Countering Terrorism: Psychological Strategies, edited by Updesh Kumar and Manas K. Mandal, New Delhi: Sage, 2012, pp. 444, INR 850

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The book is a collection of 18 research essays authored by 27 international personalities from various countries (including four from India). It is devoted to understanding 'Causes of Terrorism and How to Counter It'. These essays have been edited by two scientists of the Defence and Research Laboratories, India, who have been working on same subject.

Divided in two sections, the first nine essays are devoted to 'Understanding Terrorism: Psychosocial Issues'; and the rest cover 'Countering Terrorism: Psychosocial Avenues'. Besides focusing on the historical background, the authors have studied and analysed terrorist events and persons associated with them in the recent past the world over. Data, as revealed from 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States (US) and the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai, and studies carried out on terrorist attacks in Europe, have been quoted extensively.

SECTION I—UNDERSTANDING TERRORISM: PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES

In this section, the authors analyse the childhood environment of the terrorists, their socio-economic and educational background. They then

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attempt to deduce reasons and rational for their joining terrorist groups. The role of religion, impressions and impact of leadership, perceived threat to their culture, and other factors that create a divide between 'Us and Them', resulting in hate and anger, which finally result in terrorist attacks, have been covered. Emphasis has been laid on understanding the motivation of suicide attackers, their devotion to the cause and willingness to suffer physical hardships. How and why an 'individual joins a group and takes up its cause' has been covered, in some detail. Aspects of groups, leadership and the role of media have also been covered.

Ishtiaq Ahmad focuses on 'Terrorism: A Conceptual Framework' in the first essay of this section. He quotes various definitions of terrorism, for example, 'all criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes'; 'a violent act based on three broad criteria: target, weapon, and perpetrator'; and 'Premeditated threat or use of violence by sub-national groups or clandestine individuals intended to intimidate or coerce governments to promote political, religious, or ideological outcomes'. Ahmad concludes that, as yet, no agreed definition has been arrived at. It relates to the civilian casualties of humans and their material, as well as the state apparatus. He also differentiates between 'religious (holy) terrorism' and 'secular terrorism'. The former contains the value system and stands opposite to the latter, which operates within the realm of a dominant political and cultural framework. According to Ahmad, Huntington's 'Clash of Civilization' theory has put religion at the core of relationship between 'Islam and the West' and created a divide, in which Muslims see the US and the West as adopting double standards towards Palestinian cause and Islam. He sees 'non-state terrorism' as a largely politically motivated violent activity, which employs terrorism, often relying on religion, caste and clan, as a means rather than an end. The popular notion of 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' is totally flawed. In his view, as the state has the obligation to provide safety, and thus legitimate right to use force, the legitimacy of politically motivated violence against state security by a non-state organization is questionable.

The second article, 'Terrorism: Psychological Issues', by Abdolhosein Abdollahi analyses aggression. It involves a behaviour characterized by the goal of causing harm to another individual, with deliberate intention. It could be hostile (hot, reactive, affective—resulting from emotion of anger associated with impulsivity) or instrumental (cold—in order to

attain a goal). He explores links between psychoanalysis and terrorism, including suicidal attacks, and links it with social learning theories. In his view, aggression results from negative moods and often results in damage to innocent targets, as has been seen in Libya where the 'War on Terror' has resulted in civilian casualties. Explaining terrorism in terms of a 'tool theory', which defines it as 'tools or means to an end', he feels that it downplays the role of situational and personality factors in violence. Explaining Terror Management Theory (TMT), Abdollahi has explored the al-Qaida and Taliban leaders (including Osama bin Laden), who maintained that their fight was against the 'invasion of the Western culture against the Islamic teachings and lifestyle.'

The next chapter on 'Sociocultural Aspects of Terrorism' is co-authored by Updesh Kumar, Swati Mukherjee and Vijay Prakash. The authors find that individuals engage in terrorist activities as an expression of an 'already developed or assigned identity'. They are also impacted by the 'group', 'association',' culture', and its 'leader'. They opine that the 'War on Terror' has divided the world along religious lines and has 'created a culture of violence' by aggravating feelings of alienation. Often, the spiral of violence initiated by terrorist acts, followed by counterterror violence by the state, leads to legitimization and greater tolerance for violence amongst the general population. Analysing the social perspective for involvement in terrorism, they find that, often, perceived or existing socio-economic differences create 'ethnicity-based conflicts' and results in 'Us vs. They' groups, which often take recourse to conflict. Kumar, Mukherjee and Prakash have also analysed causes for suicidal and non-suicidal terrorist acts and found that religion and leadership often play an important role in it.

