

THE WRITTEN WORD

Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla

Reviewed by *Fatih Celenay*

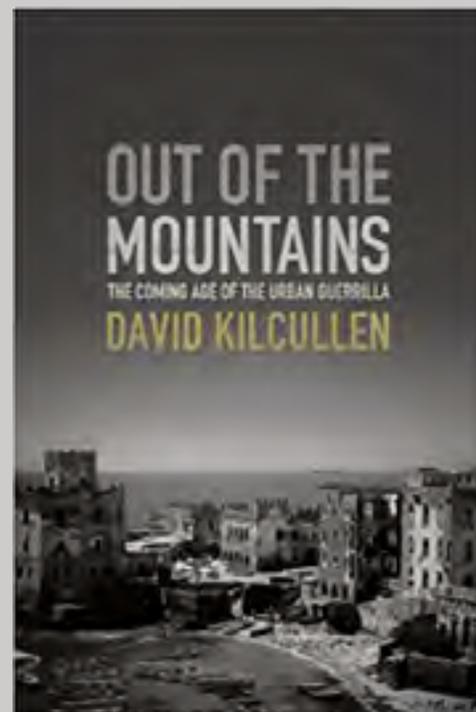
DAVID KILCULLEN, WHOSE BOOKS INCLUDE *THE ACCIDENTAL GUERRILLA: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford University Press, 2009), *Counterinsurgency* (Oxford University Press, 2010), and *Blood Year: The Unraveling of Western Counterterrorism* (Oxford University Press, 2016), is a strategist and counterinsurgency expert. He served for 24 years as a soldier, diplomat, and policy advisor for the Australian and United States governments. Between 2007 and 2009, he was a special advisor to the US secretary of state and a senior advisor to General David Petraeus in Iraq.

In Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla, Kilcullen uses a multi-disciplinary approach that includes urban design, human rights, diplomacy, community mapping, systems design, alternative energy, and rule of law, among others. He argues that four megatrends—population growth, urbanization, littoralization, and networked connectivity—will affect not only the issue of conflict but all aspects of life on the planet. Kilcullen's main argument focuses on the effects of the four megatrends on the nature of conflict and the urban environment.

These megatrends highlight significant changes that are taking place in urban life. Because urban populations in coastal regions are getting denser, more clandestine—or “dark”—networks, which control flows of people, money, goods, and information outside the government-regulated channels, are likely to emerge in these areas. These networks benefit from increasing connectivity and emerging communication technologies, and their potential dangers are also embedded in their highly-connected nature. Kilcullen uses the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack, which was carried out by Lashkar-e-Taiba, a terrorist organization based in a mountainous region of Pakistan, to illustrate this point. He maintains that Lashkar-e-Taiba not only launched the most audacious maritime terrorist attack in India's history but also showed that, with the democratization of connectivity and technology, non-state actors like terrorist organizations can conduct appallingly effective raids anywhere in the world.

Kilcullen then applies the four megatrends to a study of four megacities: Mogadishu, Somalia; Lagos, Nigeria; Kingston, Jamaica; and Mumbai, India. According to the UN's 2010 population report, the world's population will be over nine billion by 2050, and 75 percent of this population will be living in coastal cities. Kilcullen asserts that population growth, urbanization, and coastal density may lead to the rise of what some call “feral cities” all around the world. According to Richard Norton, a professor at the US Naval War College, a feral city is a metropolis with a population of more than one million people, in a state whose government cannot maintain the rule of law within the city's boundaries even though the state remains a functioning actor in the greater international system.

Kilcullen cites Kingston, Jamaica, as an example of a city with districts that are not fully controlled by the national government. Rapid population growth and unplanned urbanization, lack of governance capacity, youth unemployment,



Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla

by David Kilcullen

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and residential segregation are the main reasons for the city's problems. The Kingston neighborhood of Tivoli Gardens displays a hybrid internal/external pattern in which the Jamaican government and the non-state actors that control the district have a symbiotic relationship. Christopher Coke, a Kingston gangster who headed an international drug and weapons trafficking network called the "Shower Posse," tightly controlled Tivoli Gardens until his arrest in 2010. Coke's organization had a strong relationship with then-Prime Minister Bruce Golding, the leader of the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), supporting the JLP in elections in return for government services. In 2010, however, the Jamaican government ended the relationship by launching a military operation against the Shower Posse.

