



*Robert Mandel, Dark Logic: Transnational Criminal Tactics and Global Security. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011.*

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The rapid collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 came as a great shock to the world. The cessation of hostilities, which had never been formally declared, between the United States and the USSR was a bittersweet moment in history. The demise of communism did not usher in an era of peace but rather one of terror. Amid the chaos of the 1990s, a host of transnational threats such as terrorism and organized crime thrived. Driven by fanatical religious devotion and an unquenchable lust for profit, these unconventional foes have emerged as global threats in the post-Cold War era. Not

surprisingly, since 9/11 there has been renewed interest in studies that examine organized crime, due to the interaction between terrorist and criminal organizations. In his book, Dark Logic: Transnational Criminal Tactics and Global Security, Robert Mandel delves deep into the criminal underworld through an examination of five of the world's largest organized crime syndicates: the Chinese Triads, Columbian Cartels, Italian Mafia, Japanese Yakuza, and the Russian Mob. This study, through a detailed risk assessment of the strategies and tactics employed by the aforementioned criminal organizations, explores how transnational organized crime threatens both human and national security. This analysis is followed by an evaluation of possible countermeasures that governments can deploy to reduce criminal activity at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

The first part of this study provides the reader with basic information as to how organized crime transformed into a transnational threat. This transformation is attributed to the large-scale expansion of local criminal groups across national boundaries in the 1990s. The de-militarization of borders during this decade opened up new markets and new opportunities for organized crime. Mandel restricts his examination of this period of expansion to what he claims are the three largest illegal trades involving organized crime: drug trafficking, arms dealing, and human smuggling. The ultimate strategic objective is the domination of these trades on a global scale. A risk assessment is performed for each of the "big five" organizations based on their ability to secure local, national, and international markets. To achieve this lofty goal Mandel investigates the tactics used to create the intricate networks of control. He acknowledges that survival in the seedy world of organized crime depends greatly on an organization's situational awareness and tactical choices.

In terms of tactics Mandel spends a great deal of time detailing the operations of the major organized crime syndicates, the most cunning of which have learned through years of experience that the key to a successful strategy is maintaining a delicate balance between "stick and carrot" tactics to control and manipulate important individuals. The most common criminal acts utilized by these organizations include bribery, extortion, kidnapping, and assassination. In developing and failed states, Mandel remarks that these sorts of acts severely undermine the legitimacy of national governments and fall into the two tactical categories of violence and corruption. To combat organized crime

on an international scale this dangerous tactical duo must be confronted. How exactly such a grandiose endeavor should be undertaken is the subject of the latter half of Mandel's book.

In the final chapter, general and specific policy strategies to contain and combat the spread of transnational organized crime are suggested. The general recommendations are expectedly uninspired. The freezing of financial assets, collaborative/intensive intelligence operations, and the restoration of legitimacy in governance are among those mentioned in the book. Although these strategies have met with some success, Mandel believes that "tried and tested" countermeasures can be more effective if they are adopted internationally. Thus far the international community has failed to rise to such a costly challenge. National anti-crime initiatives still appear to be the norm for combating organized crime. Furthermore, Mandel does not satisfactorily address how international strategies can be implemented in the face of widespread corruption. He attempts to solve this daunting problem by providing more specific strategies aimed at disrupting the violent and corrupt practices utilized by organized crime syndicates. To minimize the disruptive capabilities of these criminal organizations, the author suggests that an international effort must be undertaken to train specialized police and military units in addition to the application of external pressure on corrupt regimes. Interestingly, even with the use of precision force, Mandel recognizes that the influence of organized crime can only be minimized and not entirely eliminated.

Overall this book is an excellent introductory analysis of the inner workings of transnational organized crime. Those interested in true crime will particularly enjoy the scholarly retelling of the rise of some of the world's most notorious crime syndicates. From an academic perspective this book is a reflection of the ever-expanding field of security studies. One must credit Mandel for conducting a threat assessment not only for nations but also for individuals. Because he incorporates human security into his analysis, Mandel's book stands out amongst the crowd of literature pertaining to organized crime. It is refreshing to see a study that guides the reader from the lowest level (the individual) of analysis to the highest (the international system). In promoting a holistic view of security Mandel makes a compelling argument that a complex threat like organized crime can only be reduced through multilateral action. Such a stance is

worthy of consideration if one thinks back to the United States' disastrous unilateral approach to the "War on Drugs". Although arms, funds, and personnel were provided to countries on the front lines of this war, the United States largely ignored the socioeconomic situations on the ground. Even in the current "War on Terror," there still appears to be misunderstandings concerning the root causes of terrorism. Mandel's study is designed to rectify this knowledge gap by re-examining organized crime from the bottom up. This book will undoubtedly be a welcome read to those who subscribe to Sun Tzu's old dictum that one must know their enemy in order to prevail over them.

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