AMATEUR SOLDIERS, GLOBAL WARS

Insurgency and Modern Conflict

Michael C. Fowler

Greenwood
PUBLISHING GROUP

Amateur Soldiers, Global Wars

PRAEGER SECURITY INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Board Cochairs

Loch Johnson, Regents Professor of Public and International Affairs, School of Public and International Affairs, University of Georgia (U.S.A.)

Paul Wilkinson, Professor of International Relations and Chairman of the Advisory Board, Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, University of St. Andrews (U.K.)

Members

Vice Admiral Arthur K. Cebrowski, USN (Ret.), former Director of Force Transformation, Office of the Secretary of Defense (U.S.A.)

Eliot A. Cohen, Robert E. Osgood Professor of Strategic Studies and Director, Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University (U.S.A.)

Anthony H. Cordesman, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy, Center for Strategic and International Studies (U.S.A.)

Thérèse Delpech, Senior Research Fellow, CERI (Atomic Energy Commission), Paris (France)

Sir Michael Howard, former Professor of History of War, Oxford University, and Professor of Military and Naval History, Yale University (U.K.)

Lieutenant General Claudia J. Kennedy, USA (Ret.), former Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Headquarters, Department of the Army (U.S.A.)

Paul M. Kennedy, J. Richardson Dilworth Professor of History and Director, International Security Studies, Yale University (U.S.A.)

Robert J. O'Neill, former Chichele Professor of the History of War, All Souls College, Oxford University (Australia)

Jusuf Wanandi, co-founder and member, Board of Trustees, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Indonesia)

Fareed Zakaria, Editor, Newsweek International (U.S.A.)

Amateur Soldiers, Global Wars

Insurgency and Modern Conflict

MICHAEL C. FOWLER

PRAEGER SECURITY INTERNATIONAL
Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fowler, Michael C., 1965–
Amateur soldiers, global wars : insurgency and modern conflict / Michael C. Fowler.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-275-98136-3 (alk. paper)
1. Counterinsurgency. 2. Soldiers. 3. Terrorists. 4. War. 5. Security, International. 6. Insurgency. I. Title.
U241.F69 2005
355.02'18—dc22 2005017475

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Copyright © 2005 by Michael C. Fowler

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, by any process or technique, without the express written consent of the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2005017475
ISBN: 0-275-98136-3

First published in 2005

Praeger Security International, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.praeger.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48-1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In Loving Memory of
Mary Janaros
1919–2004

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

	Preface	ix
	Acknowledgments	xiii
Chapter 1.	The Case for Global Insurgency	1
	What Is Happening?	4
	Why Insurgency?	8
	Three Factors for Success	14
	The Importance of Context	18
	The Path Ahead	23
Chapter 2.	Leadership and Mobilization	27
	Issues and Their Characteristics	35
	Organization	38
	Leadership	41
	Activation	43
	Conclusion	46
Chapter 3.	Global Insurgency Warfare	49
	Dispersal and Eclecticism	50
	Defining the Adversary	55
	Operations	57

New Battlefields 62
Warfare Redefined 66

Chapter 4. Intelligence 69
Direction and Planning 75
Collection 76
Analysis and Production 87
Dissemination 88
Sabotage 89
Organized Crime 91

Chapter 5. Funding, Procurement, and Training 93
Funding 96
Procurement 103
Training 108
Conclusion 113

Chapter 6. A Theory of Global Insurgency 115
Understanding Global Insurgency 115
Frequently Asked Questions 119
Implications 137

Chapter 7. Al Qaeda and HMS *Dreadnought* 141
Al Qaeda Tested 145
Unplanned Political Agendas 148
A New Path for Warfare 151
What Can We Do? 155

Notes 161
Works Cited 171
Works Consulted 177
Index 179

Preface

Amateur Soldiers, Global Wars came about by an interesting route. I originally only wanted to write a paper on trends in modern conflict. I investigated intelligence, urban warfare, what wars were being fought, by whom. I found something I didn't expect, namely that these things were all being done by non-state "amateur soldiers" all over the world and not by national armed forces. It was particularly interesting in light of how much was being written about the future of warfare in its conventional form at the time. As someone who had long been interested in warfare and how it changes, this finding intrigued me. The proposed futures didn't resemble what I was seeing and reading about. These "amateur soldiers" were pulling warfare and politics in a different direction from what many experts proposed. Insurgents were turning the paradigm of modern warfare from conventional warfare to global insurgency. They were turning world politics from issues between nations to issues transcending them. This thread ran through a number of topics all of which I present in this book.

