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Alejandro Colás, Bryan Mabee, eds. *Mercenaries, Pirates, Bandits, and Empires: Private Violence in Historical Context.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. x + 244 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-70208-9.

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Mercenaries, Pirates, Bandits, and Empires, edited by Alejandro Colás and Bryan Mabee, is the result of a dissatisfaction with the ways in which scholars of international relations have addressed non-state violence. The book has its origins in a workshop of similar title held in May 2008 at Queen Mary, University of London. Because of this dissatisfaction, the collection of essays, while predominantly contributed by members of the international relations field, is necessarily interdisciplinary.

The contributors to this volume seek to address a wide variety of themes and issues, not the least of which is private violence via a temporally and geographically comparative approach. Complicating the simplified notion that private violence is merely "non-state," the contributors contend that expressions of private violence were often facilitated by, and instrumental to, "the commercial, military, and political circuits of imperial power" (p. 4). By emphasizing the global interconnections of private violence, the relationships between force, territory, and authority can be reconsidered.

But the distinction between public and private violence is problematic given that it is historically constructed. Definitions of what was legally acceptable varied depending on historical and geographical context. The volume addresses three related subthemes: the role of global markets in providing the impetus for private violence; the place of law, political authority, and state sovereignty in understanding private violence; and the nature of private violence in determining whether useful comparisons can be made between past and present perpetration.

What makes this volume significant is its interdisciplinary approach, bringing together scholars of history, international relations, geography, and anthropology. Such an approach creates a historically comparative lens through which to view contemporary private violence. By historicizing private violence, the contributors "can give depth and perspective on understanding private violence today" (p. 11). Although private violence is not new, understanding its historical roots can help to recognize the new forms it has taken. In addition, by considering private violence, scholars can better appreciate the modern international system.

The volume is composed of nine essays, organized in no explicit order. The first, by Patricia Owens, delineates the problems of the public/private divide, asserting that violence is made "public" or made "private" and emphasizing the historical construction of the dichotomy. In the second essay, Tarak Barkawi asks whether the territorial monopolies of Weberian design and the public versus private distinction are adequate measurements of state and coercive power. He contends that they are not because they are too Eurocentric and "occlude a range of common practices by which states regularly have constituted force from, and exercised it over, foreign populations" (p. 34). Halvard Leia and Benjamin de Carvalho follow in the third contribution by problematizing the public/private divide in the early formation of the French state by investigating French privateering in Norwegian waters. They argue that "the eighteenth century witnessed a gradual increase in French capacity for control over privateering, but that privateering practices continued to incorporate both private and state elements" (p. 55).

The fourth contribution, by the editors, offers a structural connection between the fate of British piracy and privateering in the "long" eighteenth century (1689-1815) and political-economic logic of European mercantilist empires. They also examine what these experiences of seaborne violence can reveal about contemporary private violence, probing the relationship of public and private. In the fifth piece, Eric Tagliacozzo examines smugglers

and contrabanders in nineteenth-century Southeast Asia as a form of dissent via private violence. Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah consider the role of the state "in generating or 'inviting' private violence" through a study of tribes and warlords in southern Afghanistan from 1980 to 2005 in the sixth essay (p. 133).

Kenneth Morrison's essay on the symbiosis of criminal and state forms the seventh piece in the volume. He utilizes the Yugoslav wars of succession to discuss the role of organized crime as a major obstacle to reforms in states like Croatia and Bosnia. Patrick Cullen, in the eighth submission, uses maritime case studies in the Malaccan Straits to "provide a clear example of the new dynamics and patterns of security governance being organized by legally entrepreneurial private security companies" (p. 192). Lastly, Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams coauthor the final essay, which argues that the globalization of private security illustrates the "shifting structures of global governance and highlights the importance of prying apart the 'state, territory, authority'–triptych" (p. 216).

In the introduction, the editors contend that expressions of private violence have generally been neglected, with only recent increased academic interest, particularly in the field of international relations. However, the essays are largely reimagined syntheses of prominent historical literature on these very issues, including the work of Eric Hobsbawm, Marcus Rediker, Philip Gosse, and Charles Tilly. Noticeably, most of the essays take issue with, and reexamine, the work laid forth by political scientist Janice Thomson in *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extra-territorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (1994). This minor criticism aside, the essays are all invaluable contributions to our ever-changing understanding of the role of empires, peripheries, and public versus private violence in historical context. Each chapter is at once informative and engaging, broadening our comprehension of contemporary violence by historicizing and problematizing issues of force, territory, and authority.

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