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Book Review: Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization

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NETWORKS & SECURITY STRATEGY

Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization

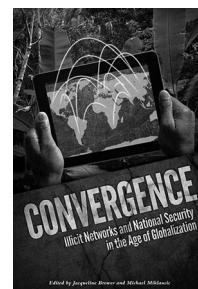
Edited by Michael Miklaucic and Jacqueline Brewer

Reviewed by Dr. Robert J. Bunker, Distinguished Visiting Professor and Minerva Chair at the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College

Michael Miklaucic, director of research, information, and publications, and editor of the security studies journal *PRISM*; and Jacqueline Brewer, an analyst, both with the Center for Complex Operations (CCO), Institute for National Strategic Studies, at the National Defense University, have created a useful and timely edited publication. The genesis of the book emanated from the conference, “Illicit Networks in an Age of Globalization,” sponsored by the Center for Complex Operations, 8-9 February 2011. This book is in the same genre as James J. F. Forest’s edited work *Crime and Terror* (Routledge 2013), Jennifer L. Hesterman’s *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus* (CRC Press 2013), and my own, with coauthor John Sullivan, *Studies in Gangs and Cartels* (Routledge 2013), all appearing this year. *Convergence*, along with these other works, focuses on varying aspects of the blending of violent nonstate actor (VNSA) forms, the rise and spread of the illicit networks in which they are linked, criminal forms of international political economy (Dark IPE), and the increasing threat these hostile entities represent to the sovereign state.

This splendid edited collection includes a foreword by James G. Stavridis; acknowledgments; an introduction; fourteen chapters divided into four parts themed “A Clear and Present Danger,” “Complex Illicit Operations,” “The Attack on Sovereignty,” and “Fighting Back”; and contributor notes. The individual chapters include the following:

- Chapter 1: “Deviant Globalization” (Nils Gilman, Jesse Goldhammer, and Steven Weber)
- Chapter 2: “Lawlessness and Disorder: An Emerging Paradigm for the 21st Century” (Phil Williams)
- Chapter 3: “Can We Estimate the Global Scale and Impact of Illicit Trade?” (Justin Picard) in part one
- Chapter 4: “The Illicit Supply Chain” (Duncan Deville)
- Chapter 5: “Fixers, Super Fixers, and Shadow Facilitators: How Networks Connect” (Douglas Farah)
- Chapter 6: “The Geography of Badness: Mapping the Hubs of the Illicit Global Economy” (Patrick Radden Keefe)
- Chapter 7: “Threat Finance: A Critical Enabler for Illicit Networks” (Danielle Camner Lindholm and Celina B. Realuyo)
- Chapter 8: “Money Laundering into Real Estate” (Louise Shelley) in part two
- Chapter 9: “The Criminal State” (Michael Miklaucic and Moisés



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298 pages

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Naim)

- Chapter 10: “How Illicit Networks Impact Sovereignty” (John P. Sullivan)
- Chapter 11: “Counterinsurgency, Counternarcotics, and Illicit Economies in Afghanistan: Lessons for State-Building” (Vanda Felbab-Brown) in part three
- Chapter 12: “Fighting Networks with Networks” (David M. Luna)
- Chapter 13: “The Department of Defense’s Role in Combating Transnational Organized Crime” (William F. Wechsler and Gary Barnabo)
- Chapter 14: “Collaborating to Combat Illicit Networks Through Interagency and International Efforts” (Celina B. Realuyo) in part four

Each chapter contains its own endnotes and a small number of figures are available in the overall text.