Global insurgency poses an interesting problem. The big question is can global insurgents like Al Qaeda win a war? If they can it implies that we must reorient politics and strategy to meet transnational issues as well as nations. It means we must change how we judge effectiveness in the conduct of war. If we cannot or do not find the answers to this question we cannot know if we are orienting our security correctly. We cannot know if we are hurting or helping ourselves.

As I researched and wrote, I kept a single question in mind: "How is it possible to lose many, even most battles and win a war?" Anyone

looking at military history can see that it has happened but it can be difficult to understand how. An implication of this question is that the end result of force may perhaps be less important than the fact of its use. War is the servant of politics. Perhaps force must be connected directly to the political goal to be most useful in a certain context. Conversely, fighting and winning a number of battles may not be useful if the battles don't connect to the political goal. This idea is part of what makes insurgency potent and conventional war less so today. It also makes war accessible to "amateurs." It allows them to constantly keep pressure on their enemies. It allows them to survive long enough to put out their message and advance their agenda.

Some would say that insurgency even on a global level is not really war, not like World War II or the Gulf War. But if these "amateurs" can use force to achieve their political goals at a cost to their opponents, how is that not war? If war is the use of force to achieve political goals then insurgents like Al Qaeda are at war. If they are, one could say that environmental insurgents like the Earth Liberation Front are too. The same could go for other groups we have not seen yet. How is it possible to lose battles and win wars? The answer is out there, but it is ill defined. Every war is different and the way force best serves politics is a function of the politics more than the form force takes. By looking at these "amateur soldiers" and investigating the possibility of their fighting in global wars we might open ourselves to new possibilities and adapt to them.

The reader is advised that this book is a survey of the possibilities of global insurgency and not the final word on it. It is an "open source" analysis of what is going on before our eyes, purposely written with what is available to the "average human being." Yet, there is so much information to look at, weigh, and judge that it is difficult to gather it all and make it useable in a book of this scope. There are limits of resources, responsibility, and time that had to be observed. The purpose here is to call attention to the phenomenon, make the case that it exists and has implications for the future conduct of politics and its terrifying servant, war. Anyone looking for a pronouncement of how to fight and win such a conflict, or on the uses and abuses of force will not find definitive answers here. Instead, the evidence presented here is meant to convince people to ask questions and engage in debate on what war is right now and how it should be dealt with. After consulting with my publisher we agreed that this book should be made as accessible as possible to as wide an audience as possible. That is why I adopted the style this book is written in. I hope to change the minds of people about war, how it is conducted, and for what ends. I hope this book gives us all new things to think about.

It is also worthwhile to talk about what this book is not. I purposely steered away from making this a "how to book." I call attention to the possibilities regarding access to various capabilities but I have not recounted in detail how to get them or where to find them. While I am trying to make the case that this type of warfare exists and should be examined, I see no reason to assist anyone in engaging in the practice, particularly our enemies. Speaking of our enemies, the reader will also note that there is very little mention of Al Qaeda in this book until the final chapter. This is by design. This topic is broader than Al Qaeda and what it does. I am calling attention not just to them, but to groups in the future who will engage in the same things for different issues. This is a form of warfare that will be around for a long time. We need to start thinking about what it means and what we will do about it.

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgments

I have a number of people to thank for their input and support for this book. First, let me thank the people who read and gave comments: Mac Fiddner at Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Phil Melanson and Kevin Curow at University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, and Michael Cadenazzi. Your comments and insights were great and helped me to see this topic more clearly. I also want to thank Paul Hammond and Phil Williams, former professors of mine who gave me an abundance of sage advice on both the subject matter and on how to craft a book. Thanks also to my agent, Esmond Harmsworth, for his advice and work on my behalf. I also want to thank Kim Hoag at Bytheway Publishing Services for her production services. Likewise thanks go to Heather Staines at Greenwood Publishing Group for her patience while I climbed over obstacles to this book and through my many questions for her. I want to thank my sister Maria for her help with the figure drawing and other odds and ends of this book. Finally, I must thank my parents for their love and support while I wrote this book and for being sounding boards for my ideas.

