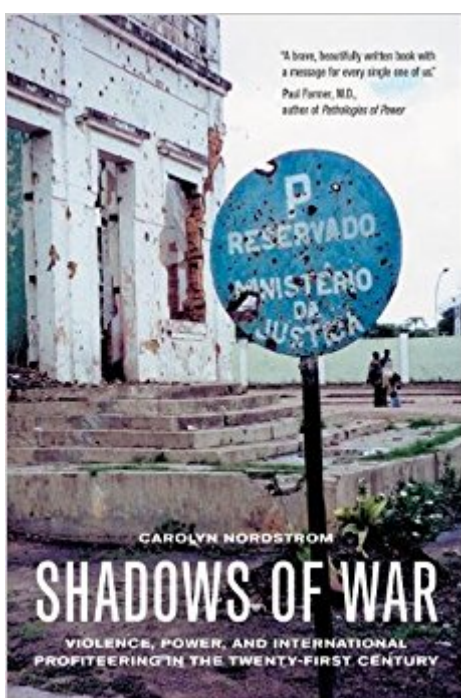


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Shadows Of War: Violence, Power, And International Profiteering In The Twenty-First Century (California Series In Public Anthropology)



Synopsis

In this provocative and compelling examination of the deep politics of war, Carolyn Nordstrom takes us from the immediacy of war-zone survival, through the offices of power brokers, to vast extra-legal networks that fuel war and international profiteering. She captures the human face of the front lines, revealing both the visible and the hidden realities of war in the twenty-first century. *Shadows of War* is grounded in ethnographic research carried out at the epicenters of political violence on several continents. Its pages are populated not only with the perpetrators and victims of war but also with the scoundrels, silent heroes, and average families who live their lives in the midst of explosive violence. War reconfigures our most basic notions of humanity, Nordstrom demonstrates. This book, of crucial importance at the present moment, shows that war is enmeshed in struggles over the very foundations of the sovereign state, the crafting of economic empires both legal and illegal, and innovative searches for peace. Nordstrom describes the multi-trillion-dollar international financial networks that support warfare. She traces the entangled routes by which illegal drugs, precious gems, weapons, basic food supplies, and pharmaceuticals are moved by an international cast of businesspeople, profiteers, and black-market operators. *Shadows of War* demonstrates how the experiences of both the architects of war and of ordinary people are deleted from media accounts and replaced with stories about soldiers, weapons, and territory. For the first time, this book retrieves from the shadows the faces of those whose stories seldom reach the light of international recognition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This should be made into a movie!"#151;Katia Lund, Co-director of City of God"Carolyn Nordstrom destroys the categories through which we normally look at war. This is a major achievement. Her eyewitness reporting, when contrasted with the official histories later compiled of the same events, is a revelation. The amount of 'extra-state' activity surrounding any war is vast, and Nordstrom evokes and analyzes it so fully, so deftly, that no one who reads this book will look at war news quite the same way again. Meanwhile, the extra-state itself, typified by Al Qaeda, has begun to drive world politics and generate wars with terrifying success."#151;William Finnegan, author of A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique"A gripping account of what the author calls 'research into the shadows' -- the often dangerous world of the powerful and wealthy who inhabit global extra-governmental organizations. It is also about the dehumanizing effects of war and violence on the victims. Nordstrom says: 'It is the only way I know how to write about war: being there.' This book provides a rare opportunity of 'being there' with a courageous and highly observant anthropologist. I recommend it highly."#151;Richard Goldstone, Former Chief Prosecutor of the International War Crimes Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda"Carolyn Nordstrom, a pioneer in warzone ethnography, gives us an up-close view of the shadowy worlds of wartime economics. Money laundering, blood diamonds, gun running -- Nordstrom puts faces on each of these. Seeing the faces makes the moral dilemmas of war not simpler, but more realistic. This is an innovative and important book."#151;Cynthia Enloe, author of Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives"Nordstrom is a compassionate scholar who simply and doggedly uses ethnography to follow the question. This approach takes Nordstrom from the spectacular violence of armed conflict--the flames and mobs and murder--to the even more destructive but hidden structural violence--the 'shadows' that few seek to understand. This is engaged, urgent scholarship at its best."#151;Paul Farmer, M.D., author of Pathologies of Power

