Ronald Crelinsten. *Terrorism, Democracy, and Human Security. A Communication Model.* Abingdon, Oxon, UK, and New York, NY: Routledge, 2021. 331 pp., US $ 160.00 [Hardcover], US $ 44.95 [Paperback], $ 40.45 [E-book]; ISBN: 978-0-3678-6087-5.

Reviewed by Alex P. Schmid

Ronald Crelinsten, the Canadian author of this book, has written on terrorism and other forms of political violence since the mid-1970s, and his latest book presents his insights gained from a lifetime of research and teaching. It is an ambitious book, seeking to provide "…a kind of 'unified field theory' of terrorism and counter-terrorism, where terrorism constitutes but one kind of security threat to democratic life and individual freedom" (p. 306). The author has been one of the first to conceptualise terrorism as a "form of violent communication or coercive persuasion" (p. 23). He defines terrorism as "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) – a definition which is close to the 1988 academic consensus definition.

Unlike most other authors, Dr. Crelinsten expands his communication model to the terrorists' government adversaries, noting that "….terrorism and counterterrorism are forms of communication that interact and co-evolve over time" (p. 12). He sees this "terrorism-counter-terrorism nexus" as interactions between the controller (the state) and controlled (those who are governed, including terrorists) and shows surprising (and at times uncomfortable parallels) between the controlling state and terrorist non-state actors: "…the legitimacy and power of the state tends to cloak any overt forms of violence in different guises: arrest instead of abduction, preventive detention instead of hostage-taking, bail instead of extortion, deterrence instead of terrorism, imprisonment instead of forcible confinement, capital punishment instead of murder" (p. 44). However, he also makes clear that it is "the rule of law and the legitimacy it bestows upon the actions of the controller that distinguishes official violence from that of the controlled" (p. 158). Meanwhile, he also admits that there are "grey zones"—e. g., when states use torture, or when the controlled become controllers (that is, when terrorists and/or insurgents manage to take state power, as happened with several authoritarian post-colonial regimes).

The whole volume is a great mapping exercise to expand and refine the basic controller-controlled parallel model. The author illustrates various types of interactions on state and international system levels to demonstrate how terrorism is linked to wider social, political, economic, religious and cultural contexts, and how counter-terrorism (with its military, criminal justice, social, economic, environmental and political domains) is similarly embedded. In the opening sentence of the volume the author tells the reader that "This is a book about everything and how everything is related to everything else" (p. 1). This is both the strength and the weakness of the volume. The reader is confronted with ever more complex models (28 in total) and their discussion becomes at times formalistic. However, the author does his best to expose the reader to the maze of connections he and others discovered, which he does in a lucid style, with illuminating quotes from authorities, including non-Anglo-Saxon ones like Fernand Braudel, Michel Foucault and Thomas Piketty.

Crelinsten addresses the impact of globalization, polarization, commodification, digitalization, securitization, militarization, and more on terrorism and counter-terrorism in an effort to portray the complexities of the modern world. The framework he presents is meant to provide the reader with a tool for "maintaining situational awareness" (p. 309). For many readers, this volume—which truly sketches "the big picture"—will be an eyeopener. For those in the field of (counter-)terrorism studies, it offers an original new template for further explorations. While a "unified field theory" of terrorism and counterterrorism remains elusive, Crelinsten's innovative book nevertheless points in the right direction. The author was a Professor of Criminology at the University of Ottawa and is currently an Associate Fellow at the University of Victoria, Canada.

About the Reviewer: **Alex P. Schmid** *is Editor-in-Chief of Perspectives on Terrorism*