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Shadow orders: clandestine non-state power in the international system
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Part IV: Conclusion

CHAPTER 9 – Clandestine non-state actors in the international system

"Insufficient thought has been given to defining the necessary and sufficient conditions for saying that an international system exists." Barry Buzan and Richard Little [968]

Critiques of International Relations theory – and even of the wider study of international politics – continue to highlight the extent to which these fields remain centred around state actors as well as the Westphalian assumption that states 'contain' society and that political authority is defined by state borders.[969] States, according to prevailing thinking, are the actors who decide to go to war, enter into international political agreements and establish trade barriers.[970] This *de facto* focus has become the fundamental, almost uncontested axiom of International Relations, shaped by classical and Neorealist thinking.[971] Whilst a few courageous scholars have argued for greater recognition of non-state actors, including the wider cast list of multinational corporations, non-governmental organisations and even credit rating agencies, as agents of international influence, these have often struggled to challenge what Farida Lakhany aptly describes as the "inviolable position [of nation states] as sole actors on the world stage."[972] Scholarly attempts to examine the growing significance of armed, criminal and subversive non-state actor groups in the international order are no exception, lingering in the seldom-frequented and dimly lit corridors of the academic literature and entangled in definitional and conceptual quagmires. Indeed, and as Paul Staniland notes, "political science lacks a conceptual language to describe varying political orders."[973]

Lying against this backdrop, this thesis has sought to go beyond the purely theoretical debate in order to close three gaps within the existing evidence base. Firstly, the thesis attempted to break down definitional boundaries, including by looking at clandestine non-state actor characteristics manifested by different types of groups in varying political and geographic contexts. This focus was reflected in the selection of granular case studies, which spanned across criminal, terrorist and insurgent organisations operating in three different continents. Secondly, and partly as an additional means of achieving this, the thesis proposed a new analytical framework allowing for the comparative as well as systematic analysis of these same actors. Finally, and drawing on empirical evidence, the thesis introduced the notion of a parallel, non-state 'shadow order' connecting actors of different denominations in an increasingly connected, alternative international system, albeit one that often intersected with the formal state-based system.

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[968] B. Buzan and R. Little, *The Idea of 'International System': Theory Meets History*, International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale De Science Politique, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1994, pp. 231–255 (p.231).
[969] H. Lacher, *Putting the State in Its Place: The Critique of State-Centrism and Its Limits*, Review of International Studies, vol. 29, no. 4, October 2003, pp. 521–541.
[970] See for example C. Reus-Smit and D. Snidal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.
[971] Critical, here (and as explored in Chapter 2), were contributions such as Hans Morgenthau's emphasis on the role of 'national interest', Kenneth Waltz's account of sovereign state interactions within a Hobbesian-type anarchic international system and Hedley Bull's description of a state-based 'international society' adhering to agreed rules and interacting on the basis of common strategic interests. See H. J. Morgenthau, Politics *Among Nations*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954. H. Milner, *The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique*, Review of International Studies, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1991, pp. 67–85. A. Watson, *Hedley Bull, States Systems and International Societies*, Review of International Studies, Vol. 13, No. 2, April 1987, pp. 147–153. and R. Jervis, *Realism in the Study of World Politics*, International Organization, Vol. 52, No. 4, 1998, pp. 971–991.
[972] F. Lakhany, *How Important Are Non-State Actors*, *Pakistan Horizon*, vol. 59, no. 3, 2006, pp. 37-46 (37). See also I. Abraham and W. van Schendel, *The Making of Illicitness*, in Abraham and W. van Schendel (eds.), *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005, p.5.
[973] P. Staniland, *States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders*, Perspectives on Politics, Vol. 10, No. 02, June 2012, pp. 243.

It has done so by isolating some of the most salient features and characteristics of different clandestine non-state actors in order to explore, in line with the research question, whether these protagonists demonstrated the ability to project power across geographies, pursue individual interests and, ultimately, challenge both the (sovereign) state and the prevailing Neorealist ontology of the international stage. The analytical framework introduced as part of this research was once again central to this investigation, whilst arguably constituting an analytical output in its own right – a tool that could be applied by investigators and intelligence practitioners seeking to better understand the inner workings of such organisations. Admittedly, all frameworks and analytical models have their flaws and limitations. The thesis' framework is not, for example, predictive and, therefore, its application to any given case study may not necessarily help to anticipate *how* investigated actors are likely to respond to, say, state-led pressure beyond relatively well-established patterns such as their propensity to turn to asymmetric activities and/or adopt more decentralised operating structures. Moreover, and although informed by a reasonably large body of empirical data, the framework was only applied in a more granular way to a much smaller case study sample. Still, its application does shed light on traits and patterns that are observable across disparate strategic contexts. It is the task of this chapter to distill these crosscutting insights and assess the extent to which they support the thesis' original hypotheses.