The theory of competitive control is another important issue Kilcullen raises in *Out of the Mountains*. This theory says that whichever local armed actor the population perceives will be best able to establish a stable and predictable system of control is most likely to dominate the population and territory. The Shower Posse in Jamaica, the clan militias in Somalia, and the Taliban in Afghanistan are perfect examples of this theory: they tend to outcompete potential opponents and exert control over the local populations.

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THE 2011 UPRISINGS IN
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According to Kilcullen, most future conflicts will occur in urban areas. Military planners should therefore prepare the whole military system to fight in a densely populated, highly connected, littoralized urban area. The opposition forces will mostly be non-state actors. As a result, existing military doctrines and publications like FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*; FM 3-06, *Urban Operations*; and JP 3-26, *Counterterrorism*, need to be revised and updated according to the emerging needs of the urban battlefield.¹ The narratives of the 2011 uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria are relevant to potential conflicts in different parts of the world because they offer explicit examples of the future of guerilla warfare and terrorism. What is more, virtual theaters, unmanned aerial vehicles, and cyber warfare—the components of remote warfare—will become increasingly important in the near future.

Kilcullen draws a clear picture of the future of guerilla and urban warfare. He defines the four megatrends by giving examples and statistics supported by scientific information and data analysis. For example, when he discusses population growth, he uses data from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and several articles published in well-known journals and magazines to support his points.² He defines the littoralization megatrend based on sources such as the CIA's *World Factbook* and the United Nations Environment Program,³ while he draws his descriptions of non-state actors and the flow of their activities from the work of researchers like Sean Everton, who study these dark networks.⁴

The book has a very strong argument overall, but there are a couple of points that the author needs to clarify. First, forming a strategy against a military threat is a complex job. Kilcullen states that military planners have to consider the four megatrends and the nature of the threat together. The easy part of military strategizing is the description of the problem. The hard part is how to conceptualize the means to deter and defeat the enemy. The book offers good ideas for military planners, but it does not contain much information for field operators. In addition, Kilcullen does not give a persuasive answer to the question of why future conflicts will bypass rural areas. Even if an increasing number of conflicts emerge

in coastal megacities, that does not mean that future wars will occur mostly in these highly populated regions. Perhaps it would be better to say that the future of guerilla warfare will be a mixture of rural and urban conflicts.

The Afghanistan and Iraq wars show that not all wars and conflicts occur in littoralized or densely populated regions. Terrorist networks like al Shabaab, the PKK (the Kurdistan Workers' Party), and the Taliban still make extensive use of mountainous regions as safe heavens inside Somalia, Turkey, Iraq, and Afghanistan. They need these rugged terrains because, in most circumstances, it is safer for their fighters to be outside of urban areas during the training, preparation, and organization phases of operations. Because most countries' security and armed forces are located in urban areas, it would be unwise for a terrorist organization to choose an urban area as its base. When a state-run army faces a similar, conventional force, it is highly probable that the conflict will occur in densely populated areas. But when an army fights an unconventional force, fighting is likely to take place in both rural and urban areas. It seems clear to me that terrorist networks will continue to use rural areas for their operations in addition to the densely populated urban areas.

I see *Out of the Mountains* not as a set of solutions but as a description of important demographic changes, which can help people understand the changing environment of war and encourage them to think about new solutions to emerging trends. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in insurgency and counterinsurgency studies. The traditional views of insurgency and counterinsurgency have been changing in recent years, and the four megatrends described by Kilcullen will have a profound effect on the future nature of war and insurgency. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fatih Celenay is a former officer in the Turkish Army.

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NOTES

- 1 Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3-24 (Washington, D.C.: HQ, Department of the Army, 2006): <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/Repository/Materials/COIN-FM3-24.pdf>; Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Urban Operations*, FM 3-06 (Washington, D.C.: HQ, Department of the Army, 2006): http://www.apd.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/fm3_06.pdf; Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterterrorism*, JP 3-26 (Washington, D.C.: CJCS, 2014): http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_26.pdf
- 2 United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision; Volume I: Comprehensive Tables* (New York: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011): http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/trends/population-prospects_2010_revison.shtml; "Concrete Jungles," *Economist*, 29 September 2012: <http://www.economist.com/node/21563412>
- 3 Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook* (Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2015): <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2212.html>; United Nations Environment Programme, Urban Environment Unit, n.d.: http://hqweb.unep.org/urban_environment/issues/coastal_zones.asp
- 4 Sean F. Everton, *Disrupting Dark Networks*, Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences 34 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

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