
Reviewed by Robert W. White

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Available online: 01 Jun 2011


To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2011.581094

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
In a curious way Tamimi accidentally tells us more than he intends. Just as his moderately couched pro-Hamas writings in British liberal newspapers like the Guardian belie his appearances at public meetings backing radical Islam, he is talking out of both sides of his mouth in this book. He does not set out to say that Hamas is calculating and untrustworthy, and that what it claims as principles challenge the norms of civilised society, making it impossible for the rest of the world to deal with it at face value. Yet the thoughtful independent reader may well take that message from this book.

Hamas is as much an issue for the Muslim world as for the West, and a detailed understanding of its real views and development is badly needed. There's simply too much partisanship and message tailoring for tender Western sensibilities, but not enough candour in this book for it to meet that objective. It will therefore only be of interest to experts on the subject and should be avoided by the general reader and students.


Reviewed by Robert W. White
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

IRA: The Bombs and the Bullets, by A. R. Oppenheimer, is an interesting contribution to the large body of literature that focuses on conflict in Ireland. Oppenheimer, a specialist in weapons of mass destruction, explosives, and counterterrorism who “contributes reports and analyses for defence and security journals” (from the back cover), writes from an interesting perspective. The book concentrates on the activities of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (1969–2005), but there is coverage of previous paramilitary campaigns in pursuit of the Irish Republic (e.g., the Fenians of the late 19th Century and the IRA’s “Border Campaign”) and of other organizations, including the Real IRA and the INLA.

In an introduction and eleven chapters, the book pretty much covers everything from bullets to highly technical remote-controlled explosions. The appendices are also noteworthy, especially for those of us who are not directly familiar with the very serious matter of explosives. Appendix 1 is titled “Bombs and Explosives – How They Are Made, How They Work and What They Do”; Appendix 2, “Effects of Explosives,” is a technical and sobering read. Clearly, the author took great care in researching this book. The bibliography includes citations to the usual sources (such as Liam Clarke and Kathryn Johnston’s Martin McGuinness: From Guns to Government), and an impressive array of other sources, including Jane’s Intelligence Review, published accounts of former IRA members and members of the security forces, newspaper articles, documentaries, and so on. The bibliography alone makes this an important book. Oppenheimer was also granted access to the inventory of weapons confiscated by the Garda Síochána (Irish police).

Unfortunately, one more pass through by a careful editor would have resulted in a tighter, smoother presentation. At various points the presentation is repetitive.
Patrick Magee and the Brighton bomb are discussed at multiple points, as indicated by, “The meticulous IRA planning and preparation involved, and the relative sophistication of the device itself (described in Chapters 3 and 6), had largely been unexpected” (p. 262). There are several relatively minor but still notable errors and the occasional tendency to make a sweeping statement. On pages 36–37, in describing the developing peace process in the early 1990s, Oppenheimer suggests that after the Downing Street Declaration (December 1993) “an idea of ‘Éire Nua’ took root, a federal four-province Ireland.” In fact, Provisional Sinn Féin jettisoned Éire Nua in the early 1980s. Describing the IRA in the 1970s, he states, “It got to the stage where most IRA operatives were known to the authorities” (p. 32). This is contradicted two pages later with, “the IRA could often remain a step ahead by being less visible” (p. 34). It appears that the first quotation describes the situation before the IRA reorganization in the mid-1970s and the second quotation describes the situation after the reorganization; a reader not familiar with Irish Republican history would be better served by a narrative that was more chronological in its approach. Although a glossary is provided, there is a bit too much usage of jargon and acronyms: “The under-vehicle booby trap (UVBT) until the end of the 1980s used a TPU [Timing and Power Unit] in a Tupperware box mounted on the exterior of the IED [Improvised Explosive Device]…” (p. 221).

