influence of drug cartels in Columbia is remote and that U.S. policy aimed at reducing coca production will have marginal impacts on drug supply.

The remaining chapters follow the same theme. Perhaps the most insightful of these chapters are the chilling analyses of the Nigerian “kleptocracy” by Obi N. I. Ebbe and “Mexico’s Legacy of Corruption” by Stanley Pimentel. In the Nigerian case, Ebbe reveals the depths to which PCN structures have become embedded within society, politics, and business. He makes a clear and powerful point: Nigeria is no longer a state with criminal networks; it has devolved into a criminal state. Despite efforts to improve conditions, Ebbe suggests, prospects for change are slim because of the absence of state infrastructure and because of pervasive penetration of criminal enterprises at all levels of society. To a lesser degree, similar problems are revealed by Pimentel in his analysis of PCN structures in Mexico. His chapter provides a discussion of the stage-evolutionary and elite-exploitative models of political–criminal relationships developed by Peter A. Lupsha (1996). Pimentel points out that “presidentialism”—the concentration of power in the office of the president with the judiciary and legislative branches of government serving as a rubber stamp for presidential authority—has dominated politics in Mexico. In the absence of meaningful checks and balances, presidents have historically represented corrupt political party interests that control state authority and support deeply entrenched PCN structures that support the power elite. As Pimentel notes, “Nothing happens in Mexico that is not known by ‘protectors’” (p. 187), that is, by the political elites. He argues that the elite-exploitative model best explains the Mexican variation in the PCN. In his view, these circumstances will be changed only with drastic political, judicial, law enforcement, and societal changes. These changes will be difficult and painful for everyone, especially for those in power.

The case studies presented in Menace to Society are good sources for those interested in cross-cultural studies of organized crime, the PCN, or border studies. The examination of state characteristics associated with development of a PCN may also be relevant to those interested in avoidable harms by transnational corporations. The political, economic, and social conditions seen in weak states that develop influential PCN structures are similar to those associated with states that have experienced avoidable harms perpetrated by global corporations. If a second edition is published, a synthesis chapter at the end of the book would be an important addition. It could draw out theoretically relevant features across case studies and articulate a more fully developed theory of the PCN phenomenon. This book is well worth reading and having on your bookshelf.

Michael J. Gilbert
University of Texas at San Antonio

Reference


DOI: 10.1177/1057567701299316

In his introduction to Diderot’s Encyclopédie, Jean le Rond d’Alembert (1759/1965) mused that “the names of the great benefactors of the human race are almost entirely unknown, whereas the
history of its destroyers is known by everyone” (p. 54). The 71,818 articles that eventually filled that seminal work’s 35 volumes were consequently, in part, an attempt to right the balance in favor of the great figures of reason and art. No such lofty ambitions motivate Stephen Atkins, assistant university librarian at Texas A&M University and author of several previous works on defense and arms control issues, who rather, as the title of his more modest single-volume work indicates, seeks to illuminate the dark truth of modern individuals and groups that for all their differences of race, geography, religion, or ideology, share a troubling willingness to embrace extremism, if not necessarily physical violence.

Since September 11, 2001, the sheer volume of material available on terrorism and other forms of political violence has expanded geometrically. In part, this is attributable to a publishing industry increasingly focused on the short term, more responsive to marketing trends than to intellectual progress. However, the exponential growth in the literature has also been a response to a very real demand on the part of a broadening array of scholars and practitioners for knowledge that they have come to appreciate as vital if their work is to be relevant to contemporary concerns. In short, what was once an almost rarified subspecialty within history, political science, economics, sociology, criminology, strategic studies, and other disciplines in the social sciences—terrorism and other phenomena associated with extremism—today can often loom larger than the fields from which it draws.

