

**The New Soldier in the Age of Asymmetric Conflict,**  
by Rumu Sarkar, New Delhi: Vij Books, 2013, pp. 290, INR 1,250

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Asymmetric warfare has existed from the time of the famous tale of David and Goliath. Post-World War II, the world has witnessed these conflicts in Vietnam, Palestine, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. The United States (US) is currently the sole superpower, and even countries with strong armed forces are developing asymmetric capabilities to respond to military threats posed by the US. Countries like China, Russia, Israel, Syria and India have to respond to asymmetric challenges which require innovative tactics in comparison to regular conventional warfare.

The biggest challenge in any conflict is to know your enemy. The aspect of gathering intelligence in asymmetric warfare is difficult and extremely complex. This type of warfare is going to increase exponentially in the near future due to the growing gap between the haves and the have-nots.

In the book, *The New Soldier in the Age of Asymmetric Conflict*, Rumu Sarkar carries out a comprehensive analysis of Islamic-based terrorism and its challenges. Thereafter, she logically deduces the need for creating the new soldier, undertaking stability and peace operations as also creating a platform for reconciliation and transition. She also elucidates the new integrated approach to be undertaken in operationalizing the concept of the new soldier and the way forward. The most important aspect which the book brings out is that in *asymmetric conditions, the military must not only win wars but win peace*. It may be pertinent to note that the

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military, in asymmetric conditions, has an arduous task. The first is to gather intelligence; the second is to act against the offender; and the third is to stabilize the situation. All these are not easy in a hostile environment where the enemy flouts all the rules, whereas the soldier has to win observing the rules. Practitioners would term each situation as unique and requiring pragmatic assessment. However, there is no doubt that there is a need to analyse the current conditions and suggest procedures for tackling this complex form of warfare. It is extremely interesting to note that the author has used the dialectical method to analyse Islamic-based terrorism rather than using law-based or political theories. This has resulted in rational deductions as to the causes of people turning to terrorism in the Islamic world.

The book has three parts: part one includes three chapters as does part two; part three includes two chapters. The author also suggests a pragmatic way forward to deal with the issue under consideration. The first part deals with Islamic-based terrorism. The initial chapter deals with radical Islamic-based separatist movements where a distinction is made between separatist and fundamentalist movements. The separatists or secessionist terrorists are created due to the failure of states in providing physical and social infrastructure. The fundamentalists are motivated by the failure of ideology. Fundamentalists or jihadists see all other forms of modern state, be it democracy, monarchy or communism, as inadequate. They believe Islamic laws should be used in place of failed ideologies. The chapter also describes the conditions in possibly failed states like Pakistan, Somalia, Mali and Yemen. The next chapter focuses on global jihadism and its discontents. The jihadists have developed hatred as their *raison d'être* for existence. The author points to al-Qaida developing the new ideology of hatred to undertake disruption, terrorism and destabilization of Western-style economies. Further, the genesis of these movements began with the formation of Israel in 1948 and gained momentum with the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The movement is ideological in nature and is bound to crumble from within as it does not address the basic human needs of society. The third chapter analyses the implications of the Arab Spring and takes into consideration the regime changes and political upheaval in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria. It is pertinent to note the dynamic situation in Egypt and Syria has given a new twist to the concept of the Arab Spring.

The first chapter of the second part deals with 'Creating the New Soldier'. The views of Major General (Retd.) Robert Scales of the US

Army are elucidated. Scales theorises that World War IV will represent 'Fearful Symmetry' which would exist between the terrorist and the security forces. Wars would need to be fought based on the perceptions of people rather than the political will of the governments. This would entail cultural awareness and sensitivity, which, along with the ability to create trust, will be the emerging amplifiers. The need for a soldier to have intuitive decision making along with compassion, empathy and wisdom would be necessary to meet the challenges in the asymmetric battlespace. The bitter lesson learnt in Somalia by the US troops was that technology alone cannot win a war. It is the right mix of cultural awareness with technology that will create a win-win situation leading to victory.

The chapter also compares the traditional soldier with the new soldier. The new soldier would empower population, be intuitive, have enhanced linguistics ability as also cultural understanding, and have an emotional profile based on empathy, compassion and wisdom. Further, the objective of the traditional soldier is currently to win conflict by defeating irreconcilables; in the case of the new soldier, it would be to win conflict by partnering with reconcilables. The need for these qualities would make the soldier capable of fighting the asymmetric war with greater effectiveness, but the war will be over only with a change of the heart and mind of the fundamentalist which would take a long time.

The next chapter elucidates on 'Re-visioning Stability and Peace Operations'. The four dimensions normally used to deal with militants are political/diplomatic, military, economic and cultural. The author states that separatists and global terrorists need to be dealt differently on these issues. This would need delicate balancing of the four entities handling the problem.

The last chapter concentrates on 'Creating a Platform for Reconciliation and Transition'. The chapter brings out the nine principles of reconstruction and development. Further, it is interesting to note the US' efforts at nation building from 1898 to 2003 and the work done by the provisional reconstruction teams in Afghanistan in this regard.

The third part of the book deals with the role of the US and international actors in forming a new integrated approach. The first chapter in this part deals with managing global instability: it discusses why do nations fail and the steps to be taken for 'interagency cooperation' in complex environments. The author proposes the creation of a temporary entity with expansive powers, which she terms as US Centre for Peace Operations (USCPO). This would work if integrated appropriately with

the US Special Operations Command (SOCOM). This would certainly ensure a coherent response of the US to failed states. The last chapter of the book deals with 'Operationalising the Concept of the New Soldier'. Here, two response forces are described: one deals with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and the other is for Africa. The author, in the section on the way forward, rightfully recommends the need for the new soldier and the necessity for military action against jihadists and cultural education for empowerment of militants.

The book is unique as it deals with Islamic terrorism logically by separating the secessionists from the fundamentalist, and is extremely well researched and compiled. It is a must read for officials of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of External Affairs, strategic analysts and all serving and retired officers of the armed forces.