

Joes, Anthony James. *America and Guerrilla Warfare*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.

The world is a dangerous place. It has always been and always will be so. But, the dangers of the world in the post-Cold War years and in the near future are unlikely to resemble the dangers of interstate conflict witnessed before and during the Cold War. Wars present and future may not involve the massed armies of years past. Instead, our recent wars are most often internal and include a variety of non-state actors asserting their various claims by use of force; organized criminals, drug cartels, ideological and religious groups, rebels, warlords, terrorists and private armies to name a few. Further, these actors do not operate in the environments for which the most advanced armies are best suited. The new warriors operate in terrain as varied as the mountainous Balkans, semiarid central Asia and the jungles of West Africa. It is likely, therefore, that the major powers, particularly the United States, will be forced to take part in a guerrilla style conflict in topographically inhospitable regions strewn with collapsed states.

It is with knowledge of this likelihood that Anthony James Joes has written his latest book, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*. This is a comparative study of conflicts in which the United States became involved directly or indirectly with guerrilla warriors. Although Joes is sensibly wary of over-analogizing the past to the present, he writes *America and Guerrilla Warfare* in order to "extract the . . . insight that arises from careful analysis of each particular case in its particular context and hopes that American military personnel and policy makers will not ignore their institutions' valuable past experience with this type of conflict." (p. 3) After all, ". . . those who would seek to defeat the insurgencies of tomorrow would do well to study the insurgencies of yesterday." (p. 207)

Joes examines chronologically nine conflicts in which the US became involved in guerrilla wars. But he could just as well have divided his cases into four types of US involvement. The first would be Americans as guerrillas. In this category are guerrilla units under Francis Marion and Thomas Sumter in the Carolinas during