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This book reveals aspects of war normally "in the shadows"--the vast profits to be made from conflicts in resource-rich regions; the informal systems through which the resources move north to the "peaceful" developed countries and the weapons, medicines, technology of the north move south to fuel the wars and also sometimes to help heal them. This is wonderful anthropology, rich in quotes and stories from the winners and losers in war--from UN officials, profiteers, development bankers to resourceful homeless children of the streets. *Shadows of War* will change the way you see the world. It has tremendous implications for the future of all of us in the 21st century, who live amongst the realities of extra-state power (like bin Laden's) that we are hardly beginning to understand.

good

The book arrived with no markings at all. It is in perfect condition, and the book itself is wonderful for any anthropology student.

Dr. Nordstrom consistently goes where most of us never will, both physically and intellectually.

Another great work.

This is a wonderful book to understand what is "normality" outside the vision of the Media but the essence of our century for much of the world. Simplistic phrases like "failed state" don't cut it and their use by diplomats, policy makers, or pundits merely proves their ignorance and/or superficiality. It is usually also evidence that they don't really care a bit so long as raw materials from these areas make it to world markets. Many people and a very significant part of the world economy is in this "unofficial" and shadowlike area. Many depend upon it without even knowing that it exists. (Violent "terrorism" is our present obsession but not the only storyline to understand much of the world.) The author is an Anthropologist who has spent considerable time in various no-man's lands especially in Southern Africa and explains some of the illicit "order" that keeps things going in war, borderlands, and general chaos. There are brief comparative references to Latin America as well. The analysis and description is the best I have ever seen in print (much deeper than Kaplan's *Coming Anarchy* which might be the nearest comparison although very different in style and with little real analysis). Perhaps a fifth of the book is telling anecdotes that humanize the book and are relevant but which could be skipped if a reader had little time (these are clearly identified in small print and spacing.) Other readers will find these the most approachable part of the book. Crime, violence, child soldiers, smuggling, viciousness are here. But so are some means of continuing trade and human relations, some sparks of peace and order and even some hopeful examples of places gradually finding their path back to more civil society. From children living in "clean" storm drains as family, to unrecognized states formed in areas of noted violence, to gradual reconciliation after war and violence - there are lessons to be learned and some small ray of hope.

Nordstrom is a great writer, so in one sense it's an easy read. It's challenging, however, in the sense that it touches on the different facets of war - the economy of war (who profits from war and how surprised and frustrated me), the blurry lines between "good" and "bad" people, the shadows of war (what goes on during war that we don't read about in the news - good and bad), the actual definition of peace (does a peace agreement actually mean peace?), etc. This book challenged my understanding of war, peace and justice. War is not black and white; there are more important things than what side wins or loses the war; there are complexities that Nordstrom does a fantastic job challenging the reader to really think about.

Attempting to do research in the field of war and developing, I have mixed feelings about the utility of this book. As a collection of first-hand stories about conflict in Mozambique, the book does an admirable job, and I suspect that anyone who treats it as a adventure travel book with some political overtones will enjoy it. Treat it like early Robert Kaplan, and it will be worth your while. However, if you're looking for some substantial insight into the living conditions of a ravaged permanent conflict-ridden region of the world, I find it lacks academic rigour. Prof Nordstrom begins to chart economic relationships that both fuel and rape the region, yet does so half-heartedly. She discusses the societal strain that the conflict has caused, yet again does so as a storyteller rather than an academic. Although there were a few interesting anecdotes, I felt like I was reading "Chicken Soup for the Soul". The bottom line is, if you're looking for academic insight, look elsewhere. As a description of life in Mozambique, the book is fine. I won't even go into the fact that little is given in the way of solution at the end of the book. Regardless what you feel your role is as an academic, I would have thought rational due diligence would have at least inspired you to write guidance on potential solutions. Otherwise, why read the book? As a postscript, if you've spent any time yourself in developing nations and are looking for this to supplement your experience, you'll find nothing new here.

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