James DeFronzo, a sociologist at the University of Connecticut, has produced a very unusual book about revolution. He is guided by neither theory nor paradigm. He explains Marxism in 23 lines in one place and 33 lines in another. And there is not one single reference in the entire book to the theories of Pareto.

After this unpromising beginning, DeFronzo explains the Russian revolutions without having read Conquest or Pipes or Solzhenitsyn. We learn that “Stalin and his supporters established an authoritarian governmental structure” (p. 57) characterized by a “relative lack of civil liberties and political freedom.” (p. 51) Regarding the purges, DeFronzo notes that “thousands” were killed and “many were deported to remote regions;” that’s it. “Yet Stalin’s leadership did accomplish rapid industrialization.” (p. 49) There is no shred of evidence that DeFronzo cares about or is even aware of Stalinism’s systematic moral deformation of the Russian people. And the Cold War arose because “almost immediately following World War II the Soviet Union was confronted with a rekindled hostility from the major capitalist powers.” (p. 51)

DeFronzo produced his chapter on China apparently without consulting the works of Doak Barnett, Chalmers Johnson, Lucian Pye or J.K. Fairbank. Thus, concerning Mao’s Great Leap Forward, which even veteran apologists for Chinese Communism now concede to have produced an unprecedented man-made famine that killed millions, DeFronzo observes that “the negative consequences of the Great Leap seem to have outweighed the gains.” (p. 89)

On Viet Nam, the author fails to cite Lewy or Smith or even Duiker’s Communist Road. He thinks that the NLF was an independent southern organization. In Central America, the Reagan Administration opposed the Sandinistas out of fear that the example of Nicaragua would endanger multinational corporations all over the globe. (p. 222) DeFronzo opines that revolution may now stalk the United States since “the guardians of the traditional capitalist system [are] deprived of their once-powerful weapon, ‘the threat of communism’.” (p. 318)

One could go on and on with this catalog of superficiality, naivete and misinformation, but to what end?

Bard O’Neill, professor of international affairs at the National War College, has given us something very different. He analyzes guerrilla insurgencies in terms of their objectives, strategies, environments, popular support,
organizational strength, and external assistance, as well as the kind of government response they provoke. He says some puzzling things about why the Algerian revolt against France succeeded, and largely ignores the question of guerrilla bases and government response to them (as well as the important question of when and how the government should solidify its own base). But this brief, clearly written volume usually hits the target, beginning with its prediction that insurgencies will continue as a major world political phenomenon.

For O'Neill, the government response to insurgency is decisive. A correct response can only be rooted in the all-important will to resist defeat. It includes timely efforts to split the leadership of an insurgency from the mass by instituting some important reforms, and successful efforts to control violence and rapine by government troops against civilians (something far easier to prescribe than to enforce). To aid in developing the correct response, Bard wants the target government to identify the real aim of the guerrillas: do they want to change certain government policies, or get rid of the present rulers, or change some basic rules of the political game, or secede from the community entirely?

Among other important points, Bard calls into question the universal applicability of the old Maoist-Chinese model of insurgency into question, pointing out that most governments today are indigenous, and have much more sophisticated weapons than either the Japanese or Chiang’s Nationalists had in the 1940s. And he reminds us that external support, much emphasized by writers on guerrilla war, has played practically no part among the Peruvian Senderistas or the Philippine NPA.

In summary, Bard’s book is a valuable addition to the increasingly sophisticated literature on guerrilla insurgency.

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His fourth book on the post-independence expulsion of Spaniards from Mexico, Harold Sims describes the present study as a summation and expansion of his previous works on the topic. For centuries the small Spanish born minority in Mexico, identified by the derogatory term as gachupines, enjoyed special access to administrative posts in the colonial bureaucracy, military, and Church; dominated commerce; and expressed haughty attitudes to anything Mexican.