

BOOK REVIEW

Policing Indigenous Movements Dissent and the Security State, by Crosby, Andrew and Monaghan, Jeffrey. Fernwood Books Ltd, Halifax & Winnipeg, 2018. ISBN 10: 1773630121 / ISBN 13: 9781773630120. Pages: 1-218.

Reviewed by Elena Nogaeva¹

Policing Indigenous Movements: Dissent and the Security State authored by Andrew Crosby and Jeffrey Monaghan is a book that presents a shift from the “war on terror” to the notion of “Aboriginal extremism”.

The facts in the book are supported by numerous declassified materials that enable the authors to demonstrate to the reader the shift from the “war on terror” rhetoric to a carefully crafted discourse that was meant to present the aboriginal population as a new security issue.

The book is intended for scholars who are studying Indigenous groups and movements. Indigenous groups would benefit from this book because it contains vast evidence-based data on how and why some groups were extensively monitored and policed. Groups that advocate for Indigenous rights and freedoms would find it particularly useful since it presents information on the extent to which the rights were refused to Indigenous people and how laws and policies were interpreted and changed for the benefit of the state. The book also benefits those studying Indigenous groups worldwide considering the same tools and strategies could be employed in other countries.

The authors structure the book in a typical way, with an introduction followed by four chapters and a conclusion. The introduction provides a strong overview of how and why the shift from the “war on terror” to the notion of “Aboriginal extremism” occurred. The authors note that their “research deals primarily with the top elements of this hierarchy, beginning with the host of federal departments and agencies that have been fused through the growing network of security, surveillance, and information sharing” (p. 28).

Further, *Policing Indigenous Movements* “provides extensive, first-hand accounts of how the security state has developed a prolific surveillance regime that targets Indigenous Peoples as national security threats” (p. 18). The authors note that they “use first-hand accounts because we refer extensively to the records of police and security agencies to narrate this book” (p. 18). The book is “compiled using thousands of declassified documents from dozens of government departments and hundreds of Access to Information Act (ATIA) requests, we believe this book is one of the most comprehensive accounts of contemporary government surveillance” (p. 18). This introduction instills confidence in the material and allows the reader to understand that declassified information was consistent with the actions taken on the ground and perceived by the Indigenous communities it targeted.

The following four chapters detail separate conflicts between the state and Aboriginal groups. It appears that each chapter explored the issue that stems from Aboriginal resistance towards the exploration of natural resources followed by the loss of Aboriginal rights. The authors diligently use declassified material from RCMP, CBSA, CSIS, DND, PSC, GOC, NRCan, PCO,

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and CSEC contrasted with the first-hand accounts of Indigenous leaders to demonstrate what each community faced.

Chapter one, “Welcome to ABL World!!!” explores how the Algonquins of Barrie Lake were policed and over-surveilled because of their protests to be heard on issues such as culture, language, traditional governance, and most importantly how their land is to be used. The authors as promised presented ample evidence of how the state used police powers and intelligence resources to deter, stop, and over police this Indigenous community.

Chapter two, “Northern Gateway Pipelines: Policing for Extractive Capitalism” explores how the Aboriginal clans of B.C. opposed an energy giant, Enbridge, and how Enbridge used its power to engage the state for its exploration benefits. The authors write “provincial and federal governments are bound by the Canadian constitution and numerous court rulings to consider the implications of contestations over lands unceded by treaty. However, within the broadening domain of the “war on terror”, security state officials can easily evade or ignore any responsibility towards Indigenous communities” (p. 75). Therefore, those that opposed the pipeline were labeled “environmental criminal extremists”. This chapter presents an excellent analysis of how the security stance can be manipulated by corporate greed. Yet, it also demonstrates the resilience of Indigenous groups to withstand the over-policing and pressures from the state.

