

Book Review

Terrorism, the Worker and the City, Simulations and Security in the Time of Terror

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Terrorism was considered a tactic of (guerrilla) war while today it is seen as a moral disaster (Stampnitzky 2013; Korstanje 2019). In this book, Luke Howie demonstrates one more time why he is one of the leading theorists in the sociology of terrorism. *Terrorism, the Worker and the City* is a high-quality book which departs from the interests to study terrorism escaping to the stereotyped, naïve and one-gazed arguments which recently occupied a significant space of media and TV. Howie, in the preliminary chapter, not only takes its cue from Baudrillard's texts, but he introduces a fresh alternative reading. Far from being "pseudo-events" which operate in the constellations of hyper-reality, terrorism moves to create real effects in daily life. He coins the term *terror-work* to infer in the substantial changes, workers have experienced just after 9/11. *Terror-work*, to put the same in other terms, can be understood in the following lines:

I explore the meaning of human security, precariousness and vulnerability in organizational, managerial, city-dwelling and workplace settings. Working people, particularly those in major cities, have been preferred targets for contemporary terrorism. Life in the city has perhaps always been risky, but the post 9/11, post-Madrid, post 7/7 city is filled with witnesses and victims of terrorism going about their work and lives in routine, mundane and everyday ways – I argue that is the essence of terror-work. (p. 14)

This above-cited excerpt reflects essentially the logic of the book, as well as the common-thread argument in its different (seven) chapters. Terrorists, echoing Jenkins, do not want a lot of people dying but a lot of people watching. Is terrorism a new or old phenomenon?

Per Howie, this question suggests two important things. On one hand, terrorism can be traceable towards ancient times - when the Sicarii a Jew activist group struggled against the Roman Empire or the case of Assassins to name a few. Terrorism –no matter the time- needs from publicity to survive; but on another, the digital media and the recent technological breakthroughs have recreated the borders of the world as a flat screen where news is covered 24/7, packaged, and disseminated to a wider global audience. In the different episodes the media portrays, as Howie asserts, workers are systematically killed in order for other witnessing workers to succumb to the “spectacle of terrorism.” Terrorism creates victims and witnesses. The victims simply die while the witnesses are the real targeted victims of terrorism. The conceptualization on the word “traumascape” serves Howie to denote a state of trauma which not only has durable effects but persists in society even after the event happened (second chapter).

The third chapter explores the effects of terrorism in the business world. Terrorism poses a real threat to business and the organizational culture. As Howie puts it, for those who work and live in the urban cities, 9/11 represented more than a blow to democracy it was an attack on workers. At the least, it was reflected in the Press, the media and the dominant presidential narrative. To some extent, the effects of terror are psychologically perdurable in the workers’ minds. Terrorism “is more felt when nothing explodes (p. 43), Howie adheres. The fourth and fifth chapters are fully reserved to debate revolving around the idea that terrorism has no real frontiers. To put this in bluntly, people living in LA or New York are sensitive to terror-related news because of their past experience as Americans. But this raises a thorny question, what can be said of those who live in the periphery? Howie brilliantly examines the case of Melbourne, Australia as a mediated city. His main thesis is that witnessing is stronger in places located farther from the geographical point where the attack was perpetrated. Here a new paradoxical situation emerges: while the attacked communities (like Britons or Americans) enhance their cohesion to struggle against terrorism, other nations remain as witnesses towards a climate of uncertainty and anxiety. The final chapters delve into the deep consequences of terrorism on the organizational culture of Australian companies. He toys with the belief that terrorism does not harm business, rather, terrorism inevitably is a new type of business. Terrorism derives from an innermost emotion, fear and we cannot struggle against fear. Hence, the “War on Terror” is doomed to fail. The same applies to the process of securitization and the populist demands of further security. We devote our efforts to making of home a safer place, and of course, we can do it. But fear is an emotion. No matter how secure our society is, our fears can be politically manipulated when the opportunity arises. Howie goes on to write:

I set out in this book to show how contemporary terrorism has consequences for working people and businesses in contemporary cities. I also wanted to show how terrorism transcends the time and space in which it first occurred –the flashpoint- in order for it be reanimated as an image over and over again. In this way, the Twin Tower continue to fall and trains and buses continue to explode in the minds of the world’s workers...

I hope to demonstrate here that terrorism does not occur when there are death and destruction –this is violence- but where witness terrorism as a simulation, an image and a spectacle. In short, terrorism exists where terror is felt. (p. 164)

This book at least for this reviewer exhibits an interesting point of entry in the discussion of terrorism and media. Howie reminds the importance to review our stereotypes and pre-conceptualized hypothesis towards a new understanding of terror-work. A more than recommendable piece for those who are interested in terrorism-related issues.

REFERENCES

Korstanje, M. E. (2019). *Terrorism, Technology and apocalyptic future*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-13385-6

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Maximiliano Korstanje is a leading and global cultural theorist specialized in terrorism, mobilities and tourism. Korstanje serves as Senior Researcher at the University of Palermo, Buenos Aires, Argentina (economics department) and Editor in Chief of Int. Journal of safety and security in Tourism and Hospitality (University of Palermo, Argentina). Besides, he was visiting professor at CERS (Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies) in the University of Leeds (United Kingdom), TIDES in the University of Las Palmas de gran Canarias (Spain) and the University of La Habana, Cuba. In 2016, he is included as Scientific Editor for Studies and Perspective in Tourism (CIET) and as honorary member of the Scientific Council of Research and Investigation hosted by UDET (University of Tourist Specialities, Quito Ecuador). With more than 1200 publications and 30 books, Korstanje is Book Series editor of Advances in Hospitality, Tourism and Service Industries (IGI Global, US), the foreign faculty member of Mexican Academy of Tourism Research (Mexico) as well as foreign member of The Tourism Crisis Management Institute (University of Florida, US). In 2018, his biography was selected to be part of the roster of Alfred Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award (Marquis Who's Who). Korstanje has been awarded as Editor in Chief Emeritus for the International Journal of Cyber-warfare and Terrorism. Now, he works as an active advisor and reviewer of different editorial projects in the most leading academic publishers as Elsevier, Routledge, Palgrave Macmillan, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, Edward Elgar, CABI, Nova Science Publishers and IGI global among others. His latest book is The Challenges of Democracy in the War on Terror (Routledge UK).