The fourth article, 'Sociopsychological Impact of Terrorism: Key Concepts, Research and Theory', is by Mark Dechesne. His research indicates that, often, terrorism is used as an instrument to bring about social, political or religious change. It works because it is difficult to predict and thus creates potential insecurity, not only among the state but also civilian masses, as it often targets them. The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) created by terrorist acts, and their impact on common public, has been explained, giving examples from the 9/11 and 26/11 incidents. To counter terrorism, Dechesne advocates a well-planned affective response; a cognitive, sense-making attribution process following a terrorist attack; and a measured individual and social response mechanism.

In the next essay, Daniel Antonius, Mandi L. White-Ajmani and Joseph Charap examine 'The Behavioral Profile of a Terrorist', based upon theoretical and empirical observations. They have taken events and also personalities from across the world and categorized them as the 'leader', the 'idealist' and the 'lone wolf'. Though difficult to get a full profile of a terrorist, their study reveals that terrorists belong to a heterogeneous group and are often influenced by factors at numerous levels, including intra-psychic motivations, cognitions and affective responses, groups dynamics and environmental experiences. Thus, different models (like socio-development, aggressive behaviour and religious group affiliation) need to be formulated for analysing them. They conclude that a number of characteristics are likely to be common to terrorists described as having the 'Leader, Idealist and the Lone Wolf' archetypes, though they have different roles and functions.

The sixth essay, 'Understanding Terrorist Groups', is by Sam Mullins. He states that the uniqueness of terrorist organizations or movements, and their context, highlights that there is no predetermined formula which can be used to counter them as they have emerged due to different reasons and often fight for different causes. The nineteenth century anti-anarchists, the twentieth century anti-colonial, or the post-Vietnam War New Left or the current Religious Wave are all distinct. New groups could be formed due to poverty, rapid population growth and urbanization, social inequality, human rights abuses, cultural clashes resulting from globalization or deprivation (comparison to other social group) or feeling of injustice. It is a group phenomenon, has a strong collective ideology, motivation, organization and leadership, and can change its strategy due to resistance, political or leadership issues. Mullins has supported his findings with extensive analysis of al-Qaida and its operations.

Dipak K. Gupta's essay is titled 'The Leadership Puzzle in Terrorism Study'. He also emphasizes that there are inadequacies of the standard theories of the 'root causes' of terrorism, which can be addressed taking human motivation to leadership as determining variable for social conflict. Gupta feels that leaders of the groups greatly influence the decisions, and they are impacted by the social, political and historical environment under which they are born and brought up. He feels that leaders mould the structure of the group, and its religious and political thought, and can direct them towards 'productive' or 'unproductive' acts, giving incentives and promises, often by personal examples of self-sacrifice.

'Bioterrorism: Psychological Implications of Biological Weapons Agents and Mass Contagion' is the next essay by Darvis Frazier, Harrison Weinstein and Bruce Bongar. The essay highlights the fact that since the anthrax events of 11 September, there is growing concern of this threat the world over. The weapon is imperceptible, infectious and has an incubation period, which makes it deadly. Stating that terrorists want large numbers dead, and even more crippled by fear, the authors argue that biological weapons have a great psychological impact. The impact of anthrax, botulism, plague, small pox and tularemia has been highlighted in the essay. Besides physical and medical issues, trauma and resilience have been covered. Precautionary and preparatory actions have been suggested to reduce trauma.

The last essay in the first section is on 'The Role of the Media in Propagating Terrorism', by Gabriel Weimann. Highlighting the reach of electronic and television media today, Weimann points out that terrorists plan and execute their acts keeping the global audience in mind, so that its impact is felt by even those not directly impacted by it. Whether it is kidnapping, 9/11 or the Mumbai attacks, by virtual and real-time coverage, the media plays a major role in conveying the message of the terrorists to the masses across the world. Terror on the Internet, using tools like Yahoo, ee-Groups and YouTube, has become a common way by which terrorist groups and their leaders operate and spread their ideology.

Section II—Countering Terrorism: Psychosocial Avenues

In the first essay in this section, Max Abrahms writes on 'Terrorist Motives: A Reassessment of the Conventional Wisdom'. His essay asks some basic questions: what the terrorists want and to what extent they will go to get it; and can they be neutralized by withholding political concessions, granting the concessions or providing peaceful outlets for political changes? Abrahms assumes that the following: terrorists are motivated by relatively stable political goals; their actions are result of a calculated course of action; and are derived by logic of consequences. He discusses them in the 'strategic model' based on economic theory of rational agents (stable and consistent preferences, evaluation of cost and benefits of the available options and selection of the optimum option). He finds seven puzzles in terrorist organizations—coercive ineffectiveness, first resort, uncompromising attitude, protean political platforms, anonymous attacks, fratricide and never-ending terrorism—and attempts to answer them.