The contributors are representative of an academic (Ph.D.) through practitioner (military and governmental agent) continuum with quite a bit of gray area expertise drawn from both poles, along with some investigative journalistic and policing hybrids also evident. This allows for a healthy mix of skill sets represented in the work. The reviewer has worked with, is working with, or is presently tracking a good portion of the scholars found in this edited collection. For this reason, a couple of observations can be readily made. For readers not familiar with the book’s themes, this work presents a great initial introduction to the writing of the prolific scholars who contributed to this work, including Douglas Farah, Vanda Felbab-Brown, Moisés Naim, Louise Shelley, John P. Sullivan, and Phil Williams. For those readers more steeped in the literature, the works of quite a few of the subject matter experts who have had less publication exposure are of much more value—especially the works found in “Part IV Fighting Back” by David M. Luna, William F. Wechsler, Gary Barnabo, and Celina B. Realuyo. This was a most welcome section because too often scholars are willing to define and outline a problem or threat but are either unable—or unwilling—to recommend solutions to mitigate or respond to it. Still, some of the solutions offered draw upon approaches known about for well over a decade and a half still have not been implemented, which suggests that we are still long on problem definition and short on solutions to these growing threats.

Focusing on some of the specific contributions themselves, it is of some importance that an intentional linkage was made in this work—via the first chapter contribution of Nils Gilman, Jesse Goldhammer, and Steven Weber. That chapter summarizes the main points of their acclaimed book *Deviant Globalization* (Continuum 2011) and, in so doing, helps provide some of the theoretical foundation for *Convergence*. The Douglas Farah chapter should also be mentioned for providing a trenchant overview of the circular flows of goods and cash and the “fixer” chains—what are essentially the “feedback loops” of illicit transactions. While much discussion of VNSA and illicit networks is made in this edited collection—the dying vestiges of our modern world are still defined by the legitimacy and sovereign rights bestowed upon territorial states. For this reason, the discussions and analysis

provided in Chapter 9, “The Criminal State” by Michael Miklaucic and Moisés Naim, is also of great theoretical significance with its coverage of degrees of state criminality and the development of the “Criminal Sovereign” construct.

Neither an index nor, more importantly, a comprehensive reference listing is included in the book, which is a slight detraction. Due to the small font size utilized in the physical book, readers will likely prefer digitally accessing the work and enlarging the font size using the zoom function of a PDF reader. In summation, this is a quality work, on an increasingly important topic of national security, and free in PDF format—all boons for the reader.

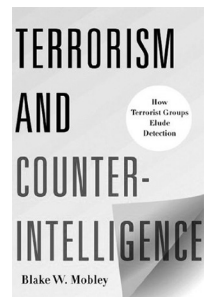
Terrorism and Counterintelligence: How Terrorist Groups Elude Detection

By Blake W. Mobley

Reviewed by Mr. Ross W. Clark, Graduate Student, School of International Affairs, Pennsylvania State University

Combating terrorism has been the focal point of US policy following that fateful day on 11 September 2001. Many in both the academic and professional worlds often fail to realize the most prominent terrorist groups in media headlines are not backwoods ad hoc organizations. They are not the groups of disturbed children or adults attempting to find their place in society as some analysts tend to portray. Many of these organizations are, in fact, quite sophisticated, well-organized groups that control their members via opportunities for improved living standards and an agenda in line with the population’s values at the time. Sophisticated organizations, both past and present, such as al Qaeda, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), Egyptian Islamic Group (IG), and Fatah all use a variety of techniques described throughout this book to evade their adversaries’ most effective counterintelligence methods, and it is these four groups the case studies represent.

Terrorism and Counterintelligence: How Terrorist Groups Elude Detection examines the intricate webs that make a terrorist group successful, and begins its review by defining the words “terrorism” and “counterintelligence.” Academics and other professionals often disagree on the basic definitions of these broad and manipulative terms, which in turn cause problems in the thorough analysis and interpretation of the reasoning behind a group’s actions. In a society with a plethora of definitions of terrorism and counterintelligence, the author does an exceptional job of defining these terms in line with the key underlining message of this book, which is to scrutinize the structure of these organizations and attempt to understand how they function from the inside out. The counterintelligence techniques used throughout the case studies include basic denial, adaptive denial, and covert manipulation. Basic denial includes training members of the group in basic counterintelligence techniques such as limited information of the telephone and internet networks and maintaining a low profile. Adaptive denial is adjusting the group’s counterintelligence techniques to combat an adversary’s intelligence methods; lastly, covert manipulation, uses double agents and false defectors to



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