



Book Review

Andrew Silke, et al., (edited by Andrew Silke). Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform. Routledge: Oxon UK, 2014. pp. 282. £28.99. ISBN: 978-0-415-81038-8.

reviewed by Robert W. Hand



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As a direct result of the 9-11 attacks, the field of Terrorism Studies has grown, and continues to do so, exponentially. While the exponential expansion of our field has re-invigorated our discipline, few of us have had time to consider the ‘strategic gaps’ that exist in our knowledge. One particularly salient topic, the consequences of incarcerating terrorists and extremists in our civil penal facilities, is almost devoid of any systematic study—until now. *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform* (Andrew Silke, ed.) is, as far as this reviewer has seen, the only book in publication comprehensively identifying many of the key issues of, and possible solutions for, using our civil penal system to deal with terrorists. It opens, defines, informs, and guides the debate of how democratic societies do and should treat those convicted of terrorist acts. It is a foundational text that is at the forefront of a new and critically important area of research.

“Part I. Introduction” begins with Silke’s excellent preamble of the theme and the clearly stated problem that is the focus of the book. Next, Colin Murray’s chapter, “To Punish, Deter and Incapacitate”, superbly frames the issue and brings to the fore several key challenges regarding the mixing of terrorists and civil criminals in penal facilities. Murray concludes by pointing out that the UK’s system of dealing with convicted terrorists is, “undergoing a necessary evolution...” (p. 30) and leaves the reader with a sudden epiphany: Much in this area has changed since 9-11, continues to change rapidly, and further systematic study is imperative. Murray opens the first of many doors that lead the reader to investigate further.

“Part II. Radicalisation, de-radicalisation and disengagement” contains four well-written and convincing chapters that largely focus on the psychological landscape of the convicted terrorist and the potential for de-radicalisation to occur. Joshua Sinai’s Chapter 3 examines numerous aspects of a terrorist’s psychological make-up to devise a seven-phase model of radicalisation. His “Table 3.1 Phased model of prison radicalisation” is complex in its implications but clear in its presentation of the factors that affect a convict’s potential for radicalisation. His proposed model is convincingly sound and well-supported. Liran Goldman’s chapter (“4. From Criminals to Terrorists”) is a succinct account of the US experience of radicalisation in prisons. It generally follows Sinai’s model while offering some more practical aspects from which we can view the radicalisation process and its results. Kurt Braddock’s chapter (“5. The Talking Cure?”) logically follows those before by providing us a look into the mind of the terrorist undergoing a de-radicalisation process. It is based largely on cognitive theory and communications techniques, further supported by vignettes from the Saudi and Yemeni approaches to de-radicalisation. Braddock’s conclusion that, “Current and future programmes should seek to understand these communicative effects...” is compelling and we would, indeed, be wise to heed his advice. Part II concludes with John Morrison’s examination of the IRA



prisoner experience. Morrison's use of the British experience with IRA prisoners as a vehicle to examine the role the *prison setting* (environment) plays in de-radicalisation is insightful. Ultimately, Morrison reveals to us that incarcerating terrorists in civilian penitentiaries does have potentially good aspects favourable to de-radicalisation—if handled correctly.

“Part III. Critical Issues in management, risk assessment and reform” moves from the modelling and theory into the application of methods and systems that lead to identification, risk assessment, and de-radicalisation. Christopher Dean's chapter on the UK experience of intervention to prevent radicalisation is a logical application of the concepts introduced earlier in the book. Silke's own chapter is a practical application of the preceding and existing theories and results in a critically important risk assessment framework. Silke admits that this framework, the assessment process, and the understanding gleaned from the application thereof is both complicated and not without its shortcomings. However, he also states, and correctly so, that the complexity and imperfection of the current process and the lack of a large evidence base does not mean we should not make the attempt. (p. 120)

D Elaine Pressman and John Flockton's chapter (“9. Violent Extremist Risk Assessment: Issues and applications of the VERA-2 in a high-security correctional setting”) is a logical continuation and provides a detailed examination of the VERA-2 system. Key here is that not only do Pressman and Flockton elucidate VERA-2, they also reveal the elements of the process that rely on the individual's history and other specific qualitative factors. As Pressman and Flockton point out, “Critical to these decisions [that a prisoner is ‘at risk’ of further extreme violence] is the item and domain structure of the VERA-2. This provides for ongoing assessment of individual dynamic risk factors.” (p. 129) Their conclusion: VERA-2 is, “...not a silver bullet of prediction”(p. 138); however, it is clear and well-argued that VERA-2, or a similarly constructed protocol, is essential and will be useful wherever violent extremists. The final chapter of Part III is Sagit Yehoshua's mini-case study of the Israeli experience with Palestinian prisoners. While at first glance this chapter would appear to be a better fit in “Part IV. Key Case Studies”, the reality is that Yehoshua's chapter highlights several of the factors that prove to be critical in the risk *assessment* frameworks. This chapter is also particularly effective in showing us that cultural differences do, indeed, hold significant importance for addressing the issues and formulating a de-radicalisation plan tailored to the individual and the setting.

