

BOOK REVIEW: TERRORISM: THE MANY DIMENSIONS

By

PINAKI BHATTACHARYA

Dr. Shubhra Sanyal (Ghosh)
TERRORISM: The Many Dimensions
Lenin Media (New Delhi), 2015

Is a terrorist born, or one, bred in a milieu the society hands her down? Shubhra Sanyal wrote this book to accomplish an extremely important task – one that requires perspicacity, perseverance and a phenomenological mind. The issues that she has raised are fundamental in nature: a common definition of terrorism; a deeper understanding of their toolbox; and finally creating a possible template for identifying a ‘terrorist’ before s/he commits the criminal act/s.

The last task is global in nature. Criminologists like Sanyal across the world are devoting thousands of hours trying to do exactly the same. And as they have propounded, the security forces combatting terrorism need to be correct all the times, the terrorist needs to be correct only once. And that one time when they achieve their diabolical goal, they create memories that stigmatise and scar the survivors for a lifetime.

It took 44 minutes – from the time of take-off - for the American Airlines Flight 11, a Boeing 767-200 Extended Range aircraft to slam into the North

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Tower of the World Trade Centre in downtown New York. And as the other two of a total of four aircrafts also hit their targets, history of the most important existential tussle of the new millennium was created. We have the memories and we have a shorthand – 9/11 – for remembering it.

In Sanyal's book she has eventually settled on a definition of 'terrorism' that needs pondering: To paraphrase her, she wrote that a terrorist seeks to impose her's or his' will on the larger society by the psychological tool of coercion. But she does not advocate coercion to be met with coercion. Though she is a realist enough to understand the natural tendency of the State – in terms of the contract it engages in with the people – is to use the heavy hand in securing the state of peace.

But mercifully there are the Edward Snowdens and Julian Assanges who help us maintain at least some parts of our sanity, and for the State, they stay the hand from becoming an Orwellian state.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pinaki Bhattacharya is an editorial consultant with a new news daily that is being published from New Delhi, *Millennium Post*, and is also the editor, *Defence and Security of India* (DSI), published by Media Transasia, Ltd. He writes on strategic and security issues.

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