IRA: The Bombs and the Bullets is a must-have for anyone interested in understanding the conflict in Ireland. Oppenheimer does an excellent job of describing a generation’s worth of measures and countermeasures employed by Irish Republican insurgents and security force counterinsurgents. And he does so in a welcome, neutral, fashion:

The IRA killed many people, either deliberately or unintentionally, when bomb warnings failed or were deliberately ambiguous, or when innocent civilians simply got in the way. Bombs, the IRA’s chosen means of attack, have long been the most indiscriminate of weapons, whether used by terrorist groups or dropped from planes on cities. But on the whole the organization avoided civilian casualties as far as possible within the frenetic mayhem of rural and urban insurgency warfare; a situation in which civilians will always get caught up in the conflict. (p. 10)

In the early 1970s, IRA operators made timing devices from spring-loaded clothes pegs with pin tacks at the end; the tacks were held apart by a rubber band or soldering wire that, at some unpredictable point, gave way and completed an electrical circuit. Too often the result was a premature explosion that killed an IRA volunteer (pp. 200–202). Over time they developed more sophisticated weaponry, including timers, booby-traps, mortars, etc. The Brighton Bomb, which targeted Margaret Thatcher and the 1984 Conservative party conference, “was both very simple and very complex – a terrorist ‘masterpiece.’” A timer from a home video recorder primed the bomb for detonation in “twenty-four days, six hours and thirty-six minutes…” (pp. 119–120). The security forces also had their technological advances. Support for an ammunition technical officer (ATO) on a “long walk” to a bomb included recoilless anti-tank guns with inert projectiles that could knock bombs apart before detonation, remote-controlled robots, informers who sabotaged operations, airborne surveillance, infra-red imaging, and more. In sum, this is a
fascinating presentation of the deadly “cat and mouse” game played over the course of a generation by the IRA and the security forces.


Reviewed by Richard Whelan  
Author, *Al Qaedaism: The Threat to Islam, the Threat to the World*  
Dublin, Ireland

Therese Delpech sets out to explain Iran’s nuclear activities, to clarify the role played by other countries and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and to offer clear and unambiguous conclusions about both. As director of strategic studies at the French Atomic Energy Commission and commissioner with the UN Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission, she is perfectly placed to do so. She succeeds admirably.

Although it is a relatively short book, Delpech covers a huge amount of ground. She discloses telling details of Iran’s gameplaying and the assistance it has received from many sources, including Russia, China, Pakistan, South Africa, North Korea, and interestingly, the IAEA itself. She confirms what many have long suspected: “The internal tensions at the IAEA over the handling of this case, as well as over the content of the reports made to the Board of Governors, have attracted comment in several capitals. In the crucial period between 2003 and 2005, the director-general, Mohammed El Baradei, was manifestly more accommodating towards Tehran than the former head of safeguards... Mohammed El Baradei’s judgement was constantly political, while his predecessor, as well as the Director of Safeguards, had kept to the agency’s core mission, which is of a technical nature. The only non-proliferation political authority must remain the Security Council” (p. 88). In case there is any doubt, her conclusion is clear—“It also has to be accepted that the IAEA is not an entirely neutral interlocutor, especially when it is a matter of reporting all the facts related to violations” (p. 107).

Delpech clarifies issues with respect to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) long forgotten in the interminable detail of the negotiations. Noting Iran’s repeated assertions about its rights under the NPT, she explains: “Tehran naturally neglects to mention that this right is linked to compliance with articles 1 and 2 of the NPT, stipulating the non-diversion of nuclear activities for military purposes. It neglects also to mention that the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes can be fulfilled without enrichment or reprocessing taking place within the country concerned” (p. 18). She also clarifies what Iran’s success to date and its likely future activities mean. Thus, she notes, “the main question facing the international community is whether it will continue to accept the policy of the fait accompli, thus losing all credibility regarding the respecting of treaties” (p. 101).

Charting the ups and downs of negotiations with Iran, particularly by the EU 3, Delpech pulls no punches. “The Europeans,” she argues, “have been manipulated from the outset by Iran” (p. 24). “For a simple reason that history has seen time and time again: western democracies seem unable to take action against an