Review of the Book:

Christopher Baker-Beall/Charlotte Heath-Kelly and Lee Jarvis (Ed.). 2015. Counter-Radicalisation. Critical perspectives, London / New York: Routledge, ISBN: 978-1-138-77663-0
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„Counter-Radicalisation" - A politically counter-productive approach?

In the last few years a new concept has come into view concerning the prevention of extremism and research into terrorism which up till today is still provoking many questions: „radicalisation". Government programs such as British „Prevent" connect their initial phases with the above ideas to start up a policy of „counter-radicalisation". From a democratic view of things, however, this has resulted in the posing of many questions. One of the most important is: How far is the concentration on terrorism prevention going to change the fabric of liberal, open societies?

It is to the credit of Christopher Baker-Beall, Charlotte Heath-Kelly and Lee Jarvis who as a team published an omnibus edition „Counter-Radicalisation – Critical Pers-pectives" (Routledge. 2015) bringing a series of critical voices from research and doctrines into view, their central point being to examine the effect anti-terrorism strategies have on a democratic multi-cultural society. The thirteen articles contributed mainly by British researchers dispute the extremist prevention policies started in 2005, but also dispute the Prevention policies of other countries with democratic constitutions such as Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany.

In their introduction the three publishers mark the framework of these critical thoughts. Their view is that the contemporary discussion on anti-terrorism diverts the attention of the public from the causes of political militancy, and with the concept of radicalisation construct a hypothesis according to which individual acts can be psychologically interpreted. Violence is attributed to the influence of ideologies allegedly widespread in certain social communities or environments and for which certain individuals are susceptible (p. 1).

"Counter-terrorism has invented a feedback loop between vulnerability and ideology to explain away the resurgence of violence in the supposed heartlands of liberty, democracy and equality. (p. 2)

The idea of radicalisation serves the purpose of changing the political agenda in order to thematise menaces as being an apparent threat to the existing social order (p. 6). The discourse on radicalisation also serves to place certain groups of society under suspicion and to make them the object of counter-radicalisation; in this way politicians can externalise the responsibility for dissatis-faction, and even more:

"…they construct a religious and racial ‚other' who takes the blame for violence, while simultaneously making claim to provide solutions that will prevent future instances of violence. (p. 7)

This kind of "othering" succeeds in the political community - as in the case of "homegrown terrorists" - when it is a matter of naturalised citizens or people who have been living for in "western" countries for many years. It is insinuated that the idea of counter-radicalisation in research and the practice of prevention is connected with the so-called "war on terror".

Even if you do not share this headstrong, politically very accentuated view of the world of the publishing team, the omnibus is nevertheless well-worth a read. There are at least two reasons for this. First of all, not all the articles are housed under this ideological roof but bring out various other perspectives. Secondly, the meticulousness and acrimony of the arguments of the authors - amongst them several junior researchers - point out the blind spots and inconsistency particularly evident in the British "Prevent" policy. Anyone engaged in education and learning for the prevention of extremism can find several concrete tips for their work.

Dealing with all thirteen articles (chapters) would go beyond the scope of this review. Certain central themes should be mentioned, however, and particularly tangible reports on experience should be referred to. These include a critical report by Anne Aly on the Australian experience in dealing with violence-orientated radicalisation (chapter 4), the study by Julia Berczyk and Floris Vermeulen on measures implemented for the prevention of islamism in Berlin and an essay by Lasse

Lindekilde on the difficulties of intervention to deradicalize individuals in Denmark (chapter 13). Like other authors in the omnibus Aly also emphasizes that coherent evidence of a connection between ideological orientation and violence-orientated extremism is still missing. She connects this with an appeal to science to carry out more precise research on the relation between radicalisation as a psychological process and the development of extremist violence (p. 81). Prevention can only be effective when the concept integrates social cooperation, cultural awareness and the involvement of members of the public.

Considering the critical demands of the omnibus the Berlin prevention concept is doing comparably well. Berczyk/Vermeulen stress that in view of its Nazi history Germany upholds a militant democracy in which the fight against extremism has been firmly anchored in the constitution and penal law (p. 88 ff). They quote the "Böckenförde Theorem" according to which the state cannot defend a liberal democracy alone but by means of constant social discourse and by relying on the willingness of the public to defend it. Thus it is that the prevention of extremism plays a greater role in the German education system than elsewhere. In contrast to the British policy of "Prevent" the Germans focus on an active prevention function practised by their Muslim partners and on an

"… umbrella initiative that funds diverse projects undertaken by a variety of actors against radical influences (97).

In the way that the idea of Community Coaching is described by them, Lindekilde, in his Denmark article, analyses the possible effectiveness of an approach which focuses on the empowerment of prevention actors in amongst the general public. According to him there is in Denmark a feeling of uneasiness about the "secure-tisation" of the integration policy as a result of the way police are active within neighbourhoods and the formation of religious homogeneous communities.

