Clive Walker. Terrorism and the Law.


Reviewed by Amos N. Guiora

Clive Walker’s latest book is an impressive achievement both in scope and detail. The author, Professor of Criminal Justice Studies at the School of Law, University of Leeds, and former special advisor to the British Parliament, covers a wide range of issues. The work’s primary contribution to existing literature is the detail with which it addresses issues germane to terrorism. It is divided in five parts: (i) a conceptual Introduction, followed by sections on (ii) Investigation and Policing, (iii) Criminal Law and Criminal Process, (iv) Other Legal Control and, finally, (v) Other Jurisdictions. While focusing primarily on the UK, Professor Walker includes examples from additional jurisdictions (including Ireland and Scotland) thereby giving the book a comparative dimension. That said, the book is not a study of comparative approaches to terrorism but rather helpfully incorporates non-UK examples (especially European) while consistently highlighting UK laws and statutes.

Prof Walker is clearly qualified to write this book; a widely recognized scholar, who taught and published on both sides of the Atlantic as well as in Australia, he is, without doubt, a subject matter expert with a deservedly sterling reputation. His years of research, writing and thinking about terrorism law and legal practice are manifestly evident in every page in this comprehensive volume.

Terrorism and the Law is very detailed, carefully citing statute, case law and specific examples; nevertheless, the book does not ‘bog down’ the reader and leave him or her with a sense of ‘over-information’ unnecessarily included. Accordingly, the book can serve multiple purposes: it can be adopted both as a primary text in a course (Law School, under-graduate or graduate program) and as a secondary, supplemental text which can also be a most helpful resource for policy makers akin to a desk-top manual.

Clive Walker views terrorism as a conventional crime (this reviewer holds a different positions on this question); the book’s approach carefully and thoroughly reflects that position and provides substantial information and material mirroring that perspective. Given disagreements amongst academics on cutting edge issues including, for example, appropriate forums to try terrorists (regularly constituted terror courts or national security courts) a second edition would benefit from fuller inclusion of scholarship holding viewpoints distinct from Prof Walker’s. That said, readers benefit from the footnotes and bibliography as both are expansive and thorough.

Clive Walker’s approach - expansive, thorough and detailed - reflects the book as a whole; topics covered include “Investigations”, “Arrest and Treatment of Detainees”, “Criminal Offenses”, “Court Processes”, “Extremist Organizations, Expressions and Activities”, “Terrorist Funding and Property” and “Protective Security”. In other words, it encompass an extraordinarily broad range of issues highly pertinent to a sophisticated and thorough discussion of terrorism. That is, in many ways, Professor Walker’s most important contribution: in one volume he is able to include the ‘must’ issues of terrorism in a coherent, cogent, and highly organized manner.
always possible to include additional issues, there is, in the mind of this reviewer, little doubt that Professor Walker carefully weighed what issues to address and what is best left either to others or to another day.

In covering a broad range of issues, there is always the possibility that too short a discussion will be given to some items; the discussion regarding investigations, arrest and judicial process is more in-depth and exhaustive than that allotted to chapters addressing extremist organizations, terrorist funding and protective security. However - and this is essential to the book’s success - the manner in which later chapters are addressed is sufficiently detailed to satisfy most readers. The book is not, based on this reviewer’s assessment, intending to address all issues relevant to each chapter subject. Nevertheless Prof Walker’s treatment of each subject in conjunction with detailed footnotes provides the reader with sufficient information both to better understand the issue and to create a clear mental roadmap facilitating further research and reading.

This volume deserves wide reading; it makes an important contribution to existing literature on the subject of terrorism and the law. It is well written, thoroughly researched, clearly presented and filled with readily accessible invaluable information. Readers - whether subject matter experts, students or the interested public - owe Prof Walker a debt of gratitude. Congratulations are also due to Oxford University Press; the book’s format is remarkably user friendly.

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