

**Hussein Solomon**, *Jihad: A South African perspective*. Bloemfontein: SUN PRESS, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-920382-30-8 (Printed book). 139 pages.

Emphasising the centrality of terrorism attacks in South Africa, Hussein Solomon provides South African historical and political explanations for the impact of such attacks. In this book the author bravely tackles a controversial topic that persists in evading scholars of terrorism in South Africa. This bold stance is an indication by the author to expose the hidden activities of radical Islamism in South Africa. This is an informed book and the most comprehensive one to date to highlight the scale of the threat posed by Islamist extremists in the hope that the South African government will try to arrest the situation through investing in resources necessary to deal with such attacks. The book is a testament to Solomon's innovative approach; the chapters extensively critically analyse topics which provide fresh and valuable, rather than rehashed and repetitive information.

The book is divided into five chapters raising critical and provocative questions on this topic. The chapters deal with discussions and challenges experienced by South Africans due to *jihad* activities. In an introductory chapter, the author gives a background to his motives for writing this book. The research methodology and the challenges thereof are highlighted. Although Solomon wrote this book in the face of threats to his life and accusations of exposing the Islamist attacks, he succeeded in producing an academically balanced account. Furthermore, in this chapter, Solomon highlights some examples of the attacks, particularly in Cape Town, by people using Islam to kill "innocent people". He argues: "If truth be told, whilst a tiny fraction of radical Muslims are prepared to kill, radical Islam as an ideology has increasingly penetrated mainstream Muslim society in South Africa." Another reason for writing this book, according to Solomon, was the reluctance of the country's security services to clamp down on Islamist terrorism, despite the attacks launched at any given moment. Consequently, this makes South Africa vulnerable to Islamist attacks.

Chapter two focuses on the changing face of terrorism from an organisational and centralised movement to one which is individual and decentralised. Solomon considers Islam a religion of peace. He does so by historicising its past events which were not violent. He states: "Indeed tolerance and respect for the beliefs of others lie at the very core of Islam. Such tolerance stems from a profound sense of humility that Islam encourages amongst Muslims, that there is no one truth that one people possesses" (p. 11). Globally, the chapter explains how Bin Laden and his successor Al Zawahiri managed to transform terrorism, making it much more decentralised, less hierarchical and less organisational. Furthermore, the author shows that Islam is spreading throughout the country and its radical elements threaten peace in South Africa. Fear has been repeatedly expressed that

organisations, such as *Jamaat al-Tabligh wal-Da'wa* play an important role in the radicalisation and recruitment of Muslims for the Islamist cause.

Chapter three highlights the fact that there is growing evidence that South Africa continuously plays a key supporting role in global jihad networks. For example, in 2008 Mustafa Mohamed Jonker, Omar Hartley and Sedick Achmat stood accused of being part of a group planning to overthrow the government by blowing up specific targets. Furthermore, the chapter examines the regional context in which South Africa exists. Solomon also unpacks the question of terrorist financing in South Africa.

In chapter four the author examines responses to the threat posed from both government and the South African Muslim community. After the 9/11 attack in Washington, the South African government committed itself to dealing with such attacks by the issuing of anti-terrorism legislation. Although the legislation was introduced, terrorist attacks continued. This suggests that to enact legislation seems easier than implementing it.

Chapter five examines as to what could be done by beefing up security service responses, as well as how Muslims could be involved in the struggle to neutralise the radical Islamists in their midst. According to Solomon, South Africa offers a comfortable base for *jihad* and that poses a threat to the country's population. The chapter proposes some solutions to dealing with terrorism challenges in South Africa. Such solutions should also be informed by international best practices. The author mentions international responses to terrorism acts; for example, ensuring a greater level of restraint; countering Islamist ideologies and their attendant radicalism; the de-politicisation and de-criminalisation of the state security apparatus; moving from reactive to pro-active measures; etc.

In his succinct conclusion, Solomon neatly ties together all the strands of his argument and leaves the reader convinced that tangible solutions should be sought in South Africa when dealing with terrorist attacks. The author is convinced that the South African government, too, should join other allies around the world in defeating this scourge. At the end, this section of the book provides a chronology of terror-related incidents in South Africa from 1980 to 2013. Solomon's text constitutes an intervention into existing academic work on the topics related to terrorism attacks and will be accessible to both general readers and those in the academy who wish to explore this research field from any number of disciplinary perspectives. Above all, Solomon makes a convincing case that terrorist attacks in South Africa are a cause for concern.

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