9.1 Relating the case study findings to the original research question and hypotheses

Overall, the analysis of case studies revealed the fundamental propensity for clandestine non-state actors to project power, including across state borders. Al Qaeda (AQ), the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the 'Ndrangheta each demonstrated a tendency to seek out and establish power bases akin to fiefdoms or bastions of influence, which could in turn be leveraged to expand that same influence in new territories further afield. In doing so, these groups have indeed, albeit to varying degrees, challenged the sovereignty and 'rules' of states, either by establishing parallel governance and economic systems or by undermining states' monopoly over the use of force. As this thesis has demonstrated, this characteristic – which sits at the heart of the research question – is broadly supported by the literature (chapters three to five) and empirical case study analysis (chapters six to eight). However, unpacking the specificity of this dynamic is best achieved by returning to the thesis' core hypotheses, which offer a qualitatively measurable means of deconstructing the research question on the basis of the comparative analysis.

Hypothesis 1: There is an established body of evidence highlighting the extent to which CNSAs of various denominations display the characteristics of *political* actors. However, the agency of CNSAs extends to articulating and balancing complex policy choices, carving out (local) spheres of influence and securing multi-vector partnerships.

On balance, the investigation supports this hypothesis. All three of case studies developed highly political objectives. For al Qaeda 'core' and the FARC, these revolved around catalysing regime change, even if al Qaeda's ambition for a unified, supra-national 'Ummah' and the overthrow of Western-backed regimes across the Islamic world extended well beyond those of the Colombian guerrilla group. Meanwhile, the 'Ndrangheta's political objectives have long been geared towards securing shadow political systems in Calabria as an antidote to the region's perceived neglect by the state. Demonstrating a logic approaching that of traditional statecraft, all three groups emphasised the control of territory and economic resources ranging from oil fields and coca plantations to transportation hubs as the basis for alternative governance – a doctrine which, in the case of the FARC, was steeped in Marxist ideology. In a similar vein, all three protagonists saw value in exploiting governance vacuums and/or pockets of instability as a means of establishing strategic footholds in new territories, as illustrated by al Qaeda's presence in Yemen and Afghanistan or that of the FARC in southern

and eastern Colombia. The latter organisation also emphasised infrastructure projects such as the construction of roads and bridges as a means of asserting its presence, securing the support the local population and increasing its mobility. Moreover, al Qaeda viewed such bridgeheads as a step towards catalysing localised revolutions which, together, would feed into a larger transnational campaign of political change.[974] Meanwhile, the case of the 'Ndrangheta, an organisation with a subtler approach to political infiltration, reveals how clandestine non-state actors are capable of breeching more stable and economically developed territory – in this instance illustrated by its *'ndrina* (or clan) presence in, *inter alia*, northern Italy, the low countries, Germany and Canada.

Strategic partnerships featured heavily in each of the organisations' expansionist policies. Thus, al Qaeda's entire strategy gravitated around establishing local franchises and cells as the basis for a transnational web of political access and power. It also adopted a quasi-diplomatic, inter-group mediation and dispute resolution role, establishing reconciliation councils and appointing scholars and tribal sheikhs to arbitrate 'practical truces' (as its leadership called them) in the event of disagreements between various factions.[975] Both the FARC and the 'Ndrangheta similarly developed external criminal partnerships, with the latter's inter-organisational deal-making activities ranging from negotiating European wholesale market distribution shares with Albanian criminal groups to striking bargains with Latin American cartels. The case of the FARC perhaps most vividly reflects the extent to which clandestine non-actors may also engage directly with state actors. Not only did it receive training and weapons from the Soviet bloc and communist countries during its Cold War years; it also subsequently enjoyed close relations with state patrons such as Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. Even then, and in a similar vein to state actors, the organisations at times found themselves at odds with strategic competitors. Thus, al Qaeda struggled to exert control over ISIS, its most successful offshoot; the FARC was drawn into pitched battles with rival armed and paramilitary groups such as the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia; and the 'Ndrangheta demonstrated a propensity towards occasional inter-clan warfare.

The examined groups demonstrated significant agency within the context of formulating policy decisions ranging from their initial recourse to violence and/or criminality to (de)escalating the intensity of their respective campaigns. In the case of al Qaeda, this included the group's initial declaration of war against the United States, which preceded attacks against the latter's assets in Kenya and Yemen. The FARC's political and policy-making agency was reflected in its successive decisions, first to launch its guerilla warfare campaign, then to expand its revenue and power base through narco-trafficking and, finally, to engage in political dialogue. Similarly, 'Ndrangheta decisions spanned from expanding into new markets to targeting politicians as a show of force. Notably, all three organisations adopted a sequenced, or multi-phase, strategic logic. Both al Qaeda and the FARC's strategic thinking arguably displayed variations on Mao's Tse-Tung three phases of warfare. Here, an initial defensive campaign organised from remote localities was considered a necessary precedent to offensive operations, including via conventional warfare, and, ultimately, to the overthrow of the state. The 'Ndrangheta case study arguably offers an interesting criminal alternative to the three-phase logic, with initial, localised illicit economic activities acting as a prequel to securing larger swathes of territory and, finally, de-facto shadow-political control (albeit via the co-option, rather than overthrow, of existing institutions). At the same time, the fact that none of the groups progressed fully through these stages highlights the extent to which such organisations may be compelled to revise and adapt their strategic objectives and approach in light of their evolving situation.

