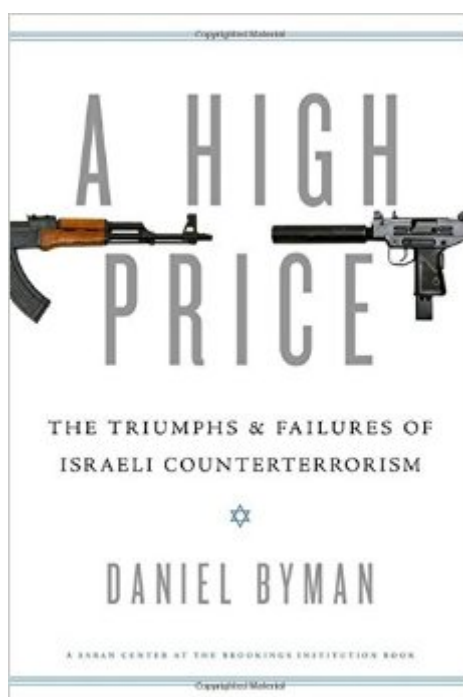


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# A High Price: The Triumphs And Failures Of Israeli Counterterrorism (Saban Center At The Brookings Institution Books)



## Synopsis

The product of painstaking research and countless interviews, *A High Price* offers a nuanced, definitive historical account of Israel's bold but often failed efforts to fight terrorist groups. Beginning with the violent border disputes that emerged after Israel's founding in 1948, Daniel Byman charts the rise of Yasir Arafat's Fatah and leftist groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine--organizations that ushered in the era of international terrorism epitomized by the 1972 hostage-taking at the Munich Olympics. Byman reveals how Israel fought these groups and others, such as Hamas, in the decades that follow, with particular attention to the grinding and painful struggle during the second intifada. Israel's debacles in Lebanon against groups like the Lebanese Hizballah are examined in-depth, as is the country's problematic response to Jewish terrorist groups that have struck at Arabs and Israelis seeking peace. In surveying Israel's response to terror, the author points to the coups of shadowy Israeli intelligence services, the much-emulated use of defensive measures such as sky marshals on airplanes, and the role of controversial techniques such as targeted killings and the security barrier that separates Israel from Palestinian areas. Equally instructive are the shortcomings that have undermined Israel's counterterrorism goals, including a disregard for long-term planning and a failure to recognize the long-term political repercussions of counterterrorism tactics.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Despite the narrow scope implied by the subtitle ("The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism"), Daniel Byman's "A High Price" defines a new benchmark in terms of presenting a lucid, objective, comprehensive, brilliantly analytical exposition of the terror and counter-terror campaign waged in the Middle East involving the State of Israel. Byman's history is organized in 4 sections: "The Early Years", "From Oslo Through the Second Intifada", "The Lebanese Hizballah", "Jewish Terrorism" and, "Findings and Conclusions". In my estimation, it is the best book on the subject amongst the dozens I've read, including the previous reference-standard, "Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services" by Ian Black and Benny Morris (1991). Any supporter or critic of Israel, its adversaries and, indeed of U.S. actions in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and now Libya (some of which mimic Israeli initiatives) would be well advised to read Byman's far-reaching analysis before rendering judgment. Byman's recurring theme is that the components of the Israeli Intelligence Community, (Aman, the military intelligence of the IDF; Mossad, responsible for overseas intelligence work; Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service) are superb practitioners of tactics, but that overall strategy, as set by the Israeli Government, is essentially non-existent. In Byman's words, "In over sixty years of fighting terrorism Israel has at times empowered radicals at the expense of moderates, tarnished its diplomatic image, allowed terrorists to use propaganda to turn defeat into victory and otherwise failed at a strategic level. Such failures are in part due to the difficulty of the challenge Israel has faced and continues to face.

The reader reviews already listed are great and thorough, and I cannot add to them. I can just add a snippet on what I enjoyed, and a Table of Contents to give you a glimpse of how the book is organized. Byman's book opens in 1954. Palestinians attack and kill a busload of Jewish Israeli vacationers at Scorpion's Pass. The killers escape. Some say that Israelis and Israel got what it deserves. The Israeli opposition leaders and others call for retaliation against the government that is shielding the Palestinian terrorists. The Labor ruling party worries about the consequences of any unilateral action. No retaliation occurs; more attacks happen. This was 1954, but it could be the scenario from the attacks over the next five decades. Byman tells how the 1976 Entebbe raid provided the myth of Israeli brilliance and execution, and the mistakes reinforced the myth of Israeli bungling. Byman systematically cuts through all the myths to show the reality of Israel's successes and its failures, the brilliance, and the lack of a focused planned long term strategy. The land of milk and honey is a land of triumphs and errors and missed opportunities for propaganda and public relations. The errors led to increased radicalization, hurt delicate alliances, and allowed the military and political leaderships to pursue opposite goals. I enjoyed his blunt analyses. He backs his

opinions with solid political theory (such as Max Weber's "logic of responsibility") and he provides inside stories (for example, Sharon and Y.

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