

Observing the battlefields of the world with “Oryx Blog”

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16 Dicembre 2020



Interviste, Osservatorio Globalizzazione

By Amedeo Maddaluno

Good morning Oryx Team! We are having this very nice chat with Mr. Stijn Mitzer, the “deus ex machina” of the website oryxspioenkop.com, an unmatched source of information from the world battlefields.

Q: First of all let’s talk a little about who you are: what is your background? Are you running the show alone? And how is the website and the related twitter profile born? Why and when you decided the infosphere needed this source on military facts?”

A: My name is Stijn Mitzer, and along with my co-author Joost Oliemans I’m the author of Oryx Blog. We initially started writing articles in 2013 when I had a moment where I thought to myself, if others can do it, why can’t I? Although initially focused solely on Syria, the range of subjects steadily grew to the worldwide coverage we have today! But for us North Korea was the holy grail in terms of difficulty analyzing, and it quickly became our niche subject. There are other countries we’d like to report on more in the future, such as Cuba and Vietnam. Stay tuned!

Q: In all these years watching wars, battlefields, and military techs deployments, did you see any major change in warfighting and warfare? We hear a lot of talks about RMA, hybrid wars, multi-domain, cyber-stuffs and so on, and in your article we see lots of drones and innovations... coupled with a lot of dust, mud, rusting Kalashnikov and even T-55's... so did the way wars are fought really change thanks to technology?

A: I think that the recent Nagorno-Karabakh war perfectly showcases that the way wars are being fought really has changed over the past few years. A frozen conflict from the 1990s till 2020, the arrival of Turkish drones and (likely) EW assets turned the tables completely, ending the war in 44 days. Whether other countries are able to replicate this depends on a lot of factors, with the limited successes with drones obtained by the UAE in Libya showing that drones themselves aren't the wonder weapon people sometimes think they are.

Q: In terms of technological innovation, which was the most interesting conflict you analysed? And in terms of tactics and strategy?

A: The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the most interesting conflict in terms of technological innovation. When dealing with tactics and strategy the first thing that comes to my mind is the type of warfare conducted by Islamic State in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere. There's so much to say about this that it could fill a book, or several articles already posted on our blog.

Q: Is it possible that the western military debate is today too focused on technology and less on strategy? Do you see this risk?

A: I can't speak for the entire debate, but I know that the conflict in Ukraine was a wake up call for many European militaries both in technology (electronic warfare and drones), equipment (such as rocket artillery) and strategy. So I think a lot is happening behind the scenes that most people don't necessarily know about.

Q: As a final question, I want to spot the lights on your SUPERB book on North Korea with Helion Publishing I just bought and devoured: any future project? You collected LOTS of data in these years and I am sure you got enough to fill not a superb book, but an entire prime quality bookshop!

A: Around this time next year four separate editions will be released (1: Ground Forces, 2: Air Force, 3: Navy and 4: Special Forces and Rocket Force), which will include all information that's in the current book but updated to 2021 standards, including everything you just saw in the parade! There's also a book on North Korea's foreign intelligence agencies coming in the future, so there's still plenty to research and write about!

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