

BOOK REVIEW

SOLDIERS WITHOUT FRONTIERS: THE VIEW FROM THE GROUND. EXPERIENCES OF ASYMMETRIC WARFARE

Edited by:

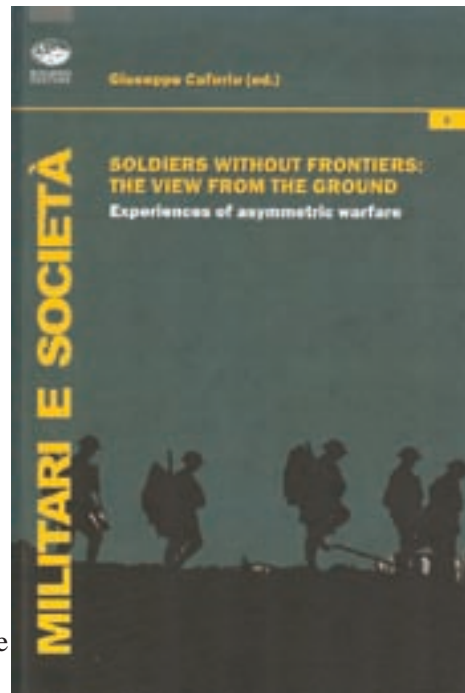
Giuseppe CAFORIO

Bonanno Editore, Gruppo Editoriale s.r.l.,
Acireale-Roma, 2013, 413 pages

REVIEWER:

Aura CODREANU, Ph.D.

Lecturer, Regional Department of Defense
Resources Management Studies,
Brasov, Romania



Soldiers Without Frontiers: The View from the Ground. Experiences of Asymmetric Warfare edited by Giuseppe Caforio, a reputed military sociologist, is issued at a time when the environment of military operations conducted by coalitions of the willing or by alliances can no longer be approached through conventional means given the breach of ethics and traditional war principles by the weaker opponents of the military forces.

The ideological framework of conflicts in nowadays' world, as well as the gap between an ethics based approach to warfare on behalf of civilized countries and the troubling lawlessness of the opponents cannot but lead to a number of challenges in human terms. This assumption underpins the overall aim of the book, which is that of "gaining a better understanding of the human aspects" (p.16) characteristic of asymmetric warfare. The means to achieve this is an empirical qualitative study undertaken by the ERGOMAS Working Group "The Military Profession". The latter focused on the experiences of the troops deployed by nine of the 19 countries that obtained approval to contribute to the research in military operations across the globe. Thus, as suggested by the subtitle of the book, special emphasis is placed on asymmetric environments like Iraq, Afghanistan, Arabian Sea without actually disregarding experiences in other areas like: Lebanon, Sudan, Chad, Mozambique to name just a few more.

The book consists of four parts that do justice not only to the research field, but also to the analysis of findings and countries supporting the endeavour. The highly professional coverage of the research framework and methodology in *Part I: Introduction to the research* sheds light on the extensive preliminary efforts made by the team to reach consistency in the discussion of the results of the findings, and hence ensures an integrative, osmotic approach to the chapters to follow.

Part II: Analysis of Findings highlights in its five chapters current topics that are of concern to the defense establishments across the globe that contribute troops to international missions. Moreover, they also allow the academics to glimpse at experiences that more often than not are captured by word of mouth and to discover an entire world of feelings and impressions that could only have been guessed as an inherent part of every human being. Thus, each of the chapters: “Experiences of Asymmetric War Missions” (Chapter 1), “Interaction with other actors” (Chapter 2), “Satisfaction and Motivation” (Chapter 3), “Psychological issues” (Chapter 4), “The ‘emerging’ concomitant issues in the conduct of asymmetric warfare” (Chapter 5) provide a theoretical background for the concepts proposed for discussion or geo-strategic information relevant for the understanding of the results analysis and for the conclusions drawn at the end. What is worth mentioning is that numerous reports of the interviewees are provided as quotes and that is an extremely valuable resource for any researcher willing to develop and test research assumptions related to the topics covered by the book.

Part III: Country chapters focuses on the nine countries, namely Bulgaria, Denmark, Italy, Philippines, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, that supported the researchers with their endeavour. The personalized approach for each of the chapters in this part grants additional value to the approach and increased relevance to the findings.

The “*Conclusions and notes*” part manages to convey salient messages to the decision making bodies in charge of troops’ deployment in theatres of operations, relationships with other actors involved in the troops’ area of responsibility, operational experiences, training and education, rules of engagement, motivation and satisfaction, psychological stress.

The complexity of the research efforts underpinning the book renders itself to the scrutiny and further development of the proposed topics by its target audience. It is our firm belief that the valuable database of quotes on the experiences of the soldiers deployed in various theaters of operations is a useful resource for any scholar in search of further support for research efforts. Moreover, any decision making authority in the defense field can cross check the already available information with the validation made by the results discussed in the book. And last but not the least, the military themselves who have already been deployed or are about to can better understand their own assumptions and perceptions before their mission, their own and their colleagues’ experiences and reactions in a given environment, and the challenges to be met when the deployment time is over.

In conclusion, the book is an important step forward in the field of military sociology. Hence, it can be used as a reference, as a decision making enabler, and as a comprehensive resource for anyone with an interest in the transitions that defense establishments are prone to at human level and not only as a result of asymmetric threats.