

Enders, Walter, and Todd Sandler. *The Political Economy of Terrorism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

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[See table of contents](#)

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Enders, Walter, and Todd Sandler. *The Political Economy of Terrorism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

The problem of transnational terrorism and complications relating to countering its threat lie at the forefront of many countries' foreign policy agendas. Accordingly, Walter Enders and Todd Sandler's *The Political Economy of Terrorism* has received considerable attention since its publication because of its systematic, policy-relevant contribution to our understanding of the processes that drive terrorist violence and government responses to it.

The authors identify the primary goal of their project as being the provision of a broadly accessible study of terrorism via an approach that combines political analysis and economic methods. Their application of diverse and powerful analytical tools (including statistical and game-theoretic modeling procedures) enables Enders and Sandler to neatly craft a study that provides an objective assessment of a topic that is all too often undermined by biased, speculative, and ill-informed postulations. In doing so, their work goes a long way toward spanning the often cavernous divide between the academy and the policy community.

The authors attempt to build a tripartite methodological approach to the study of terrorism and counterterrorism; an effort that would doubtless prove beneficial in other studies in this literature. While they have clearly succeeded in wedding quantitative and game-theoretic approaches, they could perhaps have delved deeper into qualitative and historical approaches to the subject. This would be especially valuable in respect to the assumption of rationality in the decision to employ political violence. Recent work by Robert Pape and Martha Crenshaw, as well as much of Enders and Sandler's considerable body of work, rests in large part upon the validity of this assumption. If the authors' conclusions are to be truly informative we need first to feel comfortable that economic theories of political behaviors adequately capture the motivating forces underlying the decision to employ terrorist violence. Such a pursuit is probably best founded in more in-depth qualitative study into terrorist groups and individuals.

From a topical perspective, Enders and Sandler address a wide-ranging set of issues, from the unique experience of terrorism in democratic states (chapter 2) and the covariates of individual tactical choices by terrorists (chapter 3) to the economic impact of terrorism within society (chapter 9) and the role of homeland security in countering the threat and practice of terrorism (chapter 10). The topics chosen are, without exception, policy relevant. They are also, however, often not tied together very coherently, leaving the reader with the sense that the book is somewhat cobbled together from the authors' undoubtedly impressive earlier body of research.

The political economy perspective uncovers a range of quite fascinating conclusions. Among these, Enders and Sandler demonstrate a high degree of

substitutability between terrorist actions. They show, for instance, that following the introduction of metal detectors in airports in 1973, there was an observed switch from hijacking to hostage-taking. Second, a series of games are employed to demonstrate why collective transnational efforts by governments to counter terrorism are frequently sub-optimal. Third, at a time when we are being told to prepare ourselves for attacks that will exceed the devastation wrought on 9/11, Enders and Sandler posit that future attacks will most frequently take the form of logistically simple operations such as bombings.

Despite the clear advantages of methodological diversity and valuable policy recommendations, there is an additional, notable shortcoming of *The Political Economy of Terrorism*. The book strives to be accessible and, in large part, achieves that goal. There are, however, a handful of occasions on which the authors require a lot of their general audience. Specifically, there are a number of leaps into statistical and game-theoretic assessments that could be made gentler in order to encourage greater appreciation among non-specialist audiences. For instance, chapter 4 deals with the general topic of “counter-terrorism” by detailing the proactive dilemma faced by governments trying to counter the threat of terrorism. Simply stated, this dilemma exists where governments need, on the one hand, to engage in some counter-terrorism practices in order to provide a basic level of national security, yet are conscious of the fact, on the other hand, that the use of military force can have the effect of mobilizing popular support for the terrorist organizations they are attempting to eradicate. This rather straightforward conceptual model is immediately complicated, however, by Enders and Sandler’s immediate immersion into a discussion of the relative value of proactive and defensive measures given the constraints upon the terrorist group’s resources (pp. 86-87). This discussion is illustrative of the considerable leaps of faith required of the reader to keep pace with the authors’ often sophisticated political economy approach to this subject.

Overall, it is eminently evident that Enders and Sandler have successfully created a text that will appeal to researchers of terrorism, as well as undergraduate and graduate students in political science and economics. Beyond this academic audience, however, there remain question marks as the broader accessibility of this book.

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