

COLUMBIA GLOBAL REPORTS

Dear Reader,

We all know that it's a mistake to negotiate with terrorists, right?

Not so fast, says Joel Simon, the journalist and longtime head of the Committee to Protect Journalists. Simon has been deeply involved in trying to obtain the release of journalists taken hostage by radical Islamic terrorists—notably James Foley, who was kidnapped in Syria in 2012 and beheaded by ISIS in 2014, though several captives being held in the same location were released. Simon came to learn that the strict never-negotiate policy proclaimed by Britain and the United States is not a universal one, and that several European countries, publicly or privately, do negotiate, without the disastrous results that such a policy is supposed to produce.

We Want to Negotiate is a gripping work of investigative reporting and original thinking. Simon's extensive contacts in the hostage world have enabled him to bring into the light what has up to now been shadowy: precise descriptions of the secret negotiations by European governments that led to the release of a number of hostages, plus an intimate description of the heartbreaking failure of the efforts of James Foley's family and the Obama Administration to free him. Simon argues that in the age of Internet videos of beheadings that are used as recruiting devices by terrorist organization, the logic of not negotiating no longer applies: it's now the killing of hostages, not their release, that encourages more kidnapping.

This is a brave and original book that takes apart the comfortable bromides we have been applying to a disturbing and important issue.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Lemann