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[974] Further geographic nodes, typically also situated within fragile localities such as Pakistan's tribal areas, provided staging posts for campaign planning and training with these latter, supporting functions similarly introduced by the FARC within Colombian demilitarized zones.
[975] *Letter to Abu Bashir*, ODNI, declassified March 1, 2016, p. 3.

Hypothesis 2: The morphologies and organisational structures of CNSAs are both adaptive and shaped by similar considerations, including the need to mitigate threats (such as disruption by state actors) and a willingness to seize specific political and economic opportunities. At the same time, their structural design is also influenced by their ideology as well as strategic and political culture.

Although the investigation broadly supports this hypothesis, it also introduces the need for analytical nuance. To be sure, the aforementioned tendency of clandestine non-state actors to engage in flexible policymaking implies a corresponding emphasis on organisational and structural agility. This is evidenced by the al Qaeda case study, whose leadership deliberately opted for a devolved and cell-based operating model, partly as a means of increasing the organisation's structural resilience to disruption and targeting. The FARC's *front*-based structure (within which new *fronts* could be established at will) allowed both force concentration and territorial expansion. It also provided the group with a means of pursuing specific opportunities, with individual *fronts* taking on a more active role in narco-trafficking. Such a logic similarly lay at the heart of the 'Ndrangheta's highly devolved and replicable, albeit secretive and selective, clan-based structure, which provided an effective vehicle for entering new markets, whilst inoculating the organisation against the risk of infiltration. At the same time, the three organisations did not always readily embrace the idea of devolved decision-making. Illustratively, the FARC opted for a traditional vertical operating model which meant that senior leaders constituted somewhat of a bottleneck and organisational choke point. Admittedly, the relative agency of individual *front* commanders, particularly those with access to narco-revenue, did increase over time, leading to occasional tensions with the senior leadership. The 'Ndrangheta's leadership commission made various attempts to remind local *capos* of their place in the organisation, albeit with mixed results. Meanwhile, and despite al Qaeda's original emphasis on devolution, its leadership had to contend with the fact that disparate franchises were often more focussed on localised political objectives than the wider global cause.

As is the case with most organisation's reaching a certain size, the three groups also faced bureaucratic challenges, some of which undermined organisational agility. The FARC comprised a combination of a (political) Secretariate, Central High Command, regional *Blocs* and *fronts,* as well subordinate tactical formations. Al Qaeda's lighter-touch organisational design still featured an Majlis Al Shura command council, various committees with responsibility for specific policy areas and its web of franchises, each with its own individual sub-structures. Although structurally fluid, the 'Ndrangheta had to navigate relations between its executive commission and various clan blocks, including the relatively powerful *'mandamenti,* which comprised *Locali* and subordinate *'ndrine.* These challenges became more acute for the FARC and al Qaeda as they increased in size and influence. Meanwhile, the organisations' overall reliance on individual leaders and ability to absorb their loss was somewhat varied. The 'Ndgangheta, perhaps the most devolved of the groups, has proven relatively resilient to the loss of senior *capos*, largely because of the high level of autonomy enjoyed by individual *'ndrine*. In contrast, the removal of subsequent FARC leaders had a direct bearing on the group's overall cohesion, essentially catalysing power fragmentation and the rise of local commanders as *de facto* decision makers in their areas of responsibility. Similarly, al Qaeda never truly recovered from the loss of its leader, Osama bin Laden, which was further compounded ten years later by the killing of fellow idealogue and co-founder Aman Al Zawahiri.

Whilst the organisations, as we have seen, all demonstrated a willingness to engage in partnerships (see hypothesis 1) and exploit new political and/or economic opportunities, the ways in which they did so differed, partly reflecting their respective institutional and strategic cultures. Shaped by the experience of the Mujahideen, al Qaeda embraced a relatively inclusive model for pursuing new strategic opportunities and sought to attract fighters, supporters and affiliates from across the globe to its cause. The 'Ndrangheta was much

selective in its pursuit of both opportunities and partnerships, even if its willingness to engage and strike alliances with organisations outside of its insular network of clans reveals a degree of pragmatism. The FARC's early choices of objectives and partnerships were steeped in communist ideals, although this did not stop it from working with criminal enterprises across Latin America as it morphed into a narco-insurgency. Still, the organisations' narratives and, to an extent, recruitment and indoctrination processes, largely reflected their respective ideologies derived from Marxism, Wahabism and Catholic-inspired codes of honour. The FARC and al Qaeda proved themselves somewhat more accepting than the insular 'Ndrangheta when seeking to bolster their rank-and-file membership – a necessary precondition for attaining their respective objectives. Thus, al Qaeda accepted members from countries far and wide, whilst the FARC showed a propensity towards gender inclusivity in its recruitment strategy.

Hypothesis 3: CNSAs consistently apply a variation on the types of levers of power available to states, albeit at a smaller scale, including with respect to the conduct of warfare; the pursuit of economic and financial interests; and strategic communications.

