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Review of Richard H. Shultz, Jr. and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2006. Pp. 316. ISBN 978-0-231-12982-4.

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Warriors, not soldiers, dominate contemporary battles. Insurgents, terrorists, and militias are once again concerns for the organs of state security. As seen in the chaos of the ongoing conflict in Iraq, instability in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and terrorist attacks worldwide, irregular warfare is now the norm. In the aftermath of the Cold War, governments and their military, police, and intelligence officers must develop new skills in order to combat non-state soldiers. Richard H. Shultz, Jr., director of the International Security Studies Program at Tufts University's Fletcher School and Andrea J. Dew, a research associate at the same institution, have teamed up to examine the role of and response to the tribes, clans, and ethnic groups that comprise the non-state warriors of contemporary combat.

Over the past decade, I have spent much time addressing the role of non-state actors in internal and transnational conflicts. While developing the Los Angeles Terrorism Early Warning Group, supervising and managing analytical teams to assess both criminal and terrorist threats, I have found that research and resources on contemporary adversaries in current and emerging conflicts are essential to avoid intelligence failure. Yet, intelligence failure is more the rule than the exception when traditional forces face irregular forces—guerrillas or gangs. This is due, in part, to the differences between soldiers and warriors. As T. E. Lawrence, veteran of the Arab Revolt, noted, “Armies were like plants, immobile as a whole, firm-rooted, nourished through long stems to the head. We [guerrillas] might be a vapour, blowing where we listed.”¹

Shultz and Dew attempt to explain the guerrilla vapor to future conflict analysts. In the process, they have assembled an important review of the current state of irregular conflict. Their text, which effectively assesses the factors that allow irregular forces to succeed against regular forces is a valuable contribution to the literature on both terrorism and insurgency. The authors cover the ground in eight chapters. The first, “After the Cold War,” sets the stage by providing a cogent overview of the post-Cold War security environment and the resulting changes in warfare. The next two chapters “Assessing Enemies” and “Tribes and Clans” are the most theoretically important. The following four chapters are detailed case studies of the recent conflicts in Somalia, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Iraq; these review the history, politics, and conduct of asymmetric warfare within a tribal and clan context. A

¹ T. E. Lawrence, “The Evolution of a Revolt,” *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* (Oct 1920), rpt. at Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Combined Arms Research Library <<http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/csi/Lawrence/lawrence.asp>>

concluding chapter is entitled “When Soldiers Fight Warriors: Lessons Learned for Policymakers, Military Planners, and Intelligence Analysts.”

Shultz and Dew argue that a new approach is needed to understand non-state armed groups, and provide the beginnings of just such an approach. Their most significant contribution is their analytical framework for understanding the tribes, clans, and families that fight non-state wars. (I would argue that this template is also useful in understanding gangs.) While the authors claim only to offer a structure for “military capability analysis of internal warfare,” I believe that structure may also be applied to the larger sphere of transnational terrorism and global insurgency practiced by the Salafist, Jihadi movement. Their schema comprises six topics: 1) Concept of Warfare, 2) Organization and Command and Control, 3) Area of Operations, 4) Types and Targets of Operations, 5) Constraints and Limitations (on violence and use of force), and 6) Role of Outside Actors.

Their investigation shows that state structure and the political organizing forms of the nation-state have little to do with the ethos and loyalties of irregular combatants. The concept of warfare of the “traditional” warriors studied here is shaped by tribal, clan, sub-clan, family, and village connections. All of the factions studied utilized small, fluid, and agile self-organizing elements to conduct operations. They fought and organized along devolved lines, linking with other proximate groups to fight “outsiders.” Their area of operations (AO) varied but emphasized places where they could dominate the operational tempo and shape the battle rhythm by their innate understanding of local terrain—both geographic and human.

Urban areas increasingly become viable sites for battle since the conventional army has difficulty negotiating its urban canyons and dense, unfamiliar space. Urban fighting, with its accompanying brutality, came to dominate the conflicts in Somalia, Chechnya, and Iraq. Similarly, mountainous rural terrain that challenged conventional forces was also exploited. In the case of Chechnya and Iraq, extending the reach of the tribal warriors through terrorist attacks elsewhere extended the scope of operational space, challenging state forces. Chechen rebels conducted attacks in Moscow, including attacks on transit systems and apartment houses, and threatened to use radiological dispersal devices—dirty bombs—in Russia. The 7/7 attacks against London’s Underground and buses could be viewed (internally at least) as an extension of the jihadist defense against Western invaders in Iraq.

