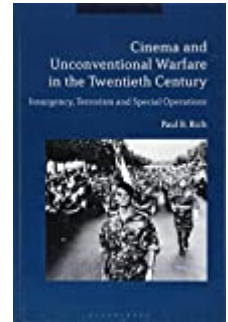


Paul B. Rich. *Cinema and Unconventional Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Insurgency, Terrorism and Special Operations*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. Illustrations. x + 264 pp. \$120.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-350-05569-8.



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Cinema not only reflects our fantasies and imaginations but can also provide glimpses into a society's attitudes, perceptions, and areas of contention. After almost twenty years since the beginning of the War on Terror, unconventional warfare (UW) has increasingly become a part of our lives culturally, politically, and economically. UW as a timeless tactic and method has been extensively studied by state and non-state intelligence actors especially throughout the twentieth century. However, the important interconnections and influences between cultural products like cinema and UW have been minimally explored in literature.

As the editor of the journal *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Paul B. Rich has written extensively on terrorism, insurgency, counterinsurgency, and guerilla warfare. In *Cinema and Unconventional Warfare*, he continues his research through the analysis of more than eighty films pertaining to UW with the purpose of “complementing the huge body of writing on the cinema of war by focusing on increasingly familiar forms of war in our age

involving insurgency, terrorism and special operations” (p. ix). Despite UW's growing presence in film, he finds an absence in the scholarly literature surrounding it and embarks on exploring how films have dealt with themes of UW, such as guerilla insurgency, terrorism, and special operations. He argues that the war genre “needs to be rethought, given its capacity for internal evolution and innovation over time” to better understand UW in film (p. 5). Rich contends that because UW does not easily fit into the traditional “western military ethos” of full-frontal assaults and conventional conflicts, it has been poorly understood by not only militaries but also filmmakers, leading to a perpetuation of cinematic myths, such as national unity, patriotism, and male heroism (p. 2).

The piece is organized thematically around case studies in the United States, Britain, Ireland, France, Italy, and Israel. Themes examined include depictions of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency in the United States, British postcolonial insurgencies in Malaya and Kenya, The Troubles in Northern Ireland, myths surrounding special

forces, French filmmaking in 1950s Algeria, Italian neorealism's depictions of urban insurgency, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and counterterrorism. While the scope for the piece is massive, these cases provide an enriching window into examining the arguments and proposed myths Rich sets out to examine. Despite some UW interpretation of Latin America and the Caribbean with films like *Burn!* (1969) and *The Dancer Upstairs* (2002) as well as discussion of Argentine Marxist revolutionary Che Guevara, Rich's purview through these selected case studies upsettingly leaves readers wanting more on Latin American UW in film during the twentieth century.

Rich's source base is admirable with feature-length films being the core of the primary sources consulted, including both American and international films, resurrecting many long-forgotten films in his analysis, such as *The Planter's Wife* (1952), *Simba* (1955), and *Djamila* (1958). Critically speaking, the filmography reflects a mostly Eurocentric or Western perspective of UW and has few films produced outside of the United States and Europe. Only a handful of films from the growing Latin American film industry are featured and none from India's massive "Bollywood." Further inclusion of such films as Santosh Sivan's *The Terrorist* (1997) or Luis Mandoki's *Voces Inocentes* (2004) would have made excellent additions in discussing terrorism and guerilla warfare. In addition to films, the work also consults a variety of excellent secondary sources, including film reviews, newspapers, magazine articles, government documents, journals, and books, on various forms of UW written by political scientists, historians, and film scholars.

At the same time, the work is not absent of flaws. There is a lack of consistency in the film analysis methodology with no detailed explanation in the introduction for readers to follow the analyses nor is there a set standard to the film elements being consulted, such as dialogue, cinematography, or sound design. To illustrate the incon-

sistency, in the chapter "Hollywood, Terrorism and the Myth of Special Forces," the piece focuses heavily on the portrayal of masculinity when discussing the *Rambo* film series, including the depiction of Rambo's body. However, Maya in *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) receives little analysis of her character's involvement in finding Osama bin Laden and the portrayal of feminine bodies. As Rich mentions, women make up very few characters in the films consulted, but the inconsistency in methodology taking place should be clarified and made consistent throughout rather than privileging some subjects and characters more than others, like that of women. This would benefit the film analyses and connections with the argument and myths presented.

Despite these minor critiques, the book significantly fills a crucial gap in scholarly literature on UW, particularly in film studies. As one of the first scholars to comprehensively examine UW in film, Rich has laid a groundwork for future scholars to build on more extensively. His work has also brilliantly revealed many lesser-known films that have been overlooked, providing even more opportunities for research exploration. The piece is well written and could easily be assigned for undergraduates studying military film history. Most important, Rich demonstrates that film can help us understand not only evolving conflicts and myths surrounding UW but also how these affect our social consciousness.

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