In sum, Part III is a collection of strongly-written chapters that further open doors to the reader. The collection of chapters makes it very clear that not only is there value in the practices as they exist, but there is merit in further exploration, investigation, and refinement of those processes. Consequently, Part III opens many more doors for the budding researcher, who often struggles to identify a distinct topic or project that is unique and adds to the greater body of knowledge in the field. Certainly, Part III identifies or suggests a number of those potential topics.

“Part IV Key case studies” is an equally-dense and exceptionally useful section for those searching for new means and methods. This part walks the reader through the superbly-chosen examinations of different de-radicalisation programmes in various regions of the world. It begins with Richard Pickering's excellent investigation of incarcerating and attempting to de-radicalise terrorists in prisons in England and Wales. Here, we begin—even at this stage—to discover some foundational truths about our subject that have major impacts on the success or failure of our attempt to de-radicalise terrorists. Marisa Porges' superlative investigation of the ‘soft’ approach in Saudi Arabia continues our education by highlighting the roles of family and culture as well as the necessity for a tailored approach to de-radicalisation.

The focus then moves to Sri Lanka, where Kruglanski, Gelfand, Bélanger, Gunaratna, and Hettiarachchi



examine the processes and context used in the de-radicalisation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Kumar Ramakrishna then provides us a compact but brilliant explanation of Singapore's "Three Rings" strategy in dealing with Jemaah Islamiyah. Sulastris Osman examines the dual-faceted nature (i.e., the interaction and affects prison has on terrorists and *vice-versa*) of the Indonesian legal and de-radicalisation processes in the wake of the Bali Bombings. Osman's conclusion: "...de-radicalisation' and rehabilitation efforts in Indonesia need to take into account both sides of the equation in order to be effective, and broader prison reform, too, is necessary to curb the problem of radicalising inmates" (p.226) is sage advice that applies far beyond the Indonesian context.

Part IV returns to Europe with Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann's detailed investigation and evaluation of the Red Army Faction members' experiences in West German prisons. Although seeming a bit out of place given the previous chapters, Diewald-Kerkmann adds an historical and contextual flavour to our examination, while also alluding to the differences and the similarities between the various regional examples in Part IV. This very dense subdivision of the book then concludes with Manuel Soriano's superb discussion on terrorism and incarceration in Spain. Key to Soriano's findings (and another door opener for the reader) are the revelations that the ETA terrorist and the Al Qaeda-inspired terrorist were fundamentally different in goals and mentality and that different tools and methods had to be applied to attempt to de-radicalise the jihadist terrorists. Indeed, Soriano's key lessons list (p. 253) is pure gold in terms of a scientifically-based, proven, and succinct guide for the practical application of a de-radicalisation programme for New Terrorism. Again, the doors for the aspiring researcher open, as it becomes obvious that Soriano's chapter, as well as those preceding, points clearly to areas we have yet to fully investigate.

As would both be expected and is appropriate, *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism* concludes with the obligatory (although brief) look at the post-prison experiences ("Part V Post-release experiences"). Benedict Wilkinson's examination ("18. Do Leopards Change Their Spots?") reveals the practical challenges and the conflicts for the UK in managing multi-agency processes supporting de-radicalisation and individual risk assessments while taking into account the civil penal code, democratically-based laws and norms of incarceration, and the persistence of institutional bias against the possibility of rehabilitation. Neil Ferguson reviews the Northern Ireland experience, and reveals not only the impact prison had on the prisoners, but the affect these (and former) prisoners had on ending The Troubles. Unfortunately, while much more could be said and many more chapters from various regions around the world could have been included, this part of the book is scant. This, however, may not be a bad thing in that here, too, we have another open door for a researcher looking for a relatively untouched topic that can contribute to our knowledge and practices in de-radicalisation and the evaluation of such programmes.

Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism 'works' on three levels. First, it provides the reader a well-organised, focused, and lucid exploration of a known function (de-radicalisation within the civil penal context) that many nations have engaged. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, it is the only book in publication addressing these issues. Second, it is exceptional in that it clearly highlights regional practices, cultural and psychological issues, and historical context in such a way that the multi-discipline character of the text flows and is natural for the audience to both comprehend and support. Finally, it is among the very few academic books that engender creative thought and lively debate not by being controversial, but by simply opening the doors to so many areas we have yet to explore and understand. For these reasons and many more, this book will become a foundational text on the study of de-radicalisation within the context of civil penal practices in democratic societies. *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism* is a truly unique and superbly edited volume that academics in Terrorism Studies, analysts and professionals performing risk assessments, and practitioners of Counter-



Terrorism cannot afford to be without. It is the perfect cross-walk between the academic and the practical with implications for both sides of the divide. *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism* is a 'must-have' that should be on the shelf of anyone serious about understanding the full spectrum of Terrorism Studies and Counter-Terrorism in practice.

About the reviewer: Robert Hand is a retired US Army officer who has extensive, nationally-recognised experience in all-source intelligence collection, analysis, counter-terrorism, and force protection. After 9-11, he was chosen to lead the NATO efforts that created; NATO's inaugural Unit Terrorism Intelligence and Force Protection architecture, the initial ISAF Force Protection and intelligence processing systems, the intelligence architecture in support of NATO Contingency Planning for humanitarian and peace support operations (Africa and Afghanistan), and the Regional Counter-Terrorism structures and standing operating procedures within the NATO headquarters of the Northern Region. He is currently a doctoral candidate of Politics at the University of Aberdeen.