Overall, the analysis supports this hypothesis. The three case studies show the propensity for clandestine non-state actors to engage in violence as a continuation of policy – to once again borrow from von Clausewitz – by other means. Out of the examined groups, the FARC came closest to acquiring the type of war fighting capabilities traditionally enjoyed by states. These included weapons from Cold-War era stockpiles such as assault rifles, rocket propelled grenade launchers and mortars, alongside the growing use of anti-personnel mines and improvised exploding devices built using a combination of ordnance shells and commercial-grade explosives. It also established structured training modules that included infantry skills, jungle warfare and specialization in advanced weapon systems.[976] Al Qaeda similarly placed a heavy emphasis on the training of operatives, including in clandestine missions, weapons handling and the use of explosives, even if its ability to build a credible and potent cadre of fighters decreased following the loss of its training camps in Afghanistan. As a predominantly criminal organisation, the 'Ndrangheta's own armed capabilities admittedly paled in comparison, although it did reveal the ability to carry out targeted assassinations. The three groups established at times-complex (counter)intelligence and security procedures, which included the 'Ndrangheta's use of encrypted communications and threats aimed at collaborators of justice, al Qaeda's courier network (which operated outside of the digital space) and the FARC's human intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities.

The organisations harnessed innovative economic as well as financial mechanisms, at times demonstrating some of the characteristics of the fiscal and trade instruments of states. Al Qaeda used disbursements to affiliates – funnelled through a web of charities and non-governmental organisations – as a strategic lever of influence; a means of projecting its influence in new territories. Meanwhile, the FARC and the 'Ndrangheta both introduced local taxation schemes in their respective strongholds. Moreover, and under the supervision of its Financial Commission, the FARC turned to advanced money laundering methods to disguise the profits of its narco-operations, including by harnessing Colombia's Black-Market Peso Exchange and Latin America's sprawling network of *casas de cambios*. Economic infiltration and embeddedness formed a cornerstone of the 'Ndrangheta's operating model, involving layers of complex commercial interests, assets and financial structures. Its money laundering operations also span(ed) across multiple jurisdictions and sectors: transport, cash rich hospitality businesses, construction and renewable energy. Reflecting a wider trend in the evolution of organised crime syndicates, it acquired the services of a legion of third-party white-collar professionals such as tax advisers, solicitors and notaries in structuring its financial affairs. All three organisations effectively managed to exploit global transport and

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[976] As we have seen, the group even developed a maritime capability, including semi-submersibles, even if these were predominantly geared towards drug-running operations.

logistics solutions as part of their illicit operations. Whilst, in the case of the 'Ndrangheta and the FARC, these were closely tied to their financial activities, such as trans-Atlantic cocaine smuggling and/or investments in port infrastructure, al Qaeda went one step further by (literally) weaponizing modern air travel.

Perhaps the greatest point of divergence between the examined organisations arguably consisted of their approach to public relations and strategic communications. Here, al Qaeda can be placed in a league of its own. The group viewed communications and publicity as *the* critical means of inspiring followers, demoralising adversaries and spreading its ideology. To be sure, its communications strategy, which blended high-profile acts of terror designed to resonate with audiences and highly curated media content, set the bar and standards for subsequent terrorist organisations such as ISIS. The FARC's approach to strategic communications and propaganda was more traditional, often relying on leadership statements and short-wave radio broadcasts (which differed markedly from al Qaeda's use of satellite television channels). The guerrilla group endeavoured to expand its online presence in the context of political negotiations, but these efforts paled in comparison to those of the Colombian state, resulting in information asymmetry. The 'Ndrangheta contrasts heavily to the other case studies given its reluctance to propagandise and draw attention to its activities – a likely reflection of its predominantly criminal character. Even then, the organisation's leadership has, over the years, cultivated its image and reputation, including through its retention of traditional codes, rites and oaths, the latter of which have contributed to its mystique as well as to folkloric depictions in television series, films and novels.

9.2 The character of clandestine non-state actors in the international system

The above cases study dynamics and, indeed, this thesis' wider theoretical investigation, hint at macro-level implications for the study of clandestine non-state power in the international system. Amongst these, and perhaps most critically, is the aforementioned existence of an unexplored dimension – or, indeed, clandestine 'order' – existing both parallel to, and intersecting with, the state-based international system. It is one that theorists and state security institutions have often struggled to define through the lens of inherited norms and perceptions as well as established *Weltanschauungs*. Indeed, rather than being 'non-state' *per se*, the protagonists described in this thesis are typically viewed by policy makers as subservient, '*sub*-state' entities. However, and as we have seen, these actors have time again embedded themselves in the political fabric of the international system to the extent that one cannot arguably talk convincingly about international 'stability' without acknowledging their (both stabilising and destabilising) role within the global architecture. For this reason, patterns in the evolution of these actors may also act as a warning sign foretelling changes in the very structure of the international system – one in which the global order becomes predicated not only upon inter-state connections but also on different configurations of inter-non-state actor and state–non-state actor relations, amounting to an erosion of traditional notions of sovereignty and an almost postmodern challenge to the idea that 'rules' are defined and (re)written by states.

