



Terrorism: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Joseba Zulaika

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In counterterrorism circles, the standard response to questions about the possibility of future attacks is the terse one-liner: "Not if, but when." This mantra supposedly conveys a realistic approach to the problem, but, as Joseba Zulaika argues in Terrorism, it functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy. By distorting reality to fit their own worldview, the architects of the War on Terror prompt the behavior they seek to prevent—a twisted logic that has already played out horrifically in Iraq. In short, Zulaika contends, counterterrorism has become pivotal in promoting terrorism.

Exploring the blind spots of counterterrorist doctrine, Zulaika takes readers on a remarkable intellectual journey. He contrasts the psychological insight of Truman Capote's In Cold Blood with The 9/11 Commission Report, plumbs the mindset of terrorists in works by Orianna Fallaci and Jean Genet, maps the continuities between the cold war and the fight against terrorism, and analyzes the case of a Basque terrorist who tried to return to civilian life. Zulaika's argument is powerful, inventive, and rich with insights and ideas that provide a new and sophisticated perspective on the War on Terror.



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