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Miranda Alison. Women and Political Violence: Female Combatants in Ethno-National Conflict.

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capitals was composed of brief lines, which included statements such as "death or America," "death to Israel," and "Allah is great." Two other envelopes, which were addressed to Senator Tom Daschle and Senator Patrick Leahy, had similar content, but included "you cannot stop us" and "we have this anthrax" amongst other lines.

Although the anthrax attacks resulted in relatively few casualties, they generated massive disruption, including 30,000 people being treated with prophylactic antibiotics. Many key government offices and buildings closed, including portions of the Pentagon, the State Department, the Federal Reserve Building, and the Supreme Court. The FBI posted a detailed psychological profile of the perpetrator, describing him as someone who holds grudges but is non-confrontational and prefers to be by himself, and has a scientific background with access to a source of anthrax which most likely came from a U.S. laboratory.

This "domestic-loner" profile appears to have been heavily influenced by the FBI's experience with Theodore Kaczynski, more infamously known as the "Unabomber." Kaczynski had mailed several letter bombs over 18 years prior to his arrest in 1996, injuring 29 people and killing three. In fact, the author of this riveting chapter points out that it remains unclear why Kaczynski's profile should be the model for the anthrax mailer as no one has ever been successfully charged for the anthrax attack. In Chapter 8 of this book, the 1942 Chinese allegations that the Japanese army attacked Chinese civilians with germs as biological weapons is rendered even more fascinating by the disclosure that the United States chose to offer immunity to Japan's Biological Warfare scientists in exchange for intelligence on their biological warfare program.

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Miranda Alison. *Women and Political Violence: Female Combatants in Ethno-National Conflict.* New York: Routledge, 2009. 292 pp., $49.95 paper. ISBN: 978-0-415-59242-0.

Reviewed by **Ryan Shaffer**
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Miranda Alison examines the role of women as ethno-nationalist combatants in Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland. She uses qualitative interviews with women from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka and women in Northern Ireland to dispel the myth "that women are generally more peaceful and less aggressive or warlike than men" (p. 1). From field research conducted in 2002 and 2003, Alison interviewed seventeen LTTE members and eleven republican ex-combatants as well as ten loyalist women from Northern Ireland. Alison uses the interviews to examine why women enlist in ethno-nationalist movements and to explore their experiences within these groups. Though there are stark social, cultural, and economic differences between the two conflicts, the book offers important insight into an often neglected facet of political violence.

The book has seven chapters that explore feminist theory and women as non-state combatants in the Sri Lankan and North Ireland conflicts, and analyze women's different experiences. In the first chapter, Alison explains that her focus is on women's violent political agency, arguing against a monolithic view that

women are just victims in ethno-nationalist violence. She then explores the structure of the book and looks at the diverse feminist epistemologies and methodologies. The second chapter offers a broad overview that, as the author admits, moves quickly through the history and mythology of the main actors in both conflicts. The third chapter examines feminist debates about peace and nationalism, concluding that, "if we do not seriously address women's violence and militarism and the specific contexts within which these operate we leave these women to continue to be read as deviant, as different from ourselves, as victims . . . and as apolitical" (p. 121).

Alison moves from the theoretical framework to her interviews in the fourth chapter by examining women's enlistment. First she explains that the LTTE began recruiting women in 1979, and the desire to join increased after the 1983 anti-Tamil riots, which resulted in nationalist fervor when their families were lost or displaced. Initially, women were turned away by the organization since it did not "have a policy of accepting women but women were eventually accepted through their own persistence" (p. 125). In Northern Ireland, the motivations were different as the loyalists and republicans saw themselves as part of a tradition, often with familial ties. The republicans cited discrimination as a reason to take up arms whereas, in one case, a loyalist became involved by protesting the civil rights movement. The fifth chapter moves to exploring women's experiences in the LTTE with extensive quotes from Alison's interviews. Pointing out that the LTTE has a stated "commitment to women's liberation" and its policies had a large impact on women, she argues "this has not always been as unambiguously positive as the organization would like us to believe" (p. 162). Social-sexual norms, for example, "are reinforced which may be strategically useful for the movement" (p. 172).

