisms for terrorism, diffusion of innovations and crisis communication. However, it goes beyond terrorism's central communicative dimensions, also featuring chapters on terrorist group dynamics, organisational structure and leadership in terrorism, globalisation of terrorism and, closer to its main communication focus, hostage negotiations.

The author aims to provide a 'critical introduction' but he is, in this reviewer's view, rather uncritical when it comes to accepting distinctions like "old" and "new" terrorism, the "old" one allegedly "striking only selected targets" and the "new" one "causing as many casualties as possible" (p. xvii, p.11). The latter statement also contradicts the author's assertion that "….the goal of most terrorism is not killing but change…." (p.35). His allegedly "most universally accepted" definition of terrorism as "the use of violence to create fear (i.e. psychic fear) for (1) political, (2) religious, or (3) ideological reasons" (p. xvii & p. 4) is rather vague and broad. It is far from widely accepted and lumps together various forms of violence other than terrorism while excluding several types of terrorism, e.g. single issue terrorism, vigilante terrorism, and acts of terrorism perpetrated by criminals and lunatics. Regime terrorism is also excluded as Prof. Matusitz view of terrorism involves, "….in modern times…the killing of humans by nongovernment political actors…." (p.2). On the other hand, he accepts amorphous terms like "media terrorism" which he uses to "….refer to media's use of fear, whether the incidents are real or imaginary, to frighten and pressure the masses…." (p.66). He further describes online radicalisations as a form of "techno-terrorism", which he defines as "….terrorist means of satellite communications, e-mail, and the World Wide Web" (p.349) "Cyberterrorism", in turn, he defines as "….the use of information technology to launch attacks and capture attention from the state" (p.352).

While there is plenty of cyber-crime, cyber-fraud, cyber-sabotage and cyber-hacking going on online, this reviewer has yet to see the first case of cyber-terrorism (defined in terms of the deliberate killing of civilians to impress, coerce or intimidate third parties by means of the Internet). Some of the contradictions in the author's text stem from the fact that - while surveying a broad range of the literature on violence as communication - he is going along with various authors who head in different directions.

The volume is a large synthesis of much of the literature on terrorism and the media. That is its chief strength as a textbook. Yet at times the sub-chapter headings reads more like a glossary, explaining to the novice in the field a plethora of concepts and terms used by a great variety of authors in their efforts to come to grips with terrorism as non-verbal communication. On top of that, the volume features a 43 pp. glossary at the end. The amount of literature consulted is impressive: Dr. Matusitz book has almost 1.800 endnotes. Yet the volume has its shortcomings. If it were true, as Jonathan Matusitz states, that "…over the past few years, face-to-face-radicalization has been replaced by online radicalization" (p. 349), one would expect a greater focus on the role of the Internet; but only 13 out of 499 pages deal with that. Among the many views on the relationship between terrorism and communication reviewed in this volume, this reviewer has not been able to detect the author's own "critical" position on various controversies. However, as a very readable textbook for undergraduate students, the volume serves its purpose very well.

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