

Norman: University of
Oklahoma Press, 2012
224 pages
\$45.00

The Complexity of Modern Asymmetric Warfare

by Max G. Manwaring

Reviewed by Robert J. Bunker, Distinguished Visiting Professor and Minerva Chair at the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College

The Complexity of Modern Asymmetric Warfare is the final volume in the Manwaring twenty-first century conflict trilogy along with *Insurgency, Terrorism, and Crime: Shadows from the Past and Portents for the Future* (2008) and *Gangs, Pseudo-Militaries, and Other Modern Mercenaries: New Dynamics in Uncomfortable Wars* (2010) also by University of Oklahoma Press. The author—Max Manwaring, a Professor of Military Strategy at the Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College—is a prolific and veteran scholar with a wealth of expertise (including extensive field research) in Latin America along with an in-depth knowledge of numerous forms of insurgent and post-modern variations of warfare, which leverage psychological, temporal, and other unconventional capabilities.

The work is composed of a foreword (by John T. Fishel), preface and acknowledgements, and an introduction; the main section of seven chapters written by Manwaring; followed by an afterword (by Edwin G. Corr) and concluding sections composed of notes, a bibliography, as well as an index. Both former US Ambassador Corr and Professor Fishel (emeritus) are long-time Manwaring associates who have written informative and strategically valuable essays that highlight the work's focus on irregular asymmetric revolutionary conflicts. The book's seven chapters focus on historical conflicts in Algeria and El Salvador (Chapter 1); Sendero Luminoso in Peru (Chapter 2); vignettes of al Qaeda (in Spain); Cuban popular militias, gangs and organized crime in Haiti, and the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) in Brazil (Chapter 3); the Russian politicized youth group Nashi (Chapter 4); transnational organized crime, gangs, and corrupted elites in Guatemala (Chapter 5); cyber and biological warfare (Chapter 6); and unconventional conflict futures (Chapter 7). Leading into the conclusion, each of the previous six provide key points and lessons as chapter summations.

As a colleague of Manwaring, I've always been amazed at his ability to draw upon unique and esoteric resources in his writings, including personal author interviews. The book's references are solid with an emphasis on scholarly works from the last ten years. The author not only has kept up with the literature in this area but also is responsible for shaping it and being one of its more creative contributors. The book's main arguments and "lessons learned" focus on the rise of irregular asymmetric revolutionary conflicts waged by both state and nonstate actors alike. These conflicts cause us to redefine our long-standing concepts of warfare. What we are seeing is the blurring of crime, warfare, gang activity, and the like. These are new actors—both state and non-state groups—who may wage war and there is a new center of gravity based on information/media developing along with a new definition of victory. Furthermore, our interpretations of power and the purpose and motives of war are changing. The end result—I agree with the author—is that conventional warfare is by comparison much easier to engage in. What we are now facing is conflict that is multidimensional,

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.

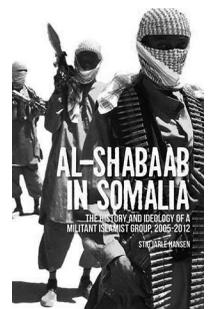
In summation, the work—and its two predecessor volumes—is of great relevance and value to senior members of the US defense community. While some of the discussions and analysis in the work may not be clear and crisp, even approaching the philosophical, Manwaring offers key mosaic pieces to help us understand 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