'Rational Choice and Terrorist Target Selection' is covered in the next essay by Graeme R. Newman and Henda Y. Hsu. An analysis of rational choice, motivation and motives is made to decide what is the limited rationality of terrorists, their decision-making apparatus, commitment, opportunity utilization and properties of a target, including approach and getaway routes. The authors feel that a target which is exposed, vital, iconic, legitimate, destructible, occupied, near and easy to attack is given preference. It should also fuel publicity, intermediacy, money and provocation from the state (resulting in more violence), which will further enhance the motive of terrorist groups.

Dushyant Singh writes on the 'Impact of Virtual World in Creation and Sustenance of Terrorists'. His essay brings out impact of information and cyber technology on terror world. Today, terrorists can communicate, link-up, spread their ideological propaganda, collect funds, select targets and enroll recruits—without any physical challenge and threat. Cyber planning transcends global boundaries, overcomes language and physical barriers and is effective in influencing opinions and ideologies. He suggests a strategy to counter it through information and communications technology (ICT) domain, launch a counter war of ideas and creating international laws and a global legal framework under the United Nations (UN) for preventing the use of cyberspace by terrorists.

The next essay, by Victoria Herrington and Karl Roberts, is titled 'Risk Assessment in Counterterrorism'. The authors cover risk (or harm), both physical and forensic, damage. In their view, hazard identification and whether the risk is dynamic or static, its frequency and related risks need to be kept in mind before adopting a counterterrorism strategy. They have evolved and explained risk assessment tools, and explained stages in forming terrorist groups. They feel that more data need to be collected to formulate empirical and accurate models.

Karl Roberts also pens an essay titled 'Strategic Interrogation: Interviewing Terrorist Suspects'. He feels that socio-political context, emotional impact and its relevance to law enforcement needs to be kept in mind while dealing with suspects. Their physical and psychological states have a direct relationship with their arrest, detention and treatment, and guide the interrogation techniques adopted. The political and psychological risks involved, and how they can be reduced, have also been touched upon.

The next essay is a case study on 'Educating People to Counterterrorism: "Cognitive Immunization" against Violent Extremism in Indonesia' by

Kumar Ramakrishna. Taking the 2002 Bali attacks as the start point by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) militant network, the author has covered various steps taken, successfully, by the state to counter the threat. At the micro level, the state took steps to identify and remove causes and use moderate leaders to neutralize the bad ones, while, simultaneously, a deliberate immunization programme against the ideology of JI was undertaken at the macro level. These steps included: undermining the moral standing of JI by using the good radicals against the bad ones; promoting face-to-face cross-faith interactions; and using media for raising issues of critical thinking. Also, by reviewing the success achieved for mid-course modulation of steps, the state has been successful in reducing the terrorist threat.

Jeff Victoroff, Janice R. Adleman and Marija Spanovic write on 'How Policies Impacting Intergroup Relations May Escalate or De-escalate Political Aggression'. By carrying out studies of the conflict of Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland and the Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip, the authors have highlighted the success and failure of state initiatives at various stages. Influence of religious biases, perceived neglect and discrimination, violation of religious beliefs and economic disparities have been pointed out as the main causes for the growth of terrorism. Initial harsh state policies, collateral damage and losses, and then success of dialogue and peace initiatives and economic incentives, has been covered.

The next essay, 'The Role of Strategic Information Operations in Countering Terrorism', has been written by Jerrold M. Post and Apostolos Pittas. Drawing extensively on the al-Qaida training manual, they highlight the psychological significance of the leader to the recruitment process, impact of his self-image and importance of correct narrative to motivate and attract recruits. For drawing recruits, identification of their characteristics, use of madrasahs, mosques, prisons and virtual reality was made. The authors suggest measures like inhibiting potential terrorists from joining the group, promoting dissension within the group, encouraging terrorists to leave the group, reducing support for the group and delegitimize its leader, in order to counter the terrorism threat.

The last essay, titled 'Psychospiritual Basis of Understanding, Prevention and Control of Violence in Terrorism', is by Akbar Husain. He argues that though great strides have been made by science and technology, human beings do not know the limits of freedom, which results in confrontation. While Western tradition (like Christianity) associates of

spirituality with religion, the Eastern cultures (like the Bhakti and Sufi traditions) have a spiritual consciousness beyond any particular religion. In the modern age, the world has forgotten non-violence as the means for resolving issues, taking recourse to spirituality (which means quest for meaning, purpose, self-transcending knowledge, meaningful relationship, love and commitment). Husain advocates group discussions to counter terrorism through Vedanta, Sufi and Bhakti traditions of non-violence.

The book tackles psychological aspects of terrorism and offers countermeasures, and will be of interest to researchers and academia involved in studying the issue. It is recommended for libraries of research and educational institutes dealing with defence topics.