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1

THE CASE FOR GLOBAL INSURGENCY

The events of the last few years have shown that war has undergone some fundamental changes tied more to the way people think than to technological advances. These changes show up in two observable ways: a shift from conventional to unconventional war and a shift from defining combatants by land and language to defining them by issue and event. After September 11, America entered into a war against "terrorism" that will range over the entire world in a number of arenas beyond the traditional battlefield. The most fundamental difference between this war and others in history is that this one is being fought by groups and organizations unaffiliated with national governments. To fight this type of war against this type of enemy, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the way such groups are able to make war and how their actions influence current ideas on the conduct of war.

This is an exploration of what people are doing and how they are changing warfare by engaging in new practices. These practices are not always a conscious effort to change war, but the potential is there for a new model of warfare involving amateur soldiers, the things they do, and what makes it all possible. Within this framework, a discussion takes place on what makes these practices possible.

Since the fall of communism, much has changed socially, politically, economically, and technologically. We went from a time when access to travel, technology, communications, and the production of wealth was limited by national governments to the current time when that access is wide open to many who want it. Yet, this exploration is not about technology. It is not about networks or telecommunications or smart weapons. They dominate television documentaries and print

media because they are interesting to watch. Technological innovations play their part and are relevant, but they are tools to carry out action. They only work when used correctly. They only produce results when part of a good strategy. They only grant success when helping to achieve political goals, and that never changes in any age with any tools.

War is now accessible to many more people outside professional military circles, as seen on September 11. Other people will develop operations of their own. They will have a unique imprint that comes from people who acknowledge no rules of war and regularly break with conventional wisdom. That is the point of this investigation. People, nonprofessional, unaffiliated people, are engaging in warfare in the form of civil wars, guerrilla wars, and private conflicts. In ages past, going to war was normally the province of governments and their professional armed forces, and they alone fought. Now, not only is it possible for nongovernmental, nonprofessional armies to fight, but also it is possible for them to do it globally in a way that most national armed forces cannot. Before, war was conventionalized; now popular access has expanded to support politics, and the machinery of war has expanded to unconventionalize modern conflict as the people involved make their own rules. This differs from past insurgencies in that the politics is transnational, and the scope of operations is global.

The idea of global insurgency is important not as a new form of warfare but for what it implies. If war is the servant of politics, then making war accessible to popular movements allows those movements to advance political agendas outside national governments or in actual opposition to the political agendas of national governments. This opens the world to a good deal more change for good or ill; it will mean chaos rather than order in the post-Communist age.

Because this is a fledgling attempt to isolate and describe a new phenomenon, there will be holes in the picture. We can take what we observe and try to explain what it means and how it works. It will help us understand the future. It sounds theoretical, and it is. But, if it is done right, a good theory helps us understand what is happening, what will happen, and why. Although there is a good deal of theory behind this topic, make no mistake: It is real. Real actions are being taken, and real blood is being shed in the name of real political goals. In light of September 11, we must be aware of these possibilities.

Finding the right terminology to describe this phenomenon has been challenging. Groups unaffiliated with governments are engaging in war writ large. Global insurgent war with tools approximating what governments use to contend with them worldwide is new. But, fixing

a label to that does not always work out well. Labels are attempts at finding the boundaries of what something is and is not. Any sort of group can do the things this book discusses, so boundaries do not serve the discussion of what is happening.

The term nongovernmental organization (NGO) could have been used, and many groups involved in this type of conflict could be considered NGOs, but not all of them would. The problem with using NGO as a term is that it lumps the peaceful groups and the potentially violent groups together and masks other groups. NGOs should be included, but they are not the only groups that could be engaged in these activities. Likewise, one could use terror groups. Again, many other types of organizations could be included in this discussion also, and the term terror groups obscures these other groups that might take part. Some organizations could be militia or issue-oriented organizations ranging from the peaceful to the violent. Other iterations of terms included subgovernmental organizations, subgovernmental agents, and extragovernmental agents, extragovernmental organizations. None of these terms offer the freedom or inclusiveness the subject seems to need. This inclusiveness is necessary because no rules govern who does this. Anyone, any time, and in various roles can be involved in this type of war, so definitions must be included that can cover all of the potential participants.

We can classify these groups by their characteristics. They are issue centered. They are activist organizations capable of servicing an agenda that transcends governments or multilateral organizations. They are not always officially registered anywhere. They are not always violent. Actually, it is better in classifying these groups to say simply only government and government-related groups are excluded from this definition.

