

Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat

***Richard H. Shultz Jr. and Andrea J. Dew
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A provocative account and analysis of twenty-first century warfare and the failures to understand the changing face of combat.

Beginning in the 1990s, conventional militaries and their political leaders confronted a new type of warfare, one they were not prepared for or expecting. Hopes for a stable, peaceful, post-Cold War world were dashed and replaced by the brutal realities of combat in Iraq, Somalia, Chechnya, and Afghanistan. Terrorists, clans, and tribal groups, with their own military traditions, became the new foes of conventional state-based forces. Richard H. Shultz Jr. and Andrea J. Dew explain the resurgence and successes of traditional warriors in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. They show that by underestimating the threat of non-state armed groups and failing to understand their cultural beliefs or adapt to their way of fighting, conventional forces have suffered and will continue to suffer military and political defeat.

From Mogadishu and the Sunni triangle to Grozny and the mountains of Afghanistan, the authors describe and analyze the tactics and strategies of non-state armed groups. They explain how decentralized organizational structures, asymmetrical warfare, and an intimate knowledge of the terrain have aided these groups in fighting against larger, technologically superior conventional forces. The authors also consider the historical, cultural, and anthropological factors that shape the motivations, mores, and tactics of traditional warriors.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the threat that insurgents, terrorists, and militias pose is both growing and changing in nature. Friendly states and outside organizations like al-Qaeda serve as powerful allies to these groups, many of whom are showing an increasing willingness to kill civilians, use weapons of mass destruction, and expand their areas of operation. By developing a richer understanding of the history, culture, and military strategy of their enemies, states will be better able to respond to these new threats and prevent future bloodshed and political chaos.

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