

Book Review: Gangsters and Other Statesmen: Mafia, Separatists, and Torn States in a Globalized World by Danilo Mandic

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Danilo Mandic. *Gangsters and Other Statesmen: Mafia, Separatists, and Torn States in a Globalized World*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021, Hardcover, 282 pages.

The study of power is a particularly important concept to understanding security issues, domestic and international politics. The political arena is a constant push and pull of power struggles lending itself to numerous diplomatic measures and policy development. The study of power consists of the interactions of people and the subsequent developments of communities on an individual, state and global scale. Facets of power are particularly interesting to research and explore.

In many senses, political scientists focus on the myriad factors in a society that affect the political structures and political developments. Simply put, these factors are important considerations. Most social scientists, however, understand that there are many other communities that affect political outcomes and government organizations. *Gangsters and Other Statesmen: Mafia, Separatists and Torn States in a Globalized World* by Danilo Mandic is a fascinating look at globalization and the role that organized crime plays in torn nations and globalization. Mandic's perspective provides a unique lens into the effects of organized crime in the international political arena. Mandic's lens focuses on the role of organized crime in stabilizing problematic nations and conversely, their role in the breakdown of nation states in the international political arena. Mandic describes mafias and organized crime as being transnational making them a particularly interesting factor in international politics. Mandic writes

Mafias can undermine both conflict resolution, (which may reimpose clear and border control) and conflict escalation (which may further destabilize the existing, lucrative lack of jurisdiction, law and order). Alternatively, they can co-op or support the separatist movement, hedging bets on a newly emerging polity where the criminal fiefdom can reign supreme under a novel, sovereign political umbrella. Finally, they can co-opt or support the host state in crushing separatists, hoping for a return to the initial environment with which they are familiar and comfortable. Such an opportunity structure affords mafias exceptional power," (p. 6).

Mandic's perspective illuminates organized crime as an important factor to consider in the intricate web of international politics.

Mandic takes a particularly interesting approach as he highlights the role of organized crime in post-Cold War world. He notes, "This book argues that countries torn by separatist movements since the Cold War cannot be adequately understood without an appreciation of organized crime. Far from passive by-products or trivial catalysts, mafias can play a decisive, autonomous role in shaping state-separatist relations, promoting or hindering succession and fueling war," (p. 3). Looking specifically at countries and organized crime in the post-Cold War world, Mandic argues, "The argument is not that mafias necessarily or always impact separatist trajectories. Rather, it is that they have—conditionally—the potential for an immense impact on separatist escalation and demobilization, violence and conciliation, victory and defeat," (p. 8).

Mandic expands on this and writes

Organized crime has the capacity to both promote and obstruct separatist movement success by: determining the stability and capacity of weak host states engaged in curbing separatism, with a fateful impact on the trajectories of secession; supplying separatist movements with criminal resources and allies, without which they are doomed to demobilization; generating or prolonging separatist confrontation and war; and promoting stalemate and ethnic reconciliation. Given these realities, globalized mafias and separatist politics are deeply symbiotic, (p. 4).

Mandic's arguments are so interesting and provide another facet that should be considered in understanding the breakdown of nation states and the potential for stabilizing what was once a nation that may have been on the verge of collapse.

Mandic's framework for looking at organized crime and their relationship with nations is intriguing. Mandic's book is divided into three parts. The first part of the book includes the literature on the subject, then focuses on the case studies between Serbia and Kosovo and Georgia and South Ossetia. From there, part 3 focuses on a "macroanalysis of West Africa, the

Middle East and Eastern Europe” (p. 14), before Mandic concludes with recommendations for future research.

As a sociological piece, the book contributes to the international relations and international security literature in a truly interesting way. The book’s approach allows for the readers, essentially students of international relations, political science, and international security to be exposed to a part of society that lurks in the shadows yet is particularly instrumental as an influential piece of communities. Particularly well-constructed and a truly intriguing read, the book would be good for any student of criminal justice, international relations or security majors—or any individual looking to further their knowledge on factors that affect interstate relations.

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