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

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STELLINGEN

(Propositions)

Propositions related to the subject of the dissertation

1. Existing International Relations theory does not account sufficiently for the role or influence of clandestine non-state actors (CNSAs) within the international system. This includes recognition of their position as independent, power-yielding and quasi-sovereign agents of political change capable of establishing their own spheres of influence and forging strategic relations with both state actors and other non-state organisations.
2. CNSAs of different denominations have in common their tendency to formulate complex policy choices; adapt their structural and operational design to reflect those same choices; and apply the range of levers and instruments of power available to states, albeit typically at a smaller scale.
3. The activities and morphologies of CNSAs are shaped by advances in technology. These advances have catalysed the rise of meta-networks and created a conduit for spreading ideas; accessing specialist third-party providers; and performing coordination and recruitment activities across borders.
4. All manner of groups – insurgent, terrorist, criminal and/or subversive – operate and interact as part of a much wider clandestine global financial system. Funds that are acquired through economic activities, including via criminal operations, donations and taxation, often underpin the delivery of flagship policies such as providing local grassroots services or acquiring new (armed) capabilities.
5. CNSAs continuously learn from states, while partnerships between CNSAs and states often result in the release and subsequent proliferation of state-owned expertise and capabilities across the international non-state marketplace. Over time, this pattern has resulted in convergence between the means and methods available to state and non-state actors respectively.

Propositions related to the field of the subject of the dissertation

6. Intelligence and security studies do not provide an adequate basis for the investigation and analysis of transnational organized crime. This contributes to a lack of expertise within national institutions with responsibility for understanding and addressing the phenomenon.
7. Existing definitions relating to various forms of sub-state threats fail to account for their polymorphic character, the latter of which does not neatly fit within individual academic disciplines such as criminology or terrorism studies.

8. Analysis of complex non-state threats should be conducted by multidisciplinary teams drawing on a combination of, *inter alia*, political science, sociology, anthropology, social psychology, history and economics. These same teams should harness machine learning to interrogate large unstructured datasets and map adversarial threat systems.
9. Diplomats, intelligence practitioners and hybrid warfare specialists in the West should become more adept at engaging with proxy non-state actors in order to build a global network of shadow influence at times of increased geostrategic competition. This requires the development of both tradecraft and doctrine.
10. Conflict and threat management approaches that prioritise centralised state and institution-building as well as 'train and equip' programmes are generally ineffective as well as counterproductive. These run the risk of encouraging both the proliferation of threats and interference by external powers seeking to exploit power vacuums.

Propositions related to other societal subjects

11. Algorithmic amplification of cognitive biases (so-called 'algorithmic radicalisation'), catalysed in part by social media platforms, provides opportunities to influence people's thoughts and behaviours. Individuals, rather than Tesla's humanoid Optimus Bot, will constitute the robots of tomorrow.