So, what label can we use? The terms this book uses are issue organizations, issue groups, and issue constellations. *Issue organizations* can be any type of organization advancing an issue or agenda through an action. More than one organization together is an *issue group*. A grouping of organizations representing different but related issues is an *issue constellation* (more explanation is given in Chapter 2). The terminology is purposely being kept simple in the hopes that, as more evidence becomes available, it will generate debate that will yield better discussions and better results. It is not necessary to search for buzzwords to revolutionize the study of warfare. Instead, we simply call attention to the beginning of what will be an important phenomenon. Terms were needed to encompass the subject, and the existing ones did not fit, hence the use of issue organizations, issue groups, and issue constellations.

What Is Happening?

Governments fight issue organizations or groups more than they fight other governments currently. Since 1989 when communism fell, only a handful of conflicts have actually occurred between governments. The Gulf War was a traditional conflict between nations, as has been the continuing conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir (although many insurgent factions on both sides seem to take part). Most of the other conflicts were fought, on one or both sides, by issue organizations/groups. This has happened without fanfare, which is surprising because it is both widespread and deviates from history. Insurgents have attempted to break away from national governments in Chiapas, Mexico, Chechnya, Russia, and Sri Lanka, among other places. Global insurgencies like Al Qaeda have staged a variety of operations aimed at destroying Western people and holdings of various types all over the world. They have been very active in ways that are in many cases shocking. However, little has been said about the changes they bring to warfare until now.

Issue organizations/groups take many forms but can be characterized in this way. They are unaffiliated organizations trying to advance an issue not addressed or supported by a government. The issues are either considered beneath the notice or beyond the scope of national governments. The organizations can be benign, like human rights organizations, or violent, like the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka. Issue organizations/groups have existed for years in various forms. What gives them power now is the state of the world today. Several things, some technological and others philosophical, have come together at this point in time to allow issue organizations/groups power they did not previously have. Modern communications allow organizations of like mind on a given issue to band together into an entity potentially as powerful as a government. The fall of communism opened the world political system for a number and variety of issues to take form and gain substance. Private concerns could gain access to more resources and attract more people to their cause. This means that issue organizations/groups are able not only to advance their agenda, but also could use violence to make it happen.

One may well ask how an issue organization/group engaging in violence is different from terrorism. There has been a good deal of debate on the definition of terrorism. That debate and the term itself obscure investigation of the use of global insurgency warfare by issue organizations/groups. The actions commonly associated with terrorism (aside from September 11) are actions that have been taken by combatants in many wars throughout recorded time. Calling the acts

terrorism (a relatively recent development) is a device to delegitimize the actions and their associated political goals. Terrorism is a term directed by one side to delegitimize political violence by its opponents (which national governments claim a monopoly on); it is criminal activity. Allowing the violence to become known as something else (e.g., rebellion, civil war, or interstate war) gives the violence a legitimacy that many governments are unwilling to surrender. In giving the violence legitimacy, the cause behind the violence is also given legitimacy. These are valid legal and political considerations, but they tend to obscure the investigation of how issue organizations/groups can conduct war. Because the term and the debate do not lend to an understanding of global insurgent warfare, it will not be used.

Political violence, regardless of its source, regardless of whether it has any legitimacy, must be answered. The answer, even if the tool used is political violence, must aim at defeating the issue causing the violence. Calling it criminal activity implies that arresting the perpetrators settles things, even if the issue that precipitated the violence remains. Because issue organizations/groups tend to be issue oriented, it seems less than useful or unrealistic to dismiss them as terrorists. The terrorism debate hinders an understanding of the nature of issue organizations/groups and the way they make war.

Issue organizations/groups are having success in fighting governments by using insurgency to subtract advantages from their opponents rather than overpowering them. After the Gulf War, it became apparent to anyone watching that there was no longer a future in fighting conventional armies in conventional wars on conventional battlefields. This not only applies to nations like the United States, but also to any nation that can afford to field an army equipped with modern weaponry and training. Such a nation can be quite successful on the conventional battlefield. For issue organizations/groups, it becomes more difficult to do this if they intend to oppose national armed forces because they not only need resources and military hardware but also safe areas in which to assemble and train an army. Doing so would make them a target easily destroyed by their enemies. Instead, they have learned to operate in ways that level the field and force others to fight without the advantages on which they have come to rely.

There are examples today that give glimpses of the possibilities of war in this fashion. They are happening all over the world. Probably the most salient examples visible to the average human are the global and violent actions of Al Qaeda. But, there will be other examples besides Al Qaeda. Global insurgents are changing warfare by pulling it away from high-tech weapons on the battlefields to suicide bombing and ambush in urban settings. Organizations are gathering millions of