The sixth chapter concentrates on women in paramilitary organizations in Northern Ireland. Alison notes that in contrast to the LTTE, "the IRA and other republican paramilitaries in Northern Ireland did not develop specific policies dealing with the integration of women and do not seem to have actively or specifically targeted women in their recruitment" (p. 186). Focusing mostly on the Provisional Irish Republican Army for the republican forces, she describes women's struggles in the early 1970s and how they pushed to be accepted.

Alison also examines their ideology by highlighting how feminism was intertwined with republicanism and socialism. Whereas, her interviews with loyalists, who had more ties to the Ulster Volunteer Force than the Ulster Defence Association, explores strands of anti-feminism because, for example, feminism is seen as an expression of the "other side" as well as the loyalists having a male-dominated public face. Consequently, most of the loyalists interviewed "were reluctant to label themselves feminist yet expressed interesting ideas on gender" (p. 214). However, she points out that one commonality between both sides was that many women "are in favour of women's greater participation in conventional politics in Northern Ireland" (p. 216). In the seventh chapter, Alison concludes by arguing that "being a woman or a feminist is not a sufficient condition for being a pacifist, it is also not a sufficient condition for being anti-nationalist" (p. 218). Indeed, feminists intertwined with nationalists and in some cases, as with the LTTE, the movement helped fostered emerging forms of feminism.

Women and Political Violence is a significant contribution to understanding political violence, with the interviewees telling their stories in their own words. The strengths of the book are the interviews that paint often diverse personal motivations for enlisting in their causes and examine the struggles women faced as

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well as how, in the case of the LTTE, ideas about social equality evolved. One of the book's weaknesses was how the interviews were used in relation to the actual conflict. Women played a prominent role in the LTTE with, for example, the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, but Alison's book does not weave the stories of women's combatant roles into the daily activity and history of the Sri Lankan conflict. Additionally, the author's focus is on non-state movements with the republicans and loyalists in Northern Ireland, and only the Tamil women in Sri Lanka. The exclusion of the Singhalese women leaves the reader wondering about the differences between the Tamil and Singhalese women, especially when she describes the "othering" process when forces seek to recruit Tamil women for their "confident" behavior. Despite these minor quibbles, Alison's book has many valuable firsthand accounts of women in conflict and provides scholars with important analyses about internal dimensions of ethno-nationalist movements.

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Neville Bolt. *The Violent Image: Insurgent Propaganda and the New Revolutionaries.* London: Hurst and Company, 2012. 429 pp., $29.50 hardcover. ISBN: 978-1-88904-191-1.

Reviewed by **D. J. Mulloy**
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This is the age of the violent image. The World Trade Center bellowing smoke and flames into a clear blue sky. Cars and trucks sent hurtling into the air by roadside IEDs. Dazed customers stumbling from the wreckage of a city restaurant. Armed gunmen running amok through opulent hotels. Suicide bombers calmly articulating their grievances. A man with bloodied hands and a meat cleaver attempting to justify himself on a London street. Whether viewed on the Internet, in newspapers, on television, or on cell phones, we are all depressingly familiar with these images and many others just like them. What do they mean? What are they intended to achieve? And why have they become so prevalent at the dawn of the twenty-first century? These are just some of the questions Neville Bolt sets out to answer in *The Violent Image: Insurgent Propaganda and the New Revolutionaries.*

A former British television producer who specialized in making investigative documentaries in conflict zones around the world, and who is now a Teaching Fellow and Research Associate in the Department of War Studies at King's College, London, Bolt is certainly well placed to answer them. Providing a new conceptualization of the "propaganda of the deed" as a form of "political marketing" and subversive communication tool, terrorist acts like those outlined above have become the new strategic operating concept of insurgent and revolutionary groups around the world, Bolt maintains. Unlike their nineteenth-century predecessors, who were unable to maintain control over the "messages" they were attempting to send, today's proponents of this kind of political violence are much more adept at exploiting the new media landscape afforded them by the information age, he says. No longer are terrorist acts undertaken to provoke the state to overreaction in order to create a crisis of legitimacy for the targeted regime, Bolt argues. Rather, today "a terrorist deed [is] aimed at state targets and sometimes populations with the