



# The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade

*Deborah Cowen*

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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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