Raids and their modern variations were important operational types for the irregular warriors in all of the conflicts reported. In every case, the normal constraints on the use of violence were eroded since the guerrillas believed they were facing existential threats posed by groups outside their traditional social structure. Barbarization, targeting women and non-combatants, beheadings, suicide operations, and other terrorist tactics (such as the Beslan School takeover in the Chechen conflict) became acceptable. Suicide operations, such as the attacks conducted by the Chechen “Black Widows” and the epidemic of suicide bombings in the Iraqi Insurgency are examples of the operational tactics, techniques, and procedures implemented by these non-state soldiers. While the authors mention these as an important factor, fuller treatment of suicide operations by tribal fighters would have been a welcome addition to their text.

Outside actors played a role in all of the case studies. Bloody Mogadishu, Grozny, Afghanistan, and post-Saddam Iraq all attracted foreign fighters—Mujahideen. These links to the global jihadi movement and its vanguard al-Qaeda were found in varying degrees, but certainly shape perception of the conflicts. Similarly, Islam played a role in shaping the concept of war for the guerrillas in all of the cases. This role is well described in each of the conflicts studies, but additional inquiry is required to accurately gauge its full impact and potentials in emerging conflicts. The distinction between “tribal” defense and jihad also deserves further exploration. This would be especially valuable in the sections on Afghanistan and Iraq, as the Afghan tribes are now engaged in a new set of conflicts against U.S. forces that in many ways mirrors the operational settings faced by the Soviets, and Iraq is still embroiled in insurgency (or what increasingly looks like multiple insurgencies).

In several places the authors mention the links between irregular, guerrilla warfare and criminal groups. The book would have benefited from additional discussion in this area. Gangs, organized crime, and transnational criminal networks contribute to contemporary conflict. In some cases insurgencies look like criminal insurgencies. Yet, a detailed evaluation of this facet of tribal conflict is lacking here. Perhaps the authors or other scholars building on their work, will explore this neglected dimension of contemporary irregular warfare. Such an exploration would be especially valuable in relation to Iraq. While the authors do a good job of describing the historical situation and the traditional Shia-Sunni divide, their book would have benefited from a deeper examination of the complex Iraqi situation. They accurately describe the early understanding of the current war by cataloging the range of participants: former regime elements, Sunni Arabs, Rejectionists, Financial Facilitators, Organized Crime, Sadr/Shiite Extremists, Sunni Iraqi Islamists, and Foreign Islamists. Unfortunately, detailed discussion of the interaction, cooperation, and competition among these groups is lacking. The case study adequately describes the impact of these “tribal” forces against U.S. and Coalition forces, but does not completely account for the multiple intra-Iraqi conflicts that punctuate the current situation.

Decentralized leadership, command, and control are attributes of all the irregular forces discussed. This traditional approach resulted in flexibility, adaptability, and the ability of small units with local knowledge of terrain and “geosocial” conditions to brutally engage unfamiliar adversaries. It would be valuable to build upon this finding and explore the impact of transnational linkages among networked adversaries and the use of information systems and Internet connectivity in current and future “tribal” wars. What happens when traditional values and warfighting structures meet real time, planet-wide communications?

In all of the case studies, it becomes abundantly clear that traditional warfare is relevant to today’s struggles. Indeed, traditional warrior codes of honor, tribal identification, the centrality of conflict in tribal life, clan warfare, retribution, reprisals, blood feuds, warlords, and informal martial leadership are central to all these conflicts. For example, in Iraq, Saddam devolved social control to tribal militias to maintain his grasp on Iraq in the face of conflict with Iran. Consequently, those militias dominated political competition within his Ministry of Interior, a situation that sadly reverberates today as Iraq sorts out its new political landscape.

Shultz and Dew's analysis of "hotbeds of instability" sheds much needed light on asymmetric conflict and "Fourth Generation Warfare." They clarify just how modern non-state warriors fight, recruit, find support, craft strategy, and apply operational art. Historical, cultural, anthropological, and social factors that favor such methods of warfare are described to illustrate the functioning of non-state private armies. The authors ably document the need to understand these factors to avoid military misfortune.

Unfortunately the conventional forces that faced the "tribal" fighters in these case studies failed to assess their adversaries before engaging them on their home turf. It is to be hoped that future intelligence officials, policymakers, and military and security operators will consider and build upon this analytical framework before embarking upon new wars of conquest or containment. I, for one, will recommend this text to the intelligence analysts and warfighters I work with to improve the chances of operational success against the tribal fighters we will undoubtedly continue to encounter in the future.