Terrorism expert says research in the field at a standstill

“....we have a system of terrorism research in which intelligence analysts know everything but understand nothing, while academics understand everything but know nothing.”

This is how Marc Sageman characterizes the state of contemporary terrorism research in his controversial paper, “The Stagnation in Terrorism Research,” published in the journal Terrorism and Political Violence. In the paper, and his response to critical peer comments, he makes a powerful plea for greater sharing of data between government and academics, and for a stronger evidential and empirical research base. He notes the weak link between radical ideas and radical action, and proposes a concerted effort between academics and government to address the research needs that face us.

Terrorism and Political Violence co-editor Max Taylor interviewed Marc Sageman on his paper and his later response to criticism of that paper, “Low Return on Investment,” also published in Terrorism and Political Violence.

Marc Sageman is author of Understanding Terror Networks and Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty First Century. He was a CIA case officer in Islamabad and is now a practicing forensic psychiatrist and a counter-terrorism consultant.

Follow the links for free access to Dr. Sageman’s articles and the critical responses until August 30, 2014:

- The Stagnation in Terrorism Research
  Marc Sageman
- Low Return on Investment
  Marc Sageman
- If I Were You, I Wouldn’t Start From Here: Response to Marc Sageman’s “The Stagnation in Terrorism Research”
  Max Taylor
- Comments on Marc Sageman's Polemic “The Stagnation in Terrorism Research”
  Alex P. Schmid
- Response to Marc Sageman's “The Stagnation in Terrorism Research”
  Jessica Stern
  David H. Schanzer

About Terrorism and Political Violence

Terrorism and Political Violence reflects the full range of current scholarly work from many disciplines and theoretical perspectives. It aims to give academic rigor to a field which hitherto has lacked it, and encourages comparative studies. In addition to focusing on the political meaning of terrorist activity, the journal publishes studies of various related forms of violence by rebels and by states, on the links between political violence and organized crime, protest, rebellion, revolution, and human rights. Symposia are a regular feature covering such subjects as: terrorism and public policy; religion and violence; political parties and terrorism; technology and terrorism; and right-wing terrorism. A truly interdisciplinary journal, it is essential reading for all academics, decision makers and security specialists concerned with understanding political violence.

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