Such an assertion rests on the basic principle evidenced throughout this thesis that clandestine non-state actors are capable of establishing (hyper)localised forms of political influence and, indeed, 'sovereign' rule, through the calibrated projection of power: what the philosopher Bertrand Russell described as "the ability to produce intended effects."[977] They achieve this, typically, through a combination of infiltration, co-option and subversion – gradually taking over social habitats, colonising economic ecosystems and securing 'political neighbourhoods' in which (and, critically, *from* which) they can operate. As we have seen, variations of this logic can be observed through the writings of guerrilla and terrorist thinkers ranging from Mao Tse-tung to Osama Bin Laden, whilst Giovanni Falcone – the iconic anti-

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[977] See F. H. Knight, *Bertrand Russell on Power*, Ethics, Vol. 49, No. 3, 1939, pp. 253–285.

mafia prosecutor – similarly described the logic of organised crime as "merely [that] of power."[978] Spheres of influence and pockets of power are therefore carved out using a range of approaches conceptually resembling those of traditional statecraft and governance, effectively amounting to quasi 'micro-states'; entities that fill gaps in the state's ability to provide for its citizens.[979]

To a degree, this logic also adheres to Anthony Giddens' notion of 'power systems' in which control over resources and production constitutes the necessary means to effect transformative change. [980] Thus, classical governance approaches that blend the provision of basic services, justice, security and employment with the extraction of taxes or rent, accompanied by coercive means such as surveillance and the threat of violence still provide the conduit towards establishing footholds in strategically important environments. Such dynamics, moreover, offer a variation on the basic Marxist and Weberian concepts of power and legitimacy as being derived respectively from the state's control over the means of production and monopoly over the use of force,[981] whilst approaching Michel Foucault's thinking on the pluralist nature and 'microphysics' of power which, by implication, cannot be the possession of the elite or exercised by a single political centre.[982] Moreover, the granular study of clandestine non-state actor organisational structures, bureaucracies and internal expertise, including those of the 'Ndrangheta, the FARC and al Qaeda, suggests that the concept of *professionalisation*, which the likes of Webber and Man considered a key attribute of the state, can also be extended to non-state entities.

Viewing these actors through such a lens offers a simpler framework through which to observe the character and logic of organisations which, it appears, harness instruments and levers that are (once again) conceptually similar to those developed by states in pursuit of their interests. It also follows that if clandestine groups can establish 'domestic' bastions of quasi-sovereign political power over which they exert *de facto* rule (and in which they can therefore develop policies on 'internal' affairs), then the more ambitious amongst these actors should also, at least in theory, be capable of pursuing 'external' foreign policy agendas. Arguably, this is precisely what a number of groups, including the 'Ndrangheta, the FARC, and al Qaeda have achieved, essentially replicating the workings of the international system at a parallel, albeit often intersecting, sub-state level. Thus, clandestine non-state actors also establish balances of power, enter in alliances, negotiate trade agreements and pursue security partnerships across at times redefined or alternative geographical boundaries and spheres of influence – the type of 'grand strategic', political manoeuvring and bargaining traditionally assumed to be solely within the purview of states. These actors also have the option of blending soft power with hard power in pursuit of their international – or to be consistent, 'external' – strategic aims.

Interactions *between* clandestine non-state actor groups are also not too dissimilar to those that exist between states. The decision to join non-state partnerships and alliances is, in many respects, born out of an almost game-theoretical logic that is calibrated around increasing their real or perceived influence through cooperation or shared interests. This pattern essentially

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[978] G. Falcone, *Cosas de la Cosa Nostra*, Barcelona, Ediciones Barataria, 2006, p. 68.

[979] Although the comparison is tempting, clandestine non-state power centres should be distinguished from historical precedents, such as the city-states of ancient Greece, to the extent that they either run parallel to or subsume state structures.

[980] See A. Giddens, *Power, the Dialectic of Control and Class Structuration*, in *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory*, Contemporary Social Theory. Palgrave, London, 1982, pp. 197-214; and I. J. Cohen, *Structuration Theory: Anthony Giddens and the Constitution of Social Life*, London, Macmillan, 1989, pp. 149-162.

[981] See for example K. Dusza, *Max Weber's Conception of the State*, International Journal of Politics, *Culture, and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1989, pp. 71–105.

[982] This idea partly flows from Foucault's argument that subjects are the passive objects of power, rather than consciously exercising it. See K. J. Heller, *Power, Subjectification and Resistance in Foucault*, SubStance, Vol. 25, No. 1, University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, pp. 78.

amounts to groups organising themselves into ideological or economic 'blocks' or, perhaps more accurately, into constellations of power. These affiliations and interactions bring the types of benefits that come with traditional alliances, such as lifting trade barriers, exchanging knowledge and agreeing on the division and control of territory and resources. They also typically involve agreeing on the 'rules of game', such as with respect to the price of commodities, sharing logistical platforms and so on. Here too, leaders or representatives take on an emissary role akin to that of trade envoys, brokering deals and scouting out new markets. Such cooperative arrangements can span from hyper-local agreements relating to territorial delineations (such as in the case of gangs operating in inner-city neighbourhoods) to transoceanic partnerships.

