



# The Faces of Terrorism: Social and Psychological Dimensions (Science Essentials)

*Neil J. Smelser*

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Terrorism is the most clear and present danger we confront today, yet no phenomenon is more poorly understood by policymakers, the media, and the general public. *The Faces of Terrorism* is the first serious interdisciplinary examination of terrorism in all its facets. What gives rise to it, who are its proponents and how do they think, and how--and why--does it work?

Neil Smelser begins by tackling the fundamental problem of defining what exactly terrorism is. He shows why a precise definition has eluded us until now, and he proposes one that takes into account the full complexities of this unconventional and politically charged brand of violence. He explores the root causes and conditions of terrorism, and examines the ideologies that inspire and fuel it throughout the world. Smelser looks closely at the terrorists themselves--their recruitment, their motivations, the groups they form, their intended audiences, and their uses of the media in pursuing their agendas. He studies the target societies as well, unraveling the complicated social and psychological impacts of having to cope with the ever-present threat of a terrorist strike--and responding when one occurs. He explains what it means to live under constant threat of terrorism, and addresses the thorny domestic and foreign policy challenges this poses. Throughout, Smelser draws from the latest findings in sociology, political science, anthropology, economics, psychology, psychiatry, and history.

*The Faces of Terrorism* provides the breadth of scope necessary to understand--and ultimately eliminate--this most pressing global threat.

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