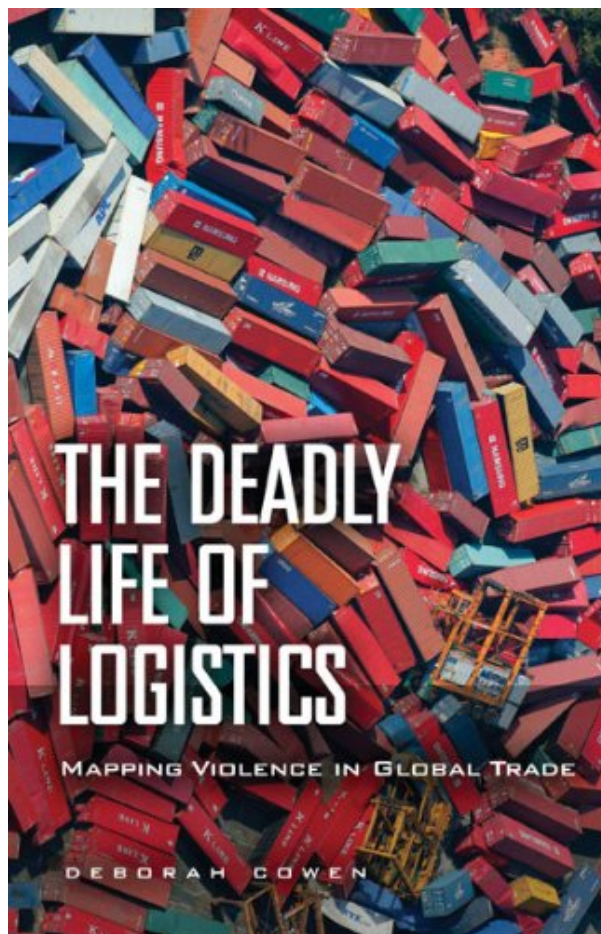
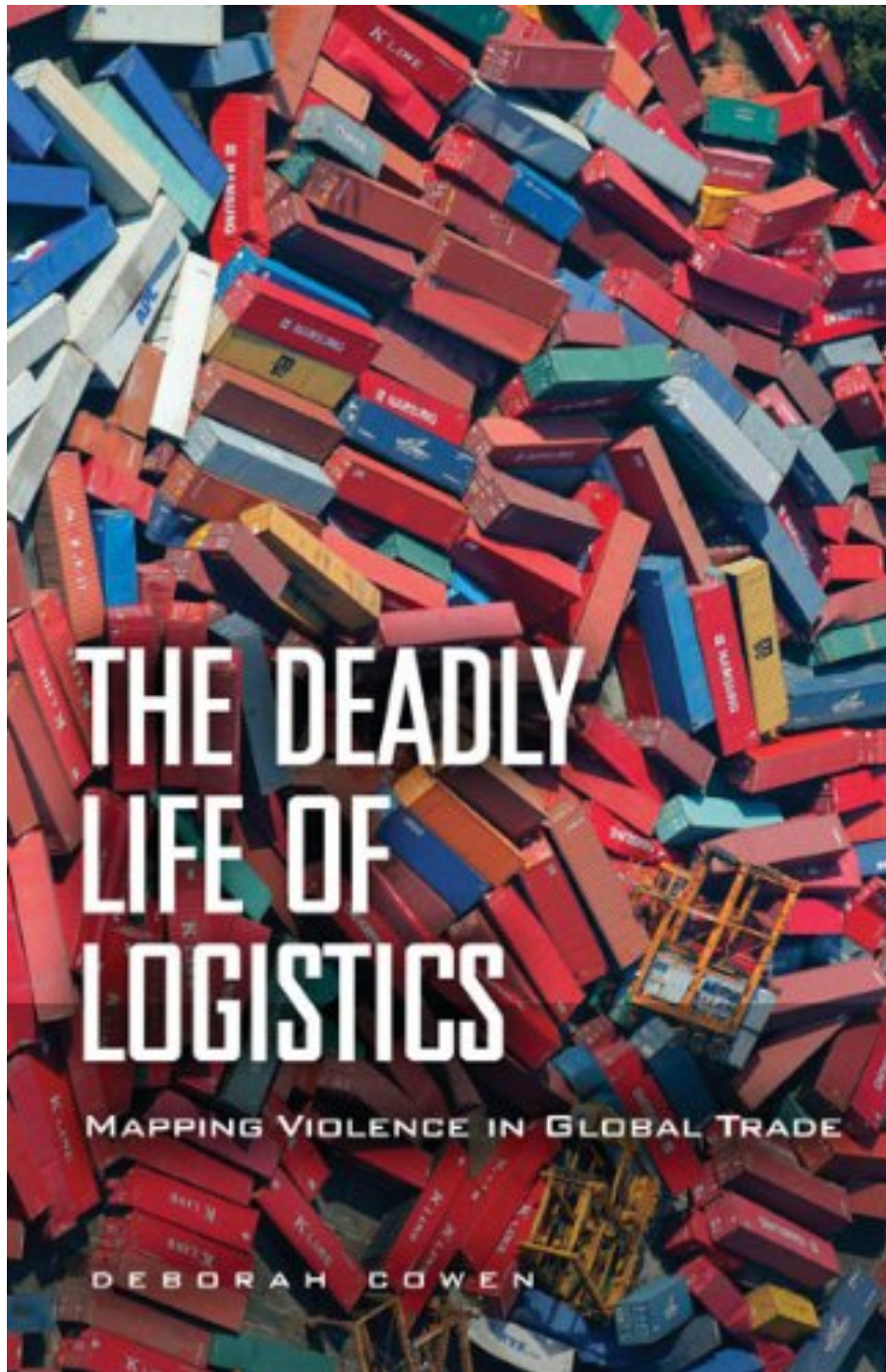