Meanwhile, all manner of groups – insurgent, terrorist, criminal and/or subversive – tend to frequent and interact in specific economic, trading and logistics hubs and 'hotspots': international centres of clandestine commerce that typically sit at the intersection of different spheres of influence. These of course form part of a much wider clandestine global financial system connecting not only these trading hubs but also most other clandestine operating localities via a large web of formal and informal financial institutions, remittance services and professional enablers. Moreover, just as in the case of state fiscal and stimulus policies, funds that are acquired through economic activities, including via 'external' trade with other groups, donations and/or taxation often underpin the delivery of flagship policies such as providing local grassroots services or acquiring new armed capabilities. Such funds can also be reinvested in growth-generating assets ranging from businesses to real estate, providing a means of diversifying within the licit economy. This approach, which in many ways resembles the notion of surplus sovereign wealth funds, is once again enabled by a plethora of financial and legal vehicles, including multi-layered offshore structures. Furthermore, cooperation between groups may of course extend to loans (a variation on 'sovereign' debt), even if clandestine organisations often have real incentives to avoid large-scale borrowing as well as to run their 'economies' efficiently and at profit; something they may arguably be better at than states.

A variation on the theme of cooperation consists of interactions and agreements between clandestine non-state actor groups and state actors, the latter of whom may be viewed by the former as useful 'force multipliers' when pursuing their aims.[983] Thus, whilst clandestine non-state actors working with states are usually described as 'proxies' of the latter, it could also be argued that this assumption ought to be turned on its head, with state backing instead being instrumentalised and exploited by non-state groups simply looking for 'foreign investment' from various governments. Perhaps for this reason, state alliances and support to clandestine non-state actor groups has historically been fraught with risk and unexpected consequences. Rarely content in the role of mere puppets, such groups have often felt emboldened to pursue their own agenda, spurred on by the injection of external resources. Moreover, clandestine actors continuously learn from states, with partnerships often resulting in the release and subsequent proliferation of expertise and capabilities previously 'owned' by states across the international non-state marketplace. Over time, and as this thesis has demonstrated, this pattern may lead to increased convergence between the means and methods available to state and non-state actors respectively.[984]

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[983] Bridget Coggins discusses the concept of "rebel diplomacy" in which armed actors "engage in strategic communication with foreign governments or agents, or with an occupying regime they deem foreign." See B. Coggins, *Rebel Diplomacy: Theorizing Violent Non-State Actors' Strategic Use of Talk*, In A. Arjona, N. Kasfir et al. (Eds), *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p.107.

[984] Such alliances perhaps work best for state actors in those specific cases – such as that of the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah – where the strategic aims of both the state and non-state partner are relatively aligned and where the former is broadly content with the way in which its (perceived) proxy utilises the resources at its disposal. See for example A. Khan and H. Zhaoying,

Clearly however, and as we have also seen, the relations that exist both amongst clandestine actors and between these groups and states are also not always, to say the least, amicable. The act of carving out spheres of influences can trigger inter-group violence, particularly in contested areas claimed by different organisations, while even groups belonging to similar ideological denominations may clash over the control of territory or markets. Perhaps unsurprisingly, and in another parallel with state interactions, tensions, rivalries and hostilities tend to manifest themselves at times of structural change when existing inter-group and international non-state and state balances of power are altered, disrupted or re-negotiated. Critically, the shift towards a multipolar international system has opened new epicentres of contestation within which (clandestine) power can be projected. These theatres offer the vehicle through which to establish ideological or economic bridgeheads from which influence can then gradually be expanded. Similarly, the removal of previous, monopolistic and unipolar hegemons within (even localised) contexts can spark turf wars between new and old contestants as was the case following the dismantlement of some of the most dominant Colombian cartels – a structural shock that contributed to the rise of narco-violence in the region. [985]

Whilst the fundamental nature of clandestine actors may not have changed since the dawn of time, their character has certainly evolved, with such protagonists increasingly able to organise themselves at much greater scale. As we have seen, this phenomenon is largely the product of a shift towards technologically enabled meta-networks in which relationships are forged at an accelerated pace and where knowledge, capabilities and expertise are readily sourced within a globally connected neo-liberal market economy. Thus, whilst state actors typically guard their capabilities closely, non-state clandestine groups (somewhat ironically given their character) benefit from a more open and fluid environment in which tactics and methods developed in different contexts flow quite rapidly from one organisation to another. Actors can once again readily expand or adapt their activities by acquiring the services of third-party service providers in the international marketplace whose expertise, specialist skills and *savoir faire* can tip the balance in their favour at moments of strategic risk and opportunity. Moreover, significant investment over the years from the private sector in modern information and communication technology infrastructure such as the servers and fibre optic cable networks that form the backbone and gateways of the internet have essentially offered clandestine actors with cutting-edge, almost instantaneous coordination capabilities as well as the ability to broadcast new ideas and direct subversive and criminal activities from afar.

