

Edwin G. Corr and Stephen Sloan, ed., *Low Intensity Conflict: Old Threats in a New World*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) pp. 317. \$63.50 (hardcover), \$19.85 (paperback) ISBN 0-8133-8593-8

Two international relations specialists have edited a timely work that should be most useful to academics and policy makers alike. As the leaders of industrial democracies seek the best ways to function internationally in a still dangerous and predominantly undemocratic world, they should consider the words of Senator David Boren (D-OK) in the book's preface: "We live in a time which our basic assumptions about geopolitics and military power have been rendered obsolete. Perhaps the greatest threat to....security is the danger we will not change our thinking to coincide with the changes in the world around us."

Ed Corr (Henry Bellmon Chair in Public Service at the University of Oklahoma) and Steve Sloan (Professor of Political Science at the University of Oklahoma) have long been concerned with low intensity conflict — Corr as U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia, El Salvador, and Peru, and Sloan through many years studying of international terrorism.

In his introduction Sloan asserts that nations now find themselves in a period when "uncertainty, unpredictability, and conflict have replaced the enforced outward stability of what was once a bipolar world." With the decline of Communism and the demise of the Soviet Union, nations (especially transitional ones) are no longer seen "as either pawns or surrogates of superpower machinations." These factors, coupled with often previously unrecognized regional and local ones, must be taken into account by policy makers who should also realize that the "line between peace and war will increasingly be blurred and ambiguous..."

The editors, noting that specialists in the field do not agree on a definition of low intensity conflict, accept the U.S. military's lengthy definition:

"Low-intensity conflict is a politico-military confrontation between competing states or groups below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition among states. It frequently involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. Low-intensity conflict ranges from subversion to the use of armed force. It is waged by a combination of means, employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments. Low-intensity conflicts are often localized, generally in the Third World, but contain regional and global security implications."

The book is separated into three sections: The Challenge, the Concepts,

and the Context; Selected Cases of Low Intensity Conflict; and Implications and Conclusions. Included among the authors are U.S. Ambassador to Sudan, James Cheek; former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William Crowe; Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, General John R. Galvin; and director of the Center for National Security Law at the University of Virginia Law School, John Norton Moore. These and the other contributors have been involved in the "bureaucratic, policy, legal and academic trenches of low intensity conflict" and share many "lessons they are still learning" while the world's "security situation undergoes reassessment in a new international order."

Among the case studies that should be of special interest to political scientists is one on Peru's Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) terrorists by David Scott Palmer, director of the Latin American Studies Program at Boston University.

Shining Path founder and leader, Abimael Guzman (captured by government forces after this book went to press), and key followers were trained in guerrilla strategy and tactics in China (1966 to 1976) and, of course, observed the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution first hand. Shining Path's ideology reflects Guzman's approach. Guzman, who holds a Ph.D., has always considered himself an ideological purist and the world's foremost interpreter of the thoughts of Mao. Indeed, Palmer characterizes the group's ideological commitment as "a secular religion, a guide for all aspects of life, and a vow in which advancing the revolution through deeds is far more important than life itself." Palmer further avers that this total submission to a higher cause by Sendero members has enabled them to "wreak havoc" in Peru despite their relatively small numbers. Such a commitment "redefines objective reality in ideological terms... then acts as if the ideological interpretation was reality itself." This observation doubtless applies to many (perhaps most) highly ideological groups that employ force or violence in pursuit of social control or social change.

Ambassador James Cheek's case study of Eritrean and Tigrayan insurgents in Ethiopia delineates reasons for their eventual success after decades of fighting against Emperor Haile Selassie's rightist government and then against the Soviet-backed Marxist-Leninist dictatorship of Mengistu Haile Mariam.

Because these insurgents had little contact with anyone outside Ethiopia, not much was written about them and their situation except in occasional news reports dealing mostly with their civil and military activities. Cheek relied on insights he acquired from "an active involvement with Ethiopia since 1985 and extensive discussions with insurgents since 1989." Although Eritrean and Tigrayan insurgencies were Marxist in orientation, ethnicity was the main factor motivating them. Eritreans and Tigrayans shared a strong antipathy toward the Amhara ruling group, but they interpreted the problem differently. Eritreans always have considered themselves an independent nation. They saw the Amhara not only as

a foreign power, but one with much less to offer than their former occupier, Italy. Tigrayans, who once were in charge of Ethiopia, saw the Amhara not as colonizers from outside, but as oppressors of their fellow citizens, especially the larger ethnic groups such as Oromos and, of course, Tigrayans themselves. Even though the two insurgencies gained legitimacy, it seems quite likely that they would not have succeeded had not the Mengistu government lost its principal supporter, the Soviet Union.

This is a versatile book most useful for those teaching courses as international relations, low intensity conflict, political violence and terrorism, revolutionary movements, and national security policy.

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