Book Review

Homeland security: Policy and politics

Nancy E. Marion, Kelley A. Cronin and Willard M. Oliver

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Homeland Security: Policy and Politics is a well-written analysis of the most pressing and controversial issues that the field of American homeland security is faced with today. In each chapter, the authors tackle difficult questions that seem to center around the same critical issue, the ‘million dollar question’: for all the time we spend discussing homeland security and all of the billions of dollars in investments we have made, and how much credit we have given it, are we actually safer? In a systematic approach to this massive undertaking, the authors use the most up-to-date information to effectively examine several commonly analyzed areas of homeland security such as FEMA, DHS funding and the USA PATRIOT Act. What is particularly unique about this book however, is its detailed inquiry of hugely important, yet little discussed areas of homeland security such as fusion centers and the role of volunteers in disaster response. Each chapter is extremely well organized, follows a natural progression and is easy to follow making this an excellent resource for both academics and non-academics alike. *Homeland Security* is also distinctive in its presentation of most of its issues as gray areas. The authors make every effort to present all information – both in favor of and against an issue – without actually coming to a clear conclusion. While the result is lack of a definitive stance in most chapters, it forces the reader to form their own opinions on the topics at hand, which is all too rare in the highly charged and politicized sphere the subject of homeland security has become. However, readers looking for a definitive stance on these controversial issues may perhaps come away dissatisfied with this format. At the end of each chapter, readers can expect a long list of credible references the authors have used to write each chapter, and can refer to for additional information.

The first chapter is a detailed account of the history of FEMA, its long history of ineffectiveness despite countless reorganizations, and particularly where it has failed after each recent disaster. The authors conclude that several factors, including lack of budget and decision-making capability, and communication, have caused FEMA to fail.

Chapter 2 dives right in to one of the most controversial, yet basic questions of our time – in light of the enormous expenditures in the field of homeland security: Are we really safer? What is noteworthy about this section is the incredibly detailed information about DHS funding which, under normal circumstances, can be difficult to compile and make sense of. When discussing preparedness, the authors shed light on the lack of preparedness, conflicting missions and mismanagement of funding that has occurred at the state level.

Instead of an answer, the authors leave the readers with a question: when will we decide that we actually are safer?

The next three chapters, while markedly different, fall under the category of exploring the interplay between policing and homeland security. Chapter 3 describes the purposes of fusion centers, and again highlights how lack of coordination and communication has led to ineffectiveness and a reactive instead of proactive approach. Not only is this chapter distinctive because it highlights an area of homeland security that is frequently neglected in comparison with other areas, but the authors take more of a solid stance in their determination that fusion centers have more work to do in striking a balance between protecting people and toeing the line with violating their rights. Along this same vein, Chapter 4 examines whether DHS is following an appropriate growth trajectory, or if has become the Hobbesian Leviathan our civil rights have long feared. Like many federal organizations, DHS has been found guilty of what is termed as 'mission creep' where they are expanding their jurisdiction to include cases that would have in the past best been handled by other organizations, and the authors indicate that perhaps this growth has gone too far. Chapter 5 analyzes the evolution of intelligence-led policing and questions whether such a tactic is appropriate for local police. The authors warn that just as in the past during the Red Scare and the Civil Liberties Movement, law enforcement are really no better at effectively carrying out intelligence-led policing while simultaneously protecting civil liberties. This is an important reminder where federal hubris has grown ever higher.

Chapter 6 tackles another one of the most hot-button issues on the homeland security front: Is terrorism actually on the rise? The authors present several case studies and many interesting statistics, but as with Chapter 2, they again leave the reader to form their own conclusions. They do note that we face newer threats than in the past, and that American homeland security has improved in combatting these threats.

Chapter 7 explores an important, yet largely ignored issue. During times of disaster, what role should volunteers play? The authors describe different kinds of volunteer organizations that exist, as well as exploring their potential to be both a help and a hindrance in times of disaster. They conclude that there is clearly a need for and reliance on citizen participation when disaster strikes, but there also needs to be a clearer outline of what participation should look like.

Chapters 8 and 9 dissect two divisive sets of legislation: that which continues to keep Guantanamo Detention Center open, and the USA PATRIOT Act. In Chapter 8, the authors make clear that evidence of torture and mistreatment of detainees has taken place in Guantanamo and despite numerous attempts by President Obama to issue legislation to shut it down and to circumvent Congressional procedures, it has remained open. They conclude that the stalemate that currently exists will most likely continue to be the case for years to come. Chapter 9 discusses the utility of the USA PATRIOT Act. A pervasive theme in this book, civil liberties, comes to the fore in this chapter yet again. Despite several sunset provisions, this legislation is continually approved and the debate continues as to whether it is an undue curtailing of American civil liberties. Worthy of note, this chapter takes on an international viewpoint in its analysis on deteriorating travel relations with Canada, who fiercely protects its privacy and rights of citizens.

Chapter 10 takes on a fundamental, yet very necessary discussion – that of cybersecurity and infrastructure. While the authors cover several expected areas such as cyberspace, they also cover a more uncommon area of infrastructure – nuclear power plants. They reveal the potentially widespread and damaging effects that could occur if key areas of infrastructure

were to be attacked, and highlight several case studies where damages have occurred and lead the reader to think about how these damages could be magnified if targeted by a wide-scale terrorist attack.

Chapter 11 tackles an issue that is typically associated with a conservative versus liberal debates in the political sphere – illegal immigration on the United States–Mexico border. The authors were ahead of their time as they weigh in on the ramifications of the DREAM Act, and how this has led to the mass migration of undocumented children to the United States, which is an issue that is currently absorbing public attention. They skillfully weave into this discussion how terrorists can exploit the unmanageable surge of undocumented children migrating to the United States to their advantage.

The last chapter in this book covers mass transportation, and questions how we can make these avenues of movement safer. While there is great attention being placed on the TSA and aviation security, there are areas of surface transit that are little explored, yet pose a much greater threat such as maritime transportation and mass transit.

Each of the authors bring their unique areas of interest to the book to create a well-rounded and complete resource. The first author, Nancy E. Marion's area of expertise regards how the various levels of government influence the criminal justice system politically to create policies and agencies is very much present in every chapter of the book. Marion has published extensively in this area and her analysis of the interplay between federal, state and local governments and how they handle terrorism is a natural addition to the work she has published already. The next author, Kelley A. Cronin's training in public administration coupled with her focused work on local law enforcement and municipal government are also a strong presence in this book. She has since published another book on homeland security since this collaborative effort titled, *Understanding Critical Infrastructure and Risk Management: A Policy Perspective*. The third and final author, Willard M. Oliver is the Official Historian for the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences in addition to being the editor of the *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology*. He has published numerous works in the area of terrorism in addition to other criminal justice works. As a previous local police officer and military police officer, Oliver offers both his academic expertise in addition to the perspective of a previous practitioner.

Over all, this book proves to be a complete and well-rounded resource for academics and non-academics that would like to stay current with the most vital and contentious homeland security issues. While its content may fall short for readers seeking definitive answers to the most controversial of homeland security debates, it would be an excellent tool for students in the homeland security field because of both its breadth of coverage and its encouragement of the reader to form their own opinions based on the facts presented. The simple and straightforward manner in which the information is organized allows for a wide range of readers to grasp these complex and involved issues that are very much a part of the homeland security debate today.

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