This evolution is not insignificant, having provided a means of running remote infiltration campaigns and expeditionary warfare. Contemporary clandestine non-state actors are therefore in the unprecedented position of being able to directly harness a blend of government-type expertise, commercially available capabilities and even 'off the shelf' training resources (including, in the case of al Qaeda, academic and think tank publications) in the formulation and execution of their policies. Arguably, this has further levelled the playing field between states and non-state actors, whilst lowering barriers to entry for newcomers. Taken even further, the combination of such strategic enablers, the inherent or 'natural' tendency (to return to Nietzsche) for clandestine non-state actors to expand their influence through the targeted projection of power, and their increased ability to operate across both physical and

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Iran-Hezbollah Alliance Reconsidered: What Contributes to the Survival of State-Proxy Alliance?, Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs, Vol. 7, Issue 1, 2020, pp. 101-123.

[985] However, it is once again important to clarify that the use of violence and coercion, does not *define* these actors in the way that the counter-terrorism, insurgency and (to a lesser extent) organised crime literature suggests. Instead, their application of violence in both 'internal' and 'external' contexts constitutes a strategic policy choice — a bargaining chip that can be played (or a lever that can be pulled) - depending on the context (with, say, peaceful economic relations and so-called *pax mafiosas* favoured at other times).

virtual borders may pave the way for the rise of 'intercontinental' insurgencies and criminal networks (or indeed a hybrid combination of both) capable of conducting different forms of infiltrative and subversive activity across multiple fronts. Such globally networked clandestine non-state power systems would function by identifying, exploiting and then ultimately connecting local ecosystems that are ripe for the picking, such as pockets of instability, dens of (urban) economic inequality and politically marginalised communities.

Levels and trajectories of clandestine activity

The above notion of highly connected, large scale power systems (re)introduces the question of whether clandestine non-state actors will attempt to grow in both size and influence wherever possible (including via the aforementioned mechanisms and relationships). Indeed, and despite the ability to demonstrate strategic patience and avoid overstretch, the patterns identified in this thesis might support the view that clandestine groups seek to expand over time, almost 'naturally' adopting a trajectory in which they morph into state entities (here, the reader may also recall Stephen Biddel's helpful notion of the state–non-state 'continuum'). Thus, smaller or 'start up' groups with limited means and/or tactical sophistication will often strive towards evolving into larger, 'high power' clandestine organisations with the ability to exert at least partial political control over geographic pockets through force, consent or co-option.[986] These same actors, it could be further argued, might subsequently attempt to ascend to the level at which they are effectively able to 'take over', supersede or replace the state, thus essentially transitioning from non-state actor to state actor.[987] Such a line of reasoning would treat clandestine substate forces as the metaphorical equivalent of volcanoes erupting below the ocean's surface to create new landmass and altering existing maps (in this case that of the international system). It might also point to the number of states within the international order, including medium to great powers, that were at one point or another the product of clandestine non-state actor movements: French, American and Russian revolutionaries, Iranian radicals, Balkan criminal 'entrepreneurs'-turned-politician, and Chinese and Vietnamese guerrillas, to name but a few.

This dynamic in which clandestine groups and state actors manifest themselves along a continuum must of course be taken to its logical conclusion – one that may well appeal to Neorealists. If clandestine non-state actors, perhaps as a reflection of natural, power-seeking human behaviour, do indeed lean towards a Clausewitzian notion of 'absolute' rule (in this case evolving into states before logically continuing their expansion towards quasi empire-type entities),[988] it then also follows that they might only be kept in check by equal and opposing forces and/or configurations of power along the way; a function that may inevitably fall to other states. In other words, and somewhat paradoxically, the very power, in a Hobbesian sense, keeping such actors 'in awe' amidst their progression may indeed be the international system *itself* within which states – including those resulting from clandestine non-state actors' ascension to power – exist. Conversely, the fact that clandestine movements may well act as a prequel to the (re)formation of states could explain why the latter increasingly and, perhaps instinctively, are returning to indirect methods of warfare and power projection so often espoused by these same groups, particularly when entering periods of multipolarity.[989] The implications of this dynamic are that existing theory, including Neorealist paradigms, need not necessarily be dismissed as irrelevant to the object of study but instead expanded to account for sub-national forces and protagonists.

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[986] Many insurgent movements, guerrilla groups, large mafia groups and cartels (as well as hybrid combinations thereof) fall within this category.

[987] This level typically involves close to full control over the previous regime's institutions and capabilities, including those of the military.

[988] A trend which *inter alia* can be observed through the historical cases of France, Russia and China.

[989] Further commentary on this trend and its implications is offered in Annex D.