Especially needed amid the bewildering array of publications on extremism are resources that enable students and trained personnel to jump start their own research by providing a quick introductory background on the object of interest and indicators to pursue the inquiry further. In structure, the *Encyclopedia of Modern Worldwide Extremists and Extremist Groups* by Atkins is certainly adapted to this need. Each of the 285 entries, which vary in length between 200 and 2,000 words, contains useful cross-references and is followed by a list of suggested readings that the interested researcher can pursue, presumably to some advantage. The criteria used by the author in determining what to include in these bibliographical guides is not, however, readily apparent. For example, at the end of the entry for Al-Qaeda (see p. 260), Atkins lists seven suggestions, including authoritative reference works (e.g., *Usama bin Laden’s al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network* by Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam and *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* by Rohan Gunaratna), an article in *Foreign Affairs* (“The Protean Enemy” by Jessica Stern), already outdated journalistic works rushed to press for popular audiences (e.g., *Al-Qaeda: The Terror Network That Threatens the World* by Jane Corbin), and obscure newspaper articles of dubious informational value (e.g., “Al Qaeda Mutating Like a Virus,” which appeared on page F3 of the June 22, 2003, edition of the *Toronto Sun*).

In fact, the gravest deficiency in Atkins’s work is methodological. Whereas, indubitably, having some editorial and other selection criteria is a sine qua non for producing volumes of this sort, Atkins is not especially forthcoming about what his were. In his introduction, the author merely states the following:

> The purpose of this book is to give an overview of the most significant extremists and extremist groups in operation in the last half century. . . . Those individuals, groups, and events that I have included have been selected for their importance in the world of extremism. Because over 85 percent of material covers the period since 1980, I have included some individuals and groups for background. (p. xxvii)

In fact, he does not even give a definition of his subject matter, contenting himself with declaring that “few subjects are as ill defined as political extremism” (p. xxv) while offering no solution to the problem. Furthermore, despite making a somewhat questionable affirmation about terrorism—“much easier to define because it begins with a conspiracy and ends with an overt act” (p. xxv)—Atkins neither proposes a definition of his own nor discusses the relative merits of the ones offered by any government, such as that of the United States: “premeditated, politically motivated violence
perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” (Title 22, 2000, Definitions section). Nor does he acknowledge experts on the subject such as Bruce Hoffman (2006): “the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change” (p. 40).

The lack of methodological transparency leaves this reviewer somewhat puzzled by some of the choices made by the author. The encyclopedia is clearly intended for a general audience. Yet the utility to such readers of devoting two full pages to a disquisition on the rather esoteric Italian neofascist philosopher Julius Evola (1898-1974) is not easily explicable any more than are some rather startling omissions that are likewise not explained. The book was apparently finished in early 2004 because the last event recorded in the “Chronology of Events” (p. xxiv) was the bombing of the Moscow subway by Chechen terrorists on February 6 of that year. At that time, the U.S. Department of State listed 39 designated foreign terrorist organizations. Yet Atkins makes no mention of three of the groups (Ansar al-Islami, Lashkar i Jhangvi, and the Salafist Group for Call and Combat) and makes only passing mention of two others (Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command). And despite noting terrorist and other violent incidents connected with the conflict in Chechnya, Atkins’s work does not have an entry on a single Chechen group (although there is a biographical entry for Chechen Islamist terrorist mastermind Shamil Basayev, who was killed in an explosion in 2006).

There also seems to be a certain geographical bias in Atkins’s encyclopedia. Whereas it is replete with entries for relatively obscure European individuals and organizations, aside from the entries for white South African extremists (e.g., Afrikaner Resistance Movement, Eugène Terre’Blanche) — and one might wonder what happened to the People Against Gangsterism and Drugs and other extremist groups associated with people of color in that country—the treatment of Africa is uneven at best. Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe merits a three-page entry whereas Liberia’s Charles Taylor makes no appearance in the volume, even though the latter stands accused before an international war crimes tribunal of responsibility for far more death and destruction than the former has been accused of. Likewise absent is any mention of the two-decades-long murderous rampage of Joseph Kony and the Lord’s Resistance Army through northern Uganda, which has killed tens of thousands and displaced more than 2 million. Even more disconcerting is the author’s decision to include as an “extremist group” the venerable Al-Azhar University in Cairo (founded 977 CE). Although it may have graduated some extremist alumni, what centuries-old institution of higher education has not? (Think “Unabomber” Theodore Kaczynski, Harvard class of 1962.) Certainly, Al-Azhar University does not itself deserve the moniker.

In short, although readers will find individual entries—many of which are commendably well researched and presented—within the Encyclopedia of Modern Worldwide Extremists and Extremist Groups useful, the work as a whole lacks the methodological rigor, perspective, and balance that are required if it is to live up to the promise of its title.

J. Peter Pham
James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA

References