

# BOOK REVIEW

Scott Nicholas Romaniuk and Stewart Tristan Webb (Eds.)

**Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Modern War**

Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2015, ISBN: 9781482247657, 288p.

Romaniuk and Webb's edited collection on *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Modern War* makes a valuable contribution to the study of those phenomena for anyone who already has an adequate theoretical grounding in that field. However, it might not be suggested to the newcomers to the topic would benefit from beginning their studies with works such as Bruce Hoffman's *Inside Terrorism* (2006, 2nd Ed.) which would equip them with an understanding of its fundamentals. This detailed study, which is highly specific in its treatment of the concept of insurgency, is aimed at the specialist reader. The book would benefit more the ones who start the book with an adequate theoretical background. In this manner Bruce Hoffman's *Inside Terrorism* (2006 2nd Edition) would provide the fundamentals to the readers in terms of being able to read a study on insurgency with such detail. The aim of Romaniuk and Webb's edited collection is to elaborate on the complexity of the term "insurgency" and to try to shed light upon the issue of how insurgencies are formed and prolonged. Essays in the collection assess the full spectrum of insurgency tactics and strategies and discuss specific insurgent groups from every part of the world except the Americas. The editors set out to provide an insight into insurgencies worldwide, and the book illustrates very capably the fact that insurgencies have roots in deep historical and unresolved struggles. By looking beyond the major counterinsurgency (COIN) actors to explore the aims, beliefs and motivations that shape COIN's formation, recruitment, leadership, planning, and execution, it also confirms the need for alternative approaches to counterinsurgency to be developed.

The first two chapters of the book, by Olivier Lewis and Shane Drennan, are some of the most intriguing ones and establish the theoretical debate behind the concepts of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. The remainder of the book hinges on these debates, and unless the reader is able to keep pace with the first two chapters, this collection is unlikely to be beneficial to them. In the third chapter, Daniela Irrera links crime, terror, and insurgency and examines whether they pose a threat to international security; she suggests that multilateralism provides the most suitable lens for analyzing this phenomenon. In the fourth chapter, Roger P. Warren shares findings from his research into the literature that discusses foreign fighters. Warren uses Social Movement Theory to powerful effect, carefully distinguishing between the contexts in which those fighters operate and their character as a cohort. Warren's chapter offers readers an impressive body of data as well as significant theoretical insights and should be read by anyone interested in understanding the motivations of *mujahedeen* who wage war against States on foreign soil. Warren concludes his chapter by emphasizing the fact that the solution lies under a Muslim-led campaign. Michael F. Morris bases the fifth chapter on the concept of social antimovement to analyse Al-Qaeda as a global threat, and the sixth chapter by Colin Maclachlan emphasizes the threat that international terrorism poses to critical infrastructure throughout Europe. In the last chapter before the direct case studies by Oren Magen provides a detailed understanding of



the domestic-political costs of deterring violence conducted by non-State organizations. The schematic visuals used in this chapter, by Magen, are exceptional.

The second part of the book focuses on more specific case studies about Indonesia, Mali, Caucasus, India, Afghanistan, China, Burma, the United Nations, and the Balkans. This section provides a useful source of information about specific insurgent and terrorist groups in various areas of the world. For example, the chapter on Afghanistan by Romaniuk and Webb, focuses on the Haqqani Network, while giving readers opportunities to gain substantial insights into the terrorism issue in Afghanistan. Marinko Bobic's use of Moral Hazard Theory in the analysis of insurgency movements in the Balkans is remarkable and it provides this collection of insightful essays with a positive and complex ending.

Romaniuk and Webb have brought together 17 chapters which cover a range of issues and contexts, and their book is prone to the problems which affect any attempt to create a comprehensive context out of diverse studies, some of which are theoretical and others of which are context-specific. The complex and multi-dimensional analysis method they employ makes a valuable contribution to the field of security studies; their up-to-date examinations provide insights that help us to understand the original character of insurgents and terrorists and encourage us to look beyond conventional COIN actors. Still, there are a number of minor mistakes that might have been corrected, and the editors could have done more to reduce the quality differences between the chapters presented in this volume. In the second part of the study, each chapter offers its own context, methodological choices, and type of analysis and this makes it difficult for the reader to draw any general conclusions that encompass all of the insights offered by individual authors. Meanwhile, the last three chapters of the book include some repetition of ideas about insurgency and terrorism debates and definitions of terms that are already well-established.

Romaniuk and Webb's book proves to be a highly relevant study of the key questions it sets out to consider in relation to insurgency and counterinsurgency. However, it would be beneficial to compensate the absence of discussion about insurgent and terrorist activities in South and Central America, which have played a pivotal role in state-building and consolidation processes related to insurgency. In order for the book to offer a complete analysis of the broad spectrum of insurgent tactics, it might have been useful to include the discussions of motivations, contexts and other factors relating to the cases of FARC and the ELN in Colombia, for example. Nevertheless, the book is quite modern, both in terms of the resources it utilizes and some of the newer concepts, such as terrorism, that it explores. For readers who want to build on a general understanding of international relations theories, state-building concepts, Social Movement Theory, insurgency, and terrorism, this book provides a very detailed analysis of significant cases, and the inclusion of case studies from Asia is welcome, as it is often neglected in more Eurocentric studies.

The book is satisfactorily organized and differences in methodology, perspectives, and typologies are to be expected in an edited volume. The adoption of a more comprehensive methodological unity in future research would provide a platform for analysing insurgent and terrorist groups in different parts of the world that fall into similar categories. Romaniuk and Webb's study represents a strong contribution to debates around insurgency and counterinsurgency and builds on Social Movement Theory and the terrorism-insurgency debate in constructive ways that create avenues for future research on these topics.

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