At the same time however, and far more uncomfortably for traditional International Relations theorists, a growing propensity towards the forging of cross-border relations between different social entities within the lower (or parallel) orbit of the clandestine international 'order' raises the question of whether an evolution towards state-type entities *is* in fact the only trajectory available to (clandestine) non-state actors. Indeed, their ability to increasingly connect, interact and project power at greater scale, coalesce around ideas, grievances, identities and markets, and tap into global communications, transport solutions and financial systems, suggests that these actors may have developed the means of circumventing the state-based international system altogether, developing and organising themselves as part of new constellations of geographically dislocated power. In other words, clandestine non-state actor groups in the modern world *need* not necessarily take over the state but may instead secure their gains 'from within' by connecting different local pockets of quasi 'sovereign' power situated at the sub-state level around the world.[990] Such pockets of localized, de-facto control, when combined, may aggregate up to significant entities capable of posing a direct challenge to the viability of the traditional, 'rules based' order. This paradigm would not only support the notion of an alternative, non-state-actor–centric international system but would also point to an additional pattern in which the global order is gradually being reshaped and remolded – and states ultimately supplanted as the dominant entity – from below. Infiltration, subversion and fluidity, the philosophical and doctrinal tenets of the clandestine protagonist, may thus lead to the gradual erosion and, ultimately, the undoing, of both the state-based international system and the increasingly tired concept of state sovereignty.

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New Orleans, 1814. Continued hostilities between America and Britain amidst the War of 1812, a conflict sometimes dubbed as the Forgotten War, had left US Major General Andrew Jackson facing a conundrum. As the commander with responsibility over large parts of America's southern territory, including Tennessee, Louisiana and Mississippi, he was all too aware of Britain's intention to invade the near-defenceless city – a vital seaport and gateway to the mighty Mississippi River. At the same time, Jackson did not have the troops to repel the superior invading force who only the previous year had defeated Napoleon in Europe. The General was committed to the task however, owing Britain "a debt of retaliatory vengeance" for having made him a prisoner during the Revolutionary War.[991] Resolved not to let New Orleans fall, he set about the task of assembling a strange assortment of frontiersmen, militiamen, French and Spanish Creole volunteers, Free Men of Colour and Choctaw Indians to fight alongside conventional US troops.[992] In a secret meeting which, legend would have it, took place on the second floor of Old Absinthe House, deep in the city's French Quarter, he then rallied Jean Laffite, a notorious privateer and smuggler, to the cause.

Laffite, an enigmatic character with "dark, piercing eyes" and a penchant for gambling who looked more like a gentleman than a pirate, had built a name for himself by preying on Spanish merchant ships from his own little fiefdom of Grand Terre Island in Barataria Bay, at the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico.[993] His enterprise involved delivering plundered goods to the (often-grateful) citizens of Louisiana who, for years, had suffered from the combination of a US embargo on international trade aimed at depriving Europe from raw material and a British

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[990] A variation of this theme might include combining 'formal' control over sovereign state territory with influence in wider territories as perhaps seen in the case of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban.

[991] R.V. Remini, *The Battle of New Orleans*: *Andrew Jackson and America's First Military Victory*, New York, Viking, 1999, p. 15.

[992] N. J. Lorusso, *The Battle of New Orleans: Joint Strategic and Operational Planning Lessons Learned*, Small Wars Journal, June 24, 2019, https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/battle-new-orleans-joint-strategic-and-operational-planning-lessons-learned.

[993] W. Groome, *Saving New Orleans*, Smithsonian Magazine, August 2006, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/saving-new-orleans-125976623/.

blockade targeting American commerce.[994] Using a blacksmith shop as a front, Laffite sold his loot, which included slaves seized in the waters around Havana, in sizable quantities, assisted by merchant connections of the likes of Joseph Sauvinet, a wealthy Frenchman and prominent figure on the New Orleans business scene.[995]

In a twist in the tale, the privateer's services had previously been solicited by the British in exchange for a small fortune, but Laffite, after feinting interest and surely hoping for favour, reported the approach – and, accordingly, British intentions – to the US Government.[996] Aroused by similar motivations, Laffite agreed to fight for Jackson in exchange for a full pardon for him and his men. When the British Redcoats advanced, Jackson's eclectic army held the line as Laffite's men delivered highly effective artillery fire, driving their adversary back in a series of pitched battles that culminated in American victory on January 8th, 1815. Exonerated and armed with an official pardon, Laffite returned to what he knew best: he established a new settlement that he renamed Campeche, this time on the island of Galveston in Texas, which he duly turned into a new smuggling centre.[997]

Jean Laffite's different personas were varied: part organised criminal, militiaman, politician, diplomat, entrepreneur and double agent. Here was a privateer with his own sphere of local influence and a degree of legitimacy who cut a deal with a future President of the United States (Jackson would serve as the 7th President from 1829 to 1837), whilst negotiating with – and raiding on behalf of – other foreign powers.[998] That such dynamics remain a feature of contemporary clandestine organisations is, as this thesis has shown, clear. What remains to be seen in the modern world is the extent to which governments around the globe will in the future only really serve at the behest and discretion of clandestine non-state networks as the entities with whom power will ultimately rest.

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[994] *Ibid.*
[995] M. A. Wegmann *et al.*, *Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop and the Battle of New Orleans*, https://neworleanshistorical.org/items/show/616.
[996] J. Sugden, *Jean Lafitte and the British Offer of 1814*, Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1979, pp. 159–167.
[997] *Jean Laffite*, Galveston & Texas History Centre, https://www.galvestonhistorycenter.org/research/jean-laffite.
[998] Laffite carried a letter of marque – essentially conveying diplomatic authority – from the government of Cartagena in modern-day Colombia.