



Terrorism, democracy, and human security a communication model

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Book review

Terrorism, Democracy, and Human Security A Communication Model, by Ronald Crelinsten, Routledge, 2021, 352 pp., £120.00 (hardback), ISBN: 9780367860875.

The symbiotic nature of terrorism and counterterrorism (CT) is one that has been subjected to academic scrutiny over several years (Crelinsten, 2002; Dershowitz, 2002; Schwebel, 2011). Despite this, the field lacks a clear communication model that demonstrates the interconnected nature of threat and response. Drawing on decades of existing research Crelinsten's book forges an understanding of violence as a means of communication in human affairs, politics, international relations, and social/cultural spaces. The impact of globalisation is acknowledged throughout the book which highlights the complexities of theorising human security in an age of extreme polarisation and emerging threats, for example, the Covid-19 pandemic. In Part I Crelinsten presents a comprehensive conceptual framework detailing what is termed the 'terrorism-counterterrorism nexus' (p. 12). Part II places the conceptual framework in a wider context, applying this to forms of governance and how this is impacted by actions of the state across three stages 'preceding the transition threshold...in the middle of the zone, and one following the transition threshold' (p. 12). This sets the scene for Part III where Crelinsten's analysis focuses on a broader analysis, international and transnational in scope, where the terrorism-counterterrorism nexus accounts for state and non-state actors. This offers a comprehensive view of action and reaction on behalf of non-state and state actors through a framework of governance ultimately impacting policy at a national and international level.

Crelinsten's experience in the field of terrorism spans four decades and the book is complemented by the author's previous works underpinning the communicative nature of terrorist acts and control measures. Chapters 1 and 2 detail the conceptual framework and context surrounding its application. The book benefits from a strict definition of terrorism, using a 'behavioural approach' (p. 23). Broadening the scope of the application of the conceptual framework this definition focuses on the act itself rather than a more restrictive notion of motive or perpetrator-based explanations. This book therefore allows for the development of a holistic approach to include the state as a perpetrator as well as a target of terrorism. Crelinsten's definition of terrorism is,

the combined use and threat of violence, planned in secret and usually executed without warning, that is directed against one set of targets (the direct victims) to coerce compliance or to compel allegiance from a second set of targets (targets of demands), and to intimidate or to impress a wider audience (target of terror or target of attention) (p.24).

While comprehensive, Crelinsten's definition alludes to terrorist acts 'usually executed without warning'. This does hinder the application of the definition to certain groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) who occasionally provided warnings prior to attacks (Mickolus

and Simmons, 1997). Arguably the communicative function of the act still falls within the remit of Crelinsten's definition and warnings were not commonplace. The definition is robust and applicable to, as Crelinsten explores 'the triangular aspect of terrorist communications' identifying target audiences and promoting propaganda on a global scale (p. 28).

The book effectively places the terrorism-counterterrorism nexus in context, by establishing nodes of governance and grey zones which facilitate the levels of communication across and within states, encompassing a range of state and non-state actors. The book uses a variety of figures to portray the cyclical relations that inform terrorist acts and the responses to said acts, denoting the role of the controller and the controlled. Crelinsten highlights that these roles follow social norms and are informed by power dynamics. The grey zones are a useful concept introduced in Chapter 2 to understand the actions of the state in their response to terrorism or the threat of terrorism. The question of legitimacy is addressed regarding the reaction of the state to acts that fall within this grey zone 'between crime...and full-blown revolution' (p.58) as punitive sanctions can often lead to an increase in support for terrorist groups. The reciprocity of the terrorist act is particularly clear in Figures 2.6 and 2.7 (p. 66 and p. 74). Here, Crelinsten successfully expands Buzan's (1991) framework to encompass an economic consideration rather than solely focusing on protection of state infrastructure. This allows for a visualisation of where policy can influence across nodes diagonally rather than being bound in a 'traditional sectoral approach' (p. 76).