Chapter three, Idle No More and the “Fusion Centre for native problems” analyzes an Indigenous movement that continuously grew in size, had a substantial digital presence, and was located close to the capital of Canada. “At the center of the movement is the notion of honoring existing treaties and the right to Indigenous self-determination based on an equal nation-to-nation relationship encapsulated in Idle No More’s vision “to honor Indigenous sovereignty, and to protect the land and water”” (p. 100). Because of the location of the protests and the social media campaign, this movement presented an imminent security concern. Idle No More was categorized as a “bacteria that threatened the health of the nation” (p. 110) and to deal with the “issue” effectively the state created “fusion centers for Native problems”. Nonetheless “and despite the efforts of the security state, Idle No More is a movement that lives on” (p. 133).

Chapter four, The Raid at Elsipogtog: Integrated Policing and “Violent Aboriginal Extremists” presents the conflict that arose because of the fear of fracking that would negatively impact the land and water in New Brunswick. The authors note that the state and state powers had learned from the Idle No More movement and were actively policing as well as monitoring social media to prevent another Idle No More situation. This chapter as others presents several experts from declassified material that label Aboriginal protests as “violent Aboriginal extremists” and states that they “pose a realistic criminal threat to Canada’s petroleum industry” (p. 174).

Through the declassified documents, the authors demonstrate that the law enforcement agencies and the government were assigning labels to the Aboriginal movements that enabled them to justify their approach as well as legitimize their actions. The authors write “Indigenous communities’ and Movements’ resistance efforts are increasingly constructed as national security threats and framed under the rubric of “domestic extremism” within the “war on terror” (page 226). However, as the book demonstrates, Indigenous groups in the pursuit of their land rights, clean water and equal say on what happens to their land have been rather successful “in not only challenging federal and provincial claims to Indigenous land and disrupting the post-colonial imaginary” (p. 225).

The authors note that “a recurrent theme through this book, “traditional concerns” or “sovereignty concerns” is framed by the security state as a threat to extractive capitalism that requires surveillance and potential repression” (p. 234), coupled with “Canadian interests” in becoming an energy superpower clashed, leading to over policing, over-surveilling and over criminalizing Indigenous movements.

Presented cases and collection of declassified documents support the intent of the book to demonstrate the shift from the “war on terror” to the notion of “aboriginal extremism”. The authors are committed to presenting to the reader through declassified information how Indigenous communities and movements that opposed the state and the state’s interests were labeled “domestic extremists” within the “war on terror” context.

The authors effectively presented the state's classified discourse on Indigenous movements, successfully delivering this critical information to the reader with clarity and depth. The analysis of movements was sufficiently outlined by giving the reader ample information on the movement, place of origin, and its goals for the reader to connect and understand all nuances of the movement and the state’s response. The authors also discussed how Indigenous culture is structured and the importance and value that Elders bring to the communities.

The authors provide evidence from interviews with Elders and community leaders. However, the limited availability of oral evidence, compared to the overwhelming references to classified excerpts, is less effective in connecting the reader to the lived experience of the movement. Such a connection could be deepened by providing a concluding statement from Elders or leaders of the movement reflecting on the declassified documents. Connecting the declassified material to the perspectives of community members about the impacts of over-policing could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these security practices affect those on the ground, making the analysis more grounded in the lived realities of the people most affected.

The authors could consider presenting further evidence regarding incarceration rates, discussing whether they have increased or remained the same during the movements. Informed readers for whom this book is intended will likely be familiar with the problem of over-incarceration; however, concrete numbers would provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Nevertheless, this book offers valuable information regarding the Canadian state’s response to Indigenous movements, exposing the discourse employed to engage security and law enforcement agencies. The authors clearly demonstrate the shift in discursive strategy from the 'war on terror' to the 'notion of Aboriginal extremism' by providing the public with numerous declassified materials.

Policing Indigenous Movements offers readers a deep understanding of how police and security agencies' practices were shaped by the state's agenda and the discourse surrounding it. By revealing previously unpublished, declassified information, it makes a significant and unique contribution to the literature, shedding light on how the state interpreted and responded to Indigenous rights to protest. It makes an important contribution to our knowledge about what drives the state to employ targeted language towards movements that threaten the state’s bottom line and aspirations. This book could also help promote further declassification and transparency regarding how Indigenous movements are addressed.