



Terrorism

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Editor's Choice:

off

BfK Rating:

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If there is a worse job than reviewing a book about terrorism, then it must be writing one, so our sympathies are with Harris as he picks his way through the rubble of which our collective feelings about terrorism consist. He starts with a bang ? 9/11 ? no contest, really, and then goes on to chart the many recent assaults on society which we have all come to know ? and, in a way, to love. For survival against terrorism proves, as with tsunamis, the resilience of the human spirit ? things were better in the blitz, you know.

Harris makes a good fist of classifying terrorism, separating the lunatic fringe like the Baader/Meinhof outfit from the glamorous hired guns of Carlos and Guevara, the entirely political ETA/IRA type factions and the unfathomables like Al Qaida and Aum Shinrikyo (gas in the Tokyo tube in case you'd forgotten). We look at methods as well as motives, impact and implications and counter-terrorist moves. The 1980 Iranian Embassy stun-grenade episode is hailed as ?brilliantly swift? ? it certainly was ? so swift it allowed us to watch Northants win the Benson & Hedges that year ? and on the same TV channel.

All of this is all right as far as it goes, and Harris's exploration fits where it touches and contains many quotable passages for project purposes. He fights shy ? or perhaps his editor Kelly Davis does ? of institutional terrorism, though. What about ?Shock and Awe? ? who was the terrorist there? The text's terminal sentence runs: ?What seems certain is that terrorism will continue to be a major challenge to civilisation.? Yes, it will, and that's because to the ?terrorist?, terrorism *is* civilisation.

Running Order:

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