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Book Review

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Military Risk Assessment:
From Conventional Warfare to Counter Insurgency Operations
By Chris W. JOHNSON
Glasgow, 2012

235 Pages

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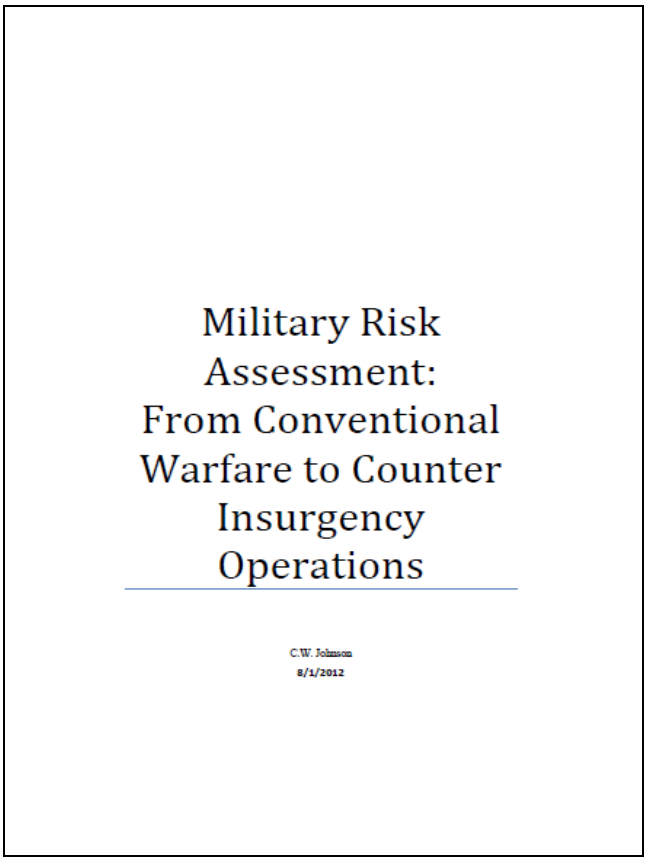
This book is written by Chris W. JOHNSON, a professor of Computing Science at the University of Glasgow, and published in 2012.

This book compares civilian and military risk assessment methods and advocates that civilian risk assessment methods often fail in military operations. Due to the high volume and complexity of military operations, as we all the diversity of threats encountered, civilian risk assessment methods were unable to respond adequately to the needs of modern warfare.

Professor Johnson argues that statistical data obtained by analyzing past accidents and incidents is useful and necessary for assessing possible future risks but insufficient. For example, monthly or annual average accident statistics may hide some incidents with potentially serious consequences or show them as low probability events.

Additionally, the author indicated that military staffs are making inadequate risk assessments while performing a given task in a limited period of time and are only focusing on the execution of tasks.

Johnson implies that fatigue caused by intense military action not only increase the likelihood of many hazards, but may also reduce the ability to assess the risks of these hazards. He claims that Night Vision Devices (NVDs), which are used to reduce the risk posed by fatigue, increase rather than decrease the level of fatigue because of sustained scanning. He argues that new operational risks can arise from the introduction of new technologies into



modern warfare. To support his thesis, he focuses on the loss of a rotary wing aircraft whose crews were using NVDs during brown-out conditions and the loss of helicopters and land-based vehicles to look at the use of innovative and disruptive technologies to mitigate military risk. He claims that with the use of Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs), conventional troops are exposed to more threats because they're forced to retrieve them from vulnerable crash sites.

Counter Improvised Explosive Device (IED) operations were also addressed in the book. Johnson says that in C-IED operations, it's very difficult to identify risks due to the constantly changing tactics of enemy forces. While some risks can be avoided or mitigated by taking precautionary measures, the civilian population may suffer as a result.

Taking into account the complex nature of military operations, the book assesses the differences between civilian and military risk assessment techniques. The hazards of modern warfare cannot be mitigated by using civilian risk assessment techniques. The limitations of civilian risk assessment techniques should be identified and developed to respond to the needs of modern warfare. In order to provide practical benefits, 'lessons learned' systems must be integrated into decision-making and planning processes.

Ultimately, the most significant contribution of this book has been to provide us a framework from which a second generation approach to risk assessment can be developed. This second generation approach can be specifically tailored for the changing demands of military organizations in order to more efficiently and holistically conduct full spectrum operations.