These shortcomings however do not detract from the book’s enduring value. Even if future presidents agree with the authors that the U.S. should “fight two enemies simultaneously…only under the most dire of circumstances,” history points to the uncomfortable reality that more multi-theater wars could be on the horizon. *IAJ*

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

*Edited by Michael Miklaucic and Jacqueline Brewer*


*Reviewed by Richard E. Berkebile, Ph.D.; Heather R. Karambelas; G. Scott Thompson; and Christopher J. Heatherly*

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*Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization*, a collective work of nineteen different authors, is topical, not collaborative, so there is plenty of overlap and some helpful divergence in perspective. The stated aim of the book is to educate national and international security leaders on the current and growing threat from the hybridization of organized criminal, insurgent, and terrorist groups or rapidly-formed, symbiotic relationships among them—in a word convergence. The book is largely successful on this score. Although the effort to persuade on the danger of convergence is often overwrought, readers will walk away convinced of the real damage to economies, governance, and victims and the beneficial aspects of the globalized international system.

The book is descriptive in its content; audiences seeking theories and causal mechanisms will need to look elsewhere. A recurring theme is the need for a networked response to a networked threat. Nonetheless, the networks described are horizontal among agencies of the national government or multilateral among states. There is little more than a passing description of vertical networking to local governments, commercial interests, or the private sector. The collection makes several sound proposals for making better use of existing interagency, diplomatic, and military tools, but does
little to promote radical innovation to counteract an adaptive and agile threat.

Part I, A Clear and Present Danger, frames the global environment as one that encourages a flourishing market of illegal goods and services, and it describes the problem of illicit networks. Nils Gilman, Jesse Goldhammer, and Steven Weber label this problem “deviant globalization.” They describe the legal global market and the technological improvements that enhance the ability to match supply with demand for goods and services. Gilman et al. then describe how these advances benefit those dealing in illicit distribution of goods and services. They conclude with a recommendation for a strategic shift away from prohibition-type policies.

Phil Williams continues the theme of describing the twenty-first century environment in which lawlessness and disorder are driving increases in illegal market supply and demand. He discusses complex trends overlapping and challenging state resources in a way that provides opportunity for a “rise of alternative governance.” He persuasively argues current policies are not working and warns of an approaching “perfect storm” of even more disorder. Justin Picard confronts the “challenge of measuring the collective size and impact of illicit markets and networks.” He compares pronouncements in policy and media circles to quantifiable statistics. Picard convincingly uses data to dispute conventional wisdom and points the way forward for future models and evidence-based policy.

Part II, Complex Illicit Operations, refines the concept of the flourishing black market economy with more analysis and examples. Each essay provides a perspective accessible to the generalist with little or no background knowledge. This section, however, would benefit from more focus on how this information could inform deeper study or policy development.

Duncan Deville considers the effect of illicit trade networks on governance. Responding to the same market forces as commercial enterprises, these organizations form efficient and adaptable networks. Deville posits criminal methods such as violence and bribery damage governmental functions in states where they operate. Douglas Farah focuses on the lateral actors enabling networks to function. “Fixers” connect local criminal enterprises to global financial markets, either gray markets for exchange or occasionally to legitimate companies. These access services and managed connections make one “fixer” critical to dozens of criminal efforts.

Switching away from the networks themselves, Patrick Keefe examines environmental features of criminal hubs—geographic locations where illicit networks operate. Analyzing characteristics such as state degradation, poverty, and corruption, he argues conventional wisdom is incorrect. Criminal enterprises operate wherever conditions are favorable and not just in failed states. Lindholm and Realuyo provide an overview of financial instruments and methods used to smuggle bulk cash and launder money through Internet gaming. Contemporary criminal enterprises rapidly and efficiently raise, move, and hide money and necessitate synchronization among financial intelligence and law enforcement, international institutions, and national governments to combat the problem. Louise Shelley focuses on a particular financial abuse: money laundering through real estate transactions. She highlights the lack of legislation, potential impact on broader financial markets, and dearth of study in this area. Shelley also explains consequences such as overbuilding, artificially elevated residential and commercial real estate prices, and the prospective triggering of a global financial crisis.

Part III, The Attack on Sovereignty, identifies threats to state sovereignty. Michael Miklaucic and Moises Naim propose a useful typology describing the degree of criminalization within a state and convincingly debunk the previous era’s assumptions about the nature of organized crime.
Using a spectrum from infiltration to becoming the regime itself, they explain how illicit actors exploit the rule-based international system of sovereign states to increase their effectiveness and survivability. Written from the viewpoint of a global power—the U.S.—their arguments are less persuasive on the threat to the international order as a whole, and they do not examine weaknesses in their proposed multinational and government-centric cures.