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## Review

"This is an insightful, extremely innovative, and much-needed book. In revealing the histories, genealogies, and geographies of our 'logistical world,' *The Deadly Life of Logistics* opens up crucial issues of contemporary politics that are all too often, as Deborah Cowen says, rendered 'invisible in plain sight' by their very ubiquity and normality. Blending deep genealogical insight, social and political theory, and topical contemporary case studies, the book's fusion is tremendously powerful. It is an immense achievement."  
—Mimi Sheller, Drexel University

## About the Author

Deborah Cowen is associate professor of geography at the University of Toronto. She is the author of *Military Workfare: The Soldier and Social Citizenship in Canada*.

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In a world in which global trade is at risk, where warehouses and airports, shipping lanes and seaports try to guard against the likes of Al Qaeda and Somali pirates, and natural disaster can disrupt the flow of goods, even our “stuff” has a political life. The high stakes of logistics are not surprising, Deborah Cowen reveals, if we understand its genesis in war.

In *The Deadly Life of Logistics*, Cowen traces the art and science of logistics over the last sixty years, from the battlefield to the boardroom and back again. Focusing on choke points such as national borders, zones of piracy, blockades, and cities, she tracks contemporary efforts to keep goods circulating and brings to light the collective violence these efforts produce. She investigates how the old military art of logistics played a critical role in the making of the global economic order—not simply the globalization of production, but the invention of the supply chain and the reorganization of national economies into transnational systems. While reshaping the world of production and distribution, logistics is also actively reconfiguring global maps of security and citizenship, a phenomenon Cowen charts through the rise of supply chain security, with its challenge to long-standing notions of state sovereignty and border management.

Though the object of corporate and governmental logistical efforts is commodity supply, *The Deadly Life of Logistics* demonstrates that they are deeply political—and, considered in the context of the long history of logistics, deeply indebted to the practice of war.

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##### Trading Spaces

By L. King

Cowan presents a passionate and articulate examination of the social impact of the evolving globalized infrastructure used to move physical goods from one end of the planet to the other. She begins by tracing the historic codependency of trade and military requirements. Commerce at a distance has always required security and the military has always needed supply chains, for as Napoleon once noted, "an army travels on its stomach". The same conduits are used for weapons, as for consumer goods, food, aid and people. The first part of the book provides a historic background from Alexander the Great's supply lines to the Baron Haussman's redesign of Paris and the development of the shipping container as a standardized unit of transport, the key benefit mentioned being the reduction of labour costs.

Using maps Cowan illustrates how logistics has recast the world from nations with boundaries into gateways and transport corridors, logistic spaces with economic, political and security interests of their own. The model now being used around the world for this is Dubai Logistics City (DLC), replicated in the Philippines at Gateway Logistics City (GGLC) and Basra Logistics City (Iraq) and the now underdevelopment Tsawwassen Gateway Logistics in British Columbia. Not surprisingly the first three are all replace military bases which were designed with security and self containment in mind. They are also all viewed as important regional economic drivers. The internationally sponsored Transportation Worker Identification Code protocol (TWIC), while designed to ensure that individual posing potential security risks not have access to commercial supply chains, becomes an Orwellian dystopia replete with security zones, biometrics, gating and cameras. The rational is protection from terrorism, theft and sabotage, but the burden of proof is often placed on the employee; the requirements are invasive, an end run around labour laws.

Chapter 4 on Somali piracy was especially interesting. Though pirates became instruments of state policy during the 16th-18th century (Barbary pirates, English and French buccaneers), they were most often viewed as outside the law, and by operating on the high seas, beyond it's reach, leading to a cooperative development of international law between sovereign nations. Somalia, which is widely regarded as a collapsed state unable to police itself or its territory, has a broad 3000 km coastline that has been subject to over fishing by foreign trawlers and a convenient dumping ground for biomedical, electronic and even nuclear waste. For their part, Somali pirates have stylized themselves as the Somali Coast Guard, holding ships hostage and demanding multi-million dollar ransoms. The Gulf of Aden lies at the gateway to the Suez Canal, through which flows 95% of European trade with the far east, a significant choke-point. The cost of insurance alone increased 40 fold between 2007 and 2011, and the policing of the Gulf has resulted in a mix of state and private security costing an estimated 5.5 billion/year. It's a hot mess of unethical dumping, legitimate international interests, criminal piracy and ongoing tragedy.

The oddly titled final chapter "Rough Trade? Sex, Death and the Queer Nature of Circulation" starts well

with a comparison between the National Geographic made for TV documentary series “Great Migrations” and its sponsor UPS. UPS used the production to brand itself with the slogan “We \*heart \*logistics” and Cowan shows how the themes of mobility and resilience in the natural world resonate with the mission of a delivery company, which was the sponsor's motivation. The 2nd half of the chapter, about 12 pages, attempts a secondary argument analogizing Cowan's previous analysis to the historic oppression of the gay community, thus explaining the chapter's title but the intersectionality approach is so far fetched as to seriously detract from the book. This aside, author makes a good case that logistic systems are an epiphenomena of the military-industrial complex and that there is a real need to integrate social justice principles to counterbalance some of the command and control excesses of supply chain economics.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Very detailed

By Oscar Cruz

This book provides a comprehensive account in regards to the evolution of logistics from a military afterthought to a key concern of U.S. national security.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By zazza

it is a dense but important book

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