

Book Review

The Handbook of Security

Martin Gill (ed.)

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One of the most important areas of scholarship in recent years explores the relationship between theory and policy across a broad spectrum of disciplines. Bridging academic inquiries in criminology, business and public administrative studies, political science, risk management, economics, and public policy, Martin Gill's *Handbook of Security* appreciably adds another important set of analyses to this literature. In making this contribution, Gill's volume evocatively treads both the clear and the muddy ends of the broader theory-policy debate. The outcome is a powerful attempt to clarify the many policy issues in the study of security, and also to place "security" into a less ambiguous theoretical and conceptual scholarly framework. Given the formidable obstacles to such a task, the *Handbook of Security* nonetheless delivers the goods.

Gill's intention is to provide a roadmap for both security professionals and academics: a noble task considering the myriad of professional sectors and academic disciplines that have made claim to the term security. As the book itself notes, this volume is geared to those who need to familiarize themselves with the broad cases and logics of security. Where Gill is most successful is in linking the disciplines to form a broader understanding of security. In looking to the many academic and policy fields that explicitly and indirectly conceptualize and study security, he errs on the side of cautious inclusion. Where particular disciplines, policy areas, or sub-fields often are careful to exactly bound (and NOT to cross) many forms of "security studies", Gill expands the survey to many areas that typically are not crossed. It is through this process that Gill develops a field of security that coalesces these forms into a common whole. Using the definitions and conceptual underpinnings of security from the perspectives of criminology, intelligence, forensic science, environmental studies, and engineering, the handbook highlights the clear (and not so clear) similarities and differences in the concept of security.

An example of his expansive framework is the inclusion of a chapter that contrasts national security with corporate security. While the authors are certainly not the first to contrast public and private policies, the inclusion here uniquely illustrates the contours of security that heretofore had been ignored. National security studies have rarely touched upon private sector actors and how they manage security affairs. Similarly, the study of business practices is practically devoid of any reference to the public sector's models of policy and decision-making. Imagine the business community acknowledging the strength of a more public bureaucracy approach to security choices! While each author in this text has created powerful rationales for the scope of their analysis, Stapley, Grillot, and Sloan bridge the overlapping logics of security in the public and private sector to make an important contribution.

In keeping with this expansionist view of security, Gill presents case studies from many disciplines. Each case illustrates the particulars of security specific to those fields. Understanding that the linkages between fields and cases are not all going to be obvious is a necessary component of this book. Still, the various authors empirically and logically present strong cases. On the whole, the research is compelling. Each pays reasonable attention to data collection, bias, and validity. None are so overly determined as to beg for dispute. And, each case either directly or indirectly addresses the question of theory vs. practice. The cases work on their own, and linked together they do a good job of presenting the wide range of examples that such a handbook should provide.

However, there is less congruence between the first conceptual section and the cases and issues of the handbook. The tone of a broader study is less apparent in each case study. While the first chapters make strong arguments relating all things to security, the individual cases studies trend away from reinforcing that end. Each case is germane and salient to its unique targeted audience. Of course, this is understandable and it can hardly be avoided. To somehow directly correlate without absurdity such seemingly disparate issues of terrorism, the use of closed circuit television (CCTV) in business environments, disaster relief and management, and the role of security guards is not as easy as noting that they all have something to do with security. In duly noting that the major strength of this handbook is its expansion of the study of security across academic and policy fields, it is important to note that this produces the dilemma of specific vs. general concepts, logics, and issues. In tying together such issues under a previously unidentified conceptual unification, Gill runs into the problem of creating a literature. Without previous academic literature or policy formation, broadening security studies across these fields must suffer in its infancy. In short, each expert in their field must write without the benefit of Gill's implied thesis already in print. They cannot cite what has not yet been made so explicitly clear. While this is a criticism, it is one that the volume itself begins to solve.

These difficulties are touched on by Gill in the opening chapter, but are more directly addressed by Giovanni and Roberto Manunta in the final chapter of the handbook. They seek to create a theory of security drawing from all the issue areas. The obvious impediments to such an endeavor become immediately clear. Operationalizing various terms becomes extremely difficult to hold constant across the various fields. Even settling on a definition of security becomes more of a normative choice as much as a logical emergence. At the end of the day, what security means to each of these various fields and studies is probably more important than finding an essential meaning. Safety, survival, protection, confidence, solidarity, defense, well-being, and self-esteem all have important nuanced meanings to each discipline and study. The Manuntas must acknowledge that the far-reaching strength of the book is also the major obstacle to any broadly conceived theory of security. Although a valiant effort, there is a paradox to wrapping a conceptual corral around this term. While theorizing about security provides a more generalized understanding across the fields, the result will be a necessary conceptual weakening within the fields. At the end of the day, losing some of the meaning of "international security", "workplace security", "cyber security", "data security", and others individually may not add up to the value of a generally held definition of security.

Nevertheless, Gill's volume does an excellent job in trying to balance against this complex paradox. It completely succeeds in broadly surveying all that looks like security, and it brings together excellent individual research within those areas. The Handbook of Security is also valuable for trying to conceptualize where there has been no broad survey. As social science, it appropriately seeks to make the broad study of security a systematic one. It does not skirt issues of methodology, epistemology, and ontology. It does not force together the extremes of practical policy and academic theory, but instead powerfully notes how security transcends those limitations. And, even in its limited weakness, it does a very good job of cutting the ribbon on working towards a general theory of security. For anyone considering the broad implications of the term security, The Handbook of Security is an extremely valuable resource.

Christopher J Saladino

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs,
Virginia Commonwealth University,
Richmond, VA, USA.