Whereas Miklaucic and Naim’s typology examines the convergence of criminal organizations and state, John Sullivan describes the degree of criminal independence and impunity from state sovereignty. Using examples from Mexico and Central America, he details the usurpation of specific sovereign tasks by illicit actors. Sullivan somewhat abruptly introduces a “generation of gangs” typology, but his explanation is cursory and dependent on a different publication. Vanda Felbab-Brown presents a compelling case study on the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of U.S. and allied counternarcotic policies in Afghanistan. Her detailed description of the tradeoffs in regards to suppressing drug production, economic development, and pacification are a must read for law enforcement, military, and development practitioners and researchers alike. Unfortunately, Felbab-Brown’s case study is misplaced in the collection in general and the sovereignty section in particular. The chapter does not use the term “sovereignty.” One can glean implications for foreign influenced state capacity and sovereignty building, but readers are on their own.

Having described the myriad number of global threat organizations, Part IV Fighting Back describes how the U.S. and its allies employ multiple ways, ends, and means to confront them. Each chapter describes elements of America’s response strategy, under the auspices of the Departments of State, Defense, and other government agencies, to work with international and private-sector partners against global narco-criminal-terrorist threats. In essence, Part IV reiterates the case for and explains how the U.S. employs a network to meet a networked threat.

David Luna advocates a network-centric method in a “fight fire with fire” approach. Luna explains how threat networks leverage differences in individual nation’s border security. In response, he argues for the greater international community to adopt a holistic, networked plan of action. He cites the Obama administration’s “2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime: Addressing Converging Threats to National Security” (SCTOC) as a positive step. The SCTOC “aims to protect Americans and citizens of partner nations from violence and exploitation at the hands of transnational criminal networks.” Luna describes the program, its associated goals, and implementation strategies through longstanding bodies such as the Organization of American States and new initiatives such as the Trans-Pacific Network.

William Wechsler and Gary Barnabo continue this theme by examining the Department of Defense (DoD) role. They explain how narco-criminal organizations cooperate with non-state actors and terrorist groups to threaten national security. Wechsler and Barnabo employ a series of case studies, beginning with U.S. support to Columbia in the 1980s, to highlight DoD ability to contribute to the overall fight against threat networks. They examine the spectrum of DoD capabilities including military-to-military support, building partner capacity, providing intelligence to law enforcement, and direct action operations. Celina Realuyo concludes the SCTOC study by discussing interagency and international roles. She begins with the by now familiar review of illicit networks and explains how their activities overlap to threaten four key elements of global supply chain management — material, manpower, money, and mechanisms. Realuyo discusses past successes and continuing challenges of several interagency and international programs, citing the collaborative efforts of Joint Interagency Task Force South as the best model.
A key element missing from *Convergence* is a thorough “no-holds barred” analysis on the effectiveness of programs and friendly networks in combating the threat. Workshops, information sharing, international agreements, and similar programs are undoubtedly steps in the right direction. However, a key question remains unanswered: Are these initiatives making a difference? The authors highlight individual successes, but the work lacks a comprehensive analysis on the overall efficacy of these programs. *IAJ*

**Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning: A Strategic, Participatory, Systems-Based Handbook on Human Security**

*by Lisa Schirch*

Kumarian Press, 250 pp., $22.00.

*Reviewed by Lt. Col. Celestino Perez, U.S. Army, Ph.D. - U.S. Army Command and General Staff College*

Lisa Schirch’s volume “aims to improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding by better linking conflict assessment to self-assessment, theories of change, and the design, monitoring, and evaluation of peacebuilding efforts at all levels, from community-based projects to international policies.” Her approach shares affinities with other practice-minded studies of conflict mitigation, such as the Berghof Foundation’s Advancing Conflict Transformation: The Berghof Handbook II, the U.S. government’s “Interagency Conflict and Assessment Framework,” and the U.S. Army’s Design Methodology. Schirch’s contribution represents a thoughtful—and necessary—complement to these predecessors. Yet, I suggest, the volume must be part of a broader, educational effort attuned to the granular realities of conflict dynamics and collective action.

*Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning* (CAPP) handbook insists on the use of a structured exploration of peacebuilders’ biases and the dynamics of conflict. The book advocates a systems approach, which includes mapping the relationships between “stakeholders” and potential “peacebuilding actors,” the “factors driving and mitigating conflict,” and “the existing peacebuilding activities taking place in different sectors.” These actors, factors, and activities compose an “ecological relationship” characterized by interdependence; hence, the book’s approach emphasizes “the importance of understanding the whole system rather than just discrete elements of a conflict.”

The author recommends “whole of society” interventions because “neither government nor civil society can build peace alone.” Since “peacebuilding includes a wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society at the community, national, and international levels,” the CAPP handbook envisions collective action among multifarious governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Each of these entities is to strive chiefly toward “human security” and accordingly “align” and “link” their more parochial security and organizational interests.