Other than the German prevention orientation which considers a dispute with radical ideologies as important, in Denmark a concept has asserted itself, according to Lindekilde, that abstains from "battling extremist ideas". Particularly worth reading is what he writes about the new Danish strategy of counter-radicalisation. Its three columns are mentoring, counselling and education as well as the exit strategy. While the last of these is supervised by the security organisation, it is the local authority which takes responsibility for the first two - supported by the department of democracy and prevention of radicalisation (p. 227). Nevertheless, Lindekilde also sticks to the point - and among many other authors there is consensus in his criticism - that the Danish state has disconnected itself from its earlier supported goals of social cohesion and justice in its prevention agenda. In the sense of a neoliberal "gouvernementalité" (Foucault) the state is withdrawing itself from its social responsi-

bility and instigating the solitary responsibility of the local prevention actors who often see themselves confronted with the dilemma as mentor faced with the mentees and having to take on all possible - and contradictory - functions (p. 234).

In the articles in chapters 2, 3, 8, 9 and 11 critical reflection is focused on the British "Prevent" policy. In chapter 2 Paul Thomas criticises the fact that the mixture of "Prevent" and other UK agendas for the promotion of Community Cohesion has lead to a highly problematic stress of prejudice in the relationships with Muslims and that stigmatisation of them is increased rather than reduced. Instead of democratic development it is the security authorities which are increasingly active in the creation of a society living together. Nadya Ali (chapter 8) and Francesco Ragazzi (chapter 9) also question the future of a multi-culturally aware social policy. Ali attempts to verify that the "Contest" strategy which was launched in 2005 after the London attacks emanated from a radicalisation concept according to which terrorism is researched and understood

"as a product of psychological, sociological and mental deviance (139)

and that it lead to a mapping of the Muslim community in Great Britain which thus became re-defined as a "governable entity" and as such the object of intervention and supervision. Ragazzi sketches out the dilemma of "preventive counter terrorism" resulting from the assumption that intentions of terrorist acts can be identified in good time if only the state security network is broad enough. A part of this prevention policy is the concept of close co-operation with a suspicious community and its simultaneous surveillance (p. 158). "Ethnic profiling" is one of the problematic consequences of this kind of policy.

What for some authors of the omnibus are the fatal accompanying consequences of a confused political approach there are others, such as Phil Edwards, who see it as an ideological state crusade. In his article (chapter 3) he considers the efforts of the state to comprehend the dispute with extremism as a confrontation of values, contrary to experience from the sphere of everyday crime, and submits differentiated proposals for a reform of the "Prevent" policy. These proposals are worth reading not only by education experts but also by political decision makers. Edwards brings criminological knowledge about the process of "desistance from crime" into the debate (p. 59) and recommends supporting the renunciation of violence not by arguing that offenders should renounce their ideological options but that they should realise them in other, peaceful ways. Under the provocative caption "How (not) to create ex-terrorists" Edwards alludes to the experience that leaving a criminal gang is bound up with the emergence of a personal counter-narrative that shatters the personal narrative that kept him in the gang. Similar to Arun Kundnani in chapter one Edwards considers it a failed approach when

the state rebuts ideologies in its prevention of extremism. Several authors recognise this in former Prime Minister Cameron's approach towards anti-terrorism prevention.

In a previous article (chapter 12) Mohammed Elshimi takes up the new "buzzword" de-radicalisation and puts it in the semantic context of comparable terms such as "disengagement" or re-socialisation. It is particularly since this article provides an analysis of meaning so rich in various facets, that it is an aid to practical work particularly as he engages himself with the specifics of jihadist ideology more than all the other authors do.

A final assessment of the complete omnibus. It is rather extraordinary that this publication in its 250 pages does not discuss aims and agendas of totalitarian ideologies and movements as essential impulses for politically motivated criminal acts despite the fact that right-wing extremism and jihadism provide a mass of material - even videos of suicide assailants. Full criticism about across-the-board evaluation of communities and religious associations is expressed against the authors as they have, for instance, blanked out the enormous differrences amongst mainstream Islam and Islamist minorities.

The fact that a democratically constitutional state has to protect the lives, freedom and security of its citizens should be the notional starting point of the criticism of the state's strategies for prevention. However, the authors' narrowed view of the world, mislead by Foucault's theory of rule, is reduced to a criticism of government, and the internal power relationships within society are not dealt with. And so the simple fact that prevention should occupy itself with the ideological overwhelming of individuals and whole communities remains untouched.

It remains a question of taste whether we should accept this systematically narrowed view as "critical studies" or whether we should recommend the request for critical reflection to the publishing team.

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