

BOOK REVIEWS

Charters, David, and Maurice Tugwell, eds. *Armies in Low-Intensity Conflict: A Comparative Analysis*. London: Brassey's, 1989.

The provenance of this study of how armies adapt to low-intensity warfare was a study commissioned by the Canadian Department of National Defence. Such comparative studies are highly desirable and should be of particular value in the study of counter-insurgency but, sadly, this volume is something of a disappointment.

It is not clear whether the six individual essays were first presented as conference papers (editor's note: they were not) but this certainly appears the case given the considerable variation in length and style. Indeed, the essays on the British and French experience contributed respectively by David Charters and Michel Martin are twice the length of those on the United States, Israeli and Canadian experiences contributed respectively by Sam Sarkesian, Gunther Rothenberg and David Charters in cooperation with James LeBlanc. The contributions by Rothenberg and Sarkesian are also almost entirely drawn from secondary sources by comparison with the wide variety of primary sources consulted by Charters for his essay on British practise, which has no less than 233 footnotes.

Some disparity in themes covered is perhaps inevitable in any collective work but it does often seem that it is only Charters himself and his co-author on the Canadian essay who has followed a consistent framework of analysis. Unfortunately, too, the introduction by Tugwell adds little to the overall cohesion of the volume with a rambling historical discourse of marginal relevance to the overall theme: the reader would be well advised to study the conclusions first in order to determine those guidelines that the editors presumably laid down for the other contributors.

Although some updating of the original study has clearly been undertaken by some of the contributors, it is again almost inevitable that events will have overtaken some of the conclusions advanced. Thus, Rothenberg has not been able to take account of the IDF's less than accomplished handling of the Palestinian *intifada* while Charters' comments regarding the educational and military training undertaken at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst and the Staff College, Camberley do not reflect the considerable recent changes in the Junior Command and Staff Course (JCSC) programme.

But even though Sarkesian and Rothenberg say nothing new and Martin's division of French practise into *guerre algerienne* and *guerre africaines* is unconvincing, there is still value to be gained from this volume. The essay on the Canadian experience is particularly interesting, while it is worth buying the book for Charters' essay on the British army alone. Covering both the traditional British approach to counter-insurgency and such specialized aspects as command, special forces, intelligence and information services, he has produced a

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shrewd and penetrating study of one of the most successful of practitioners in that most trying of combat roles for modern armies.

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Rice, Edward E. *Wars of the Third Kind. Conflict in Underdeveloped Countries.* Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1988.

Peterson, Michael E. *The Combined Action Platoons. The U.S. Marines' Other War in Vietnam.* New York: Praeger, 1989.

America's seemingly impossible failure in South Vietnam continues to tax the minds of those involved. How might the lessons of Vietnam guide future US military intervention is the implicit question of both works reviewed here. Each draws on historical analysis and the personal reflections of the authors who participated, in one form or another, in the effort to save Vietnam from itself.

Edward Rice, is a former career Foreign Service Officer with assignments in China, 1937-45, the Philippines, 1949-51, the State Department Policy Planning Staff, 1959-61, and who served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 1961-63, and US consul general to Hong Kong, 1963-67. He is also author of the acclaimed *Mao's Way*. In this volume Rice contributes observations drawn from his exposure to conflict in Asia and from a survey of innumerable counter-guerrilla and counter-insurgency wars from throughout the ages and the world.

Rice's comparative analysis employs examples ranging from such diverse struggles as the Czarist suppression of various nationalities in the central Caucasus, the Chinese civil war, the Sino-Japanese war, the Malayan Emergency, urban insurrections in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Uruguay, the Peninsular War, the Huk rebellion, Algeria, and the thirty-year war in Vietnam, among others. Naturally, comparisons entail epistemological and practical problems, but after asserting these struggles were "in essence" the same, however much they differed "in their particulars," Rice spends no time addressing these concerns.

Such a broad sweep proves the work's major weakness, and strength. Problems first emerge with the very title — "wars of the third kind." Rice coins this phrase to describe wars that are neither nuclear nor conventional, and for which "guerrilla wars" in an inappropriate title because reliance on guerrilla operations "may be only partial." Such may be true, but surely partisan war, counter-insurgency, revolutionary war, small war, low-intensity conflict, or even the British phrase "warm war" would have sufficed. A more normative title for the set of rather discrete dirty little wars that have raged throughout history might be welcome, but Rice's is employed so indiscriminately that it is of little use. Dependence on secondary sources, and in at least one occasion the