

The Future of Small Wars

reviewed by Capt James R. Finley

INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare. By Bard E. O'Neill, Brassey's, New York, 1990, 171 pp., \$19.00. (Member \$17.10)

LIC 2010: Special Operations and Unconventional Warfare in the Next Century. By Col Rod Paschall, USA, Brassey's, New York, 1990, 166 pp., \$23.00. (Member \$20.70)

Some clear trends in recent years make it more likely that Marines will see combat in a low-intensity conflict (LIC) setting than any other. Tanks, aircraft, and capital ships are steadily growing more expensive and vulnerable to cheap unsophisticated weapons. Military budgets are shrinking. Global power is shifting from a bipolar world to a bazaar of jostling powers and shifting alliances. As Third World nations with rising social and material expectations enter this competition, more brushfire wars and revolutions are likely.

Two American authorities on small wars have explored different aspects of this topic. *Insurgency and Terrorism* by Dr. Bard E. O'Neill is a systematic analysis of revolution and counterrevolution. In *LIC 2010*, Col Rod Paschall, USA(Ret), speculates about possible developments in the tools and methods of LIC. Both books contain some material of interest for Marines of any grade, though its practical usefulness is limited.

Bard E. O'Neill is the director of

Middle East studies and studies of insurgency and revolution at the National War College. He has taught, written, and consulted extensively on the Middle East. In *Insurgency and Terrorism*, he presents a framework for analyzing an insurgency or terrorist movement. Dr. O'Neill divides insurgencies by their types, strategies, environments, bases of support, organizations, and sponsors. He examines the possible responses an established government can take to combat this problem. This framework is presented as a guideline, not a rigid template, as Dr. O'Neill stresses that every real-world conflict is unique and complex.

Insurgency and Terrorism is well-organized, clearly written, and solidly thought out. Its focus is political and sociological rather than military, and Dr. O'Neill discusses military actions only in general terms. In many circumstances he recommends nonmilitary solutions. This book is aimed at those who make policy more so than those who will carry it out, limiting its immediate usefulness for Marines. It is helpful, however, in gaining a broad understanding of insurgency and would be worthwhile for gaining a better grasp of "commander's intent" in dealing with revolutionary war.

Col Paschall brings extensive experience to his subject in *LIC 2010*. He spent most of his Army career as a Special Forces officer in combat and in research and development. He served as a special operations planner for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as the commander of the Army's Delta Force, and as

the Director of the U.S. Army Military History Institute. In this book, he discusses Special Forces organization and training, trends in warfare, world politics, LIC technology, and a range of LIC situations.

LIC 2010 presents a number of fascinating ideas about possible developments and uses of various technologies. He looks at ideas, equipment, and techniques from unaccustomed angles, and raises several questions worthy of further study. (For example, in discussing leadership, he challenges the relevance of college education as a primary qualification for service as a commissioned officer; in a section on revolutionary warfare, he suggests that counterinsurgency support for small governments be provided by international corporations created for that purpose rather than by large-power sponsors.) However, the book has some serious flaws. Many of Col Paschall's conclusions are questionable, such as his assertion that mechanized forces are slower than unmechanized infantry and cannot operate on a nonlinear battlefield. Some of his forecasts have been overtaken by events—he expected the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact to endure as a cohesive bloc, and observed that the U.S. Army is becoming strategically immobile. He tends to become preoccupied with gadgets, and discusses some concepts repeatedly throughout the book. There are some surprising gaps in his generally farsighted thinking, e.g., in predicting the world political powers of the next century, he does not include any Third World states or groups. Although the book's subject matter is LIC, he does not even mention Islamic fundamentalism and gives only a paragraph to the involvement of the narcotics trade in terrorism and insurgency. Though *LIC 2010* sparks the imagination, its depth of vision is inconsistent, and it contains little solid information of use to Marines today.

For most Marines, neither *Insurgency and Terrorism* nor *LIC 2010* are primers for future action, but Dr. O'Neill's book is excellent as general background for one type of LIC, while Col Paschall's is an intriguing source of ideas to explore. They are likely to be most useful for those making policy in the first case or conducting research and development in the second.



>Capt Finley recently graduated from Communication Officers School at Quantico.

Marine Corps Gazette • July 1991

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