In Part II, Crelinsten begins to outline the conceptual framework in more depth, exploring each of the nodes of governance in more depth, these are 'territorial/environmental, economic, social, political, criminal justice and military' (p. 74). In Chapter 3, territory is explained in terms of borders, natural resources, and environments. The role of the state is clear, in that it regulates markets and is responsible for commoditisation within a territory. Applying the conceptual framework the author uses a number of examples to demonstrate how terrorist acts impact policy within a given territory. Specifically focusing on the wave of restrictive measures from 'controllers' in the aftermath of the 7th July 2005 bombings in London (p. 85). Crelinsten notes that the control and division of resources within society can be a catalyst for terrorism and has the potential to create lasting social inequality, political unrest and economic hardship for subsets of the 'controlled' in society.

Chapter 4 explores these inequalities further within the grey zone of social and economic concerns. The 'controllers' have the responsibility to allocate financial resources to various sectors. Unsurprisingly, security expenditure fluctuates depending on the perceived threat to a territory (discussed within Chapter 4). To explore this further Crelinsten draws on a pertinent example 'after 9/11, the budget for the United States (US) Department of Homeland Security grew by over 60% in the first two years of its existence' (p.105). The co-evolution of the terrorism-counterterrorism nexus is evident through this analysis.

Chapter 5 holds focus on the politicisation of social issues which coincides with polarisation and manifests in a breakdown of social control, characterised by protests. This occurs in a number of contexts but most recently, the technological advances and availability of social media channels has represented a shift in risk perceptions and distribution of false information on a global scale.

Chapter 6 further explores the narrative on the protesting 'controlled' population, Crelinsten identified three policing styles typical of the state's response, 'proactive policing...security intelligence...reactive policing' (p.143). The choice of response is dictated by the type of dissent. Proactive policing is used to combat legal dissent, characterised by a rise in radicalisation and propaganda. Security intelligence is a response to an escalated threat, whereby security services actively detect and monitor threats to national security. While reactive policing is a direct response to violent dissent, which includes social disruption in the form of riots, assault, intimidation and property damage (p. 143). Crelinsten explains that in these circumstances there is scope for 'undermining democratic governance' because of the inflammatory nature of the state's response, especially in cases of legal dissent e.g. peaceful protest (p.159).

Chapter 7 focuses on the military and in particularly the state's role and response to terrorism. This section allows for the exploration of instances of state terrorism and insurgent terrorism – in a top down/bottom-up analysis. Crelinsten notes that instances of state terrorism are usually associated with totalitarian or authoritarian regimes, quashing political rivals using suspect means eg using paramilitary forces, targeted killings and torture. Here the blurring of boundaries in the terrorism-counterterrorism nexus is clear, as the state are routinely employing counterterrorism methods as a means of control to maintain the status quo. Conversely, the bottom-up analysis concludes that emergency measures put in place to deal with insurgent terrorism leads to restrictive measures for non-combatants and the inevitable infringement of civil liberties.

Chapter 8 denotes the final node relating to sovereignty – this explores the interconnected nature of states on a global scale, 'what happens in one state can affect what happens in other states and vice versa' (p. 189). Regime change is highlighted within Crelinsten's framework, whether this is because of foreign interference, military coups, or civil war – terrorism can stem from these actions. The act of international cooperation plays a vital role in fighting terrorism; however, the lack of an agreed definition hinders the response.

Part III brings Crelinsten's conceptual framework from Part I together with the nodes of governance from Part II to theorise as to the role of the state and non-state actors on a national, international and transnational level across Zones A-F, mapping the communicative nature of the acts and the responses across a number of examples. Crelinsten concludes that the relationship between the controller and the controlled is influenced across each node,

vertically, horizontally, and diagonally in the conceptual framework, 'across space and time' (p. 304). The complexity of the framework is simplified through the wealth of knowledge that Crelinsten brings to the analysis, allowing the reader to engage fully with the 'unified field theory of terrorism and counterterrorism' (p. 306).

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