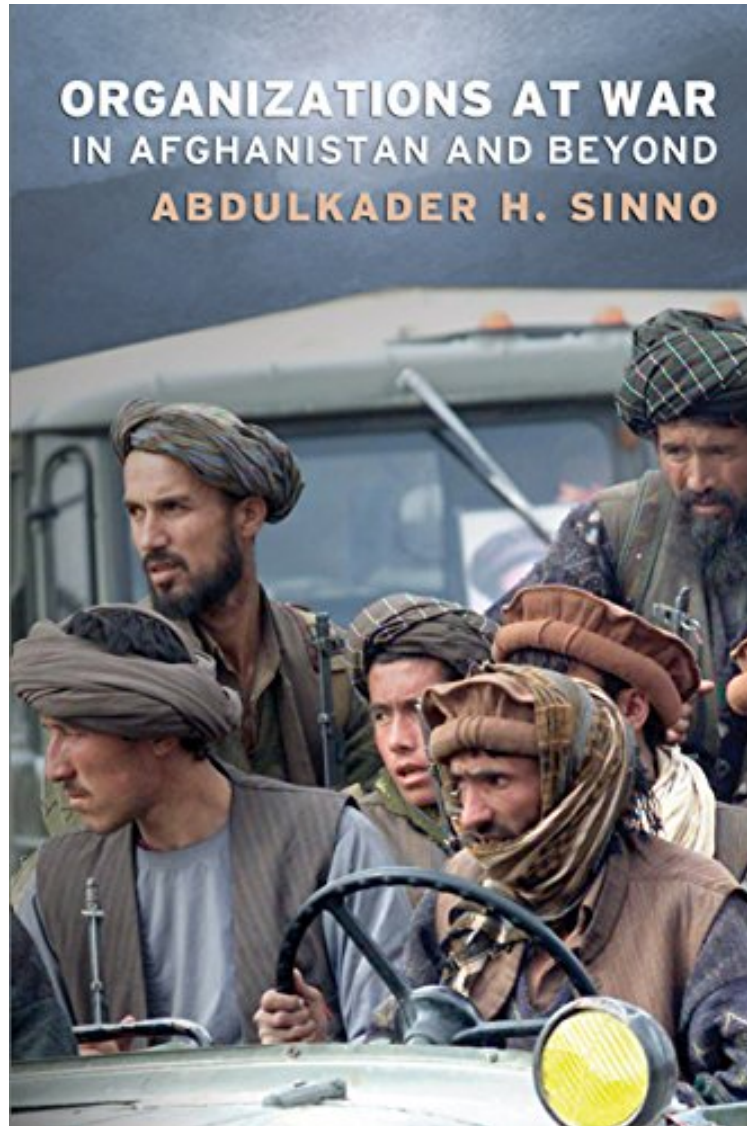


(Free download) Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond

## Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond

*Abdulkader H. Sinno*

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**Abdulkader H. Sinno : Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Dispassionate but essential reading (for a select few)By Peter MonksThis work endeavours to use organisational theory in order to analyse the growth and effectiveness of the various protagonists in Afghanistan from 1979 onwards. The result is a scholarly and at times insightful work that attempts to define a model to forecast the effectiveness and probability of survival of an insurgent organisation or unconventional force based on a range of factors (not least it's degree of centralisation - surprising arguments include the assertions that in some cases foreign financial support or access to an indoctrinated manpower is less decisive than

commonly expected), and makes a plausible case that state actors and conventional forces should be cautious about emulating decentralised, 'networked' structures that insurgents adopt out of necessity rather than choice. Two weaknesses are the relatively dispassionate and clinical approach, which fails to highlight the effects of the attitudes of various organisations to the use of force as a means of seeking compliance and securing support (willing or otherwise) at the tactical level, and the fact that despite publication in 2010 the analysis concludes in late 2005/early 2006. As a consequence, the analysis of the post-2001 insurgency is considerably less comprehensive than that of earlier chapters, and some of the authors wider assumptions (e.g. that Iraq was obviously a complete failure, so at the time of writing the ISAF effort in Afghanistan was doomed to failure as well ...) and conclusions are certainly open to question. That said, his analysis of the ANA and Karzai's government was comprehensive and accurate, and it would be interesting to see if a second (updated) edition could shed more light on the inner workings and tensions of the post-2001 insurgency. If you are looking for a general introduction to post-1979 Afghanistan this is far too narrow and specific a book to start with, and even if you expect to be operating over there at the tactical level there are other works I would recommend first. If, however, you expect to be involved in operational-level planning or have an interest in both organisational theory and COIN (surely it's not just me?) this is definitely worth a read and careful consideration.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
By David Munyua  
Great book and interesting as well  
8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Strongly Recommended by BGen McMaster in Talk at ODNI  
By Robert David STEELE Vivas  
This is one of two books strongly recommended, with deep admiration, by BGen McMaster, USA (Ret) speaking to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) on 19 January. The four page trip report on his remarks about improving intelligence in support of the multinational mission in Afghanistan has been posted to Phi Beta Iota the Public Intelligence Blog. I have bought this book and will review it within two weeks. The key point that General McMaster made in referencing the book is that the author of this book has it right, there is no such thing as a leaderless jihad, and it is vital to be able to identify, understand, and interdict the often obscure means by which a jihad "organization" is formed and operated. General McMaster also recommended *Drugs and Contemporary Warfare*. In my own review of *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* From that review pending my doing a complete proper review of this book: The most important point in the book is not one the author intended to make. He inadvertently but most helpfully points to the fact that at no time did the U.S. government, in lacking a policy on Afghanistan across several Administrations, think about the strategic implications of "big money movements." I refer to Saudi Oil, Afghan Drugs, and CIA Cash. The greatest failure of the CIA comes across throughout early in the book: the CIA missed the radicalization of Islam and its implications for global destabilization. It did so for three reasons: 1) CIA obsession with hard targets to the detriment of global coverage; 2) CIA obsession with technical secrets rather than human overt and covert information; and 3) CIA laziness and political naivete; in relying on foreign liaison, and especially on Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

While popular accounts of warfare, particularly of nontraditional conflicts such as guerrilla wars and insurgencies, favor the roles of leaders or ideology, social-scientific analyses of these wars focus on aggregate categories such as ethnic groups, religious affiliations, socioeconomic classes, or civilizations. Challenging these constructions, Abdulkader H. Sinno closely examines the fortunes of the various factions in Afghanistan, including the mujahideen and the Taliban, that have been fighting each other and foreign armies since the 1979 Soviet invasion. Focusing on the organization of the combatants, Sinno offers a new understanding of the course and outcome of such conflicts. Employing a wide range of sources, including his own fieldwork in Afghanistan and statistical data on conflicts across the region, Sinno contends that in Afghanistan, the groups that have outperformed and outlasted their opponents have done so because of their successful organization. Each organization's ability to mobilize effectively, execute strategy, coordinate efforts, manage disunity, and process information depends on how well its structure matches its ability to keep its rivals at bay. Centralized organizations, Sinno finds, are generally more effective than noncentralized ones, but noncentralized ones are more resilient absent a safe haven. Sinno's organizational theory explains otherwise puzzling behavior found in group conflicts: the longevity of unpopular regimes, the demise of popular movements, and efforts of those who share a common cause to undermine their ideological or ethnic kin. The author argues that the organizational theory applies not only to Afghanistan—where he doubts the effectiveness of American state-building efforts—but also to other ethnic, revolutionary, independence, and secessionist conflicts in North Africa, the Middle East, and beyond.

"Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond is an original, penetrating, and important book; Abdulkader H. Sinno marries organizational theory to analysis of nonstate actors in situations of civil war or state disruption. This is strikingly innovative not only in respect to Afghanistan (where nothing like this has been attempted previously) but also in respect to complex transitions more generally. This is a book that no serious student of transitions from conflict can afford to ignore." William Maley, Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, The Australian National University  
In *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, Abdulkader H. Sinno makes an original contribution to the study of

civil war. He takes a specific case that of Afghanistan and uses organizational structure as a basis for explaining how events unfolded. Readers will be especially fascinated by the narrative of what occurred in Afghanistan prior to the Taliban's rise to power. This book is essential reading for anyone with an interest in either international politics or the study of organizations."Patrick James, Professor of International Relations and Director of the Center for International Studies, University of Southern California"Sinno does a remarkably thorough job of analyzing the Afghan insurgency and tribal interactions from 1978 through the present. This section is insightful, thoughtful, and exceptionally valuable; he reveals a deep knowledge of Afghan politics and rivalries, personalities, and agendas. Sinno's organizational theory approach to explaining success and failure of rival groups during this period is persuasive. His tables and analysis are clear and direct and provide an excellent starting point for anyone wanting to understand the complexities of events in Afghanistan from the end of the Soviet occupation through the collapse of the Najib regime and the rise of the Taliban. It is doubtful that there is an analysis of events in Afghanistan that is better, more complete, and more useful to a military commander, diplomat, or Provincial Reconstruction Team chief than what can be found in chapters six through eight of this book. This analysis should open some eyes and minds to reassessing the purpose and direction of the current operational activities in Afghanistan."Keith D. Dickson, Joint Forces Quarterly"Sinno's finding should end the current search of U.S. policymakers for a 'moderate Taliban' that can be broken off from the insurgency. . . . For the Taliban remains a formidable organization, and his book is a formidable account of why."Barnett Rubin, Perspectives on Politics"Sinno knows a lot about Afghanistan and offers significant insights about organizations and strategy on which others will want to build."Lawrence D. Freedman, Foreign Affairs"This book is a fascinating and serious piece of scholarship that carries implicit policy warnings. . . . Highly recommended."Choice"Sinno has produced an insightful book. His emphasis on organizational theory will arm those who study conflict with a valuable perspective."H. R. McMaster, Survival"The book accomplishes a crucial social science goal: it develops a parsimonious and generalizable theory that explains a wide range of behavior, without the need to resort to other variables (such as religion, ethnicity, ideology, or unique factors of anthropology or history). Sinno concludes with a set of predictions about other cases, using his findings to provide useful advice for policymakers. While he only mentions in passing the relevance of his findings for the Middle East, it is striking how well his arguments seem to explain ongoing conflicts everywhere from the Palestinian territories to Iraq. For all of these reasons, this book has great value."Kimberly Marten, Political Science Quarterly "This book is a fascinating and serious piece of scholarship that carries implicit policy warnings. . . . Highly recommended." "Sinno has produced an insightful book. His emphasis on organizational theory will arm those who study conflict with a valuable perspective."--H. R. McMaster