

multilateral, multiorganizational, and total—an unrestricted, brutal, and more complex form of organized and hypercompetitive political violence.

The major policy suggestions advocated to contend with the new types of conflict (wars) focus on five fundamental educational and organizational imperatives: a) our civilian and military leaders need to learn about subversion and insurgency techniques and understand strategic and political-psychological implications of operational and tactical actions; b) civilian and military personnel must benefit from enhanced and revitalized interagency cooperation, cultural awareness and language training, and combined (multinational) exercises to be effective; c) leaders need to understand that increased intelligence capabilities are required for small internal wars; d) our peace enforcers must also be warfighters to contend with more sophisticated nonstate political actor conventional and unconventional weaponry; and e) governmental restructuring is necessary to achieve an effective unity of effort drawing upon civilian and military instruments of national power and obtain an agreed upon political end state in our foreign conflicts.

Positive aspects of the book—besides the main arguments and important US defense policy suggestions contained within it—include the chapter focuses that highlight some very informative case studies. The reviewer found the Sendero Luminoso, Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), and Russian Nashi essays of great interest due to a general lack of exposure to those topical areas. The gaining of insights and context for these groups was in itself added value. A negative aspect of the work, if that is even a fair characterization, is that it seeks to peer into the “fog of still emerging conflict.” As a result, the reader is left at times with both a hazy vision of emergent forms of warfare and of the opposing forces the United States may be facing.

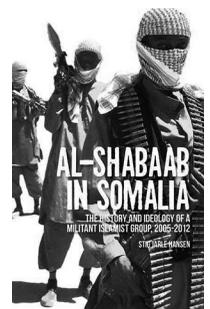
In summation, the work—and its two predecessor volumes—is of great relevance and value to senior members of the US defense community. While some of the discussions and analysis in the work may not be clear and crisp, even approaching the philosophical, Manwaring offers key mosaic pieces to help us understand the complex puzzle—which merges war, insurgency, revolution, terrorism, criminality, cyberconflict, and a host of other elements—into that which is twenty-first century conflict.

Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group 2005-2012

By Stig Jarle Hansen

Reviewed by Richard J. Norton, Professor of National Security Affairs at the US Naval War College

As the Kenyan government is still trying to piece together what actually happened during al-Shabaab’s 21 September 2013 attack on Nairobi’s Westgate shopping mall, this is a most timely book. Al-Shabaab, at least for a time, was the most favored and successful of al Qaeda’s so-called affiliates, racking up impressive victories and controlling large areas of the Somali countryside, including the capital Mogadishu. This



Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012

208 pages

\$31.80

period was followed by one of significant setbacks leading some analysts to predict the incipient demise of the organization. Clearly, these predictions were premature.

Scholar and author Stig Hansen has put together a remarkably detailed account of al-Shabaab's history. The book is filled with densely packed accounts of numerous Somali clans and their associated leaders and activities. While this level of detail may seem daunting to some, the book is still of great value to the lay reader. It is of greater utility to those analysts and practitioners who need or want to know about recent Somali history, or the rise of a surprisingly effective terrorist organization that may serve as a model for other such groups in the future.

Hansen comes from that small breed of what might be termed "adventure scholars"—although he himself might disagree with being identified as such. He does not rely on secondary source material but has travelled widely through Somalia for years and is personally familiar with many of the members and leaders of the movement. As a result, his description of events carries a powerful sense of legitimacy. While it is possible to debate what Hansen's observations mean, there is no doubting their authenticity.

There are surprises in this book. For example, it is easy to forget al-Shabaab's very modest beginnings. For example, in 2005, the movement could boast only 33 members. Within five years, they were nearly running southern Somalia. Hansen shows the reader how this happened. In the telling there are lessons and significant points to consider for those who wish to understand, and to potentially oppose, such groups.

The degree to which al-Shabaab used international events and a militant Islamic ideology was not insignificant. As Hansen chronicles, this broader dimension helped the movement's leaders align with disparate Somali clans and draw in significant numbers of foreign fighters and financing from not only Africa but also Asia, Europe, and even the United States. At the same time, al-Shabaab had to be relevant on the local clan level, which required them to be responsive to Somali issues that had little or nothing to do with a globalist ideology. Indeed, as al-Shabaab gained support among Somali clans, starting with some who were being sore-pressed by larger, more powerful groups, its leaders found themselves in a position similar to that of some politicians who, having come to power on glowing promises, now had to deliver.

This meant al-Shabaab was required to govern. It had to provide areas of stability where none had previously existed, ruling as neither an exploitative warlord nor a corrupt Somali government—neither of which Hansen argues provided real human security for Somalis in their areas of control. This was never an easy task and was often compounded by such adverse factors as drought and internal clan politics.

This is not to imply that the leaders of al-Shabaab were some romantic Robin Hood-like figures. They raised money through taxes and provided a form of justice through strict Sharia courts. They recruited heavily from local clans and established a powerful secret police, the Amniyat. The group relied on assassinations, roadside bombs, and suicide attacks in their rise to power. Interestingly, the majority of the suicide attacks were said to have been carried out by non-Somali members of the group.

At the same time, Hansen also makes it clear that al-Shabaab's link to al Qaeda was always more than just lip service. Although not centrally directed by al Qaeda, the relationship is important to both organizations. While al-Shabaab must follow a "Somalia-first" policy of necessity, its globally oriented ideology remains aligned with the larger group. One point where the local and global are able to be conjoined by al-Shabaab is the ability to blame any adversity on the United States or African actors identified as US proxies.

Al-Shabaab has also displayed a talent for creating a powerful propaganda arm and not above dealing with criminal elements—most notably Somali pirates—when it was beneficial to do so. In the latter case, al-Shabaab did not go to sea; it simply demanded a "piece of the action" from those who did.

Hansen's account also reminds the reader that violent extremist groups embrace terror and irregular warfare as tactics of choice because they are not capable of engaging their opponents in a more conventional fashion. Although al-Shabaab was able to hold its own against the forces of the Transitional Federal Government, it was unable to do so against Ethiopian, Kenyan, Ugandan, and African Union military troops. The success of these forces, whether acting independently or as allies, speaks favorably of their military skill and capability.

Al-Shabaab's subsequent defeat cost them territory, created dissension among the group's leadership, and led to a loss of credibility and defection by clans that were previously loyal. While not destroying al-Shabaab, the military victories obtained by other African forces serve as a reminder that violent extremist groups suffer much from loss of reputation and that bombing shopping malls and assassinating opposition leaders is what they do when they cannot hold their own against conventional forces. This lesson should not be lost on those who hope to defeat such organizations.

But Hansen also reminds us that al-Shabaab is resilient. The Amniyat is still a force with which to be reckoned and a large amount of Somali territory is still under al-Shabaab control. The organization can obviously still mount cross-border actions and it is unlikely that its leadership will not seek to regain their former positions of power.

It would have been interesting if Hansen had discussed al-Shabaab's military operations in greater detail as to tactics, training, command and control, and so on. This is not to imply that he ignores these areas, just that readers with a particular interest in such things may be left wanting more.

One could also wish Hansen had expanded this work to include more analysis to rest alongside his powerful historical account. Given his long and deep exposure to the group, it would be valuable to know what he thinks the chances of integrating al-Shabaab into a legitimate Somali government and what the al-Shabaab story means to Africa and the world.

That said, until the distant and unlikely day when something better comes along, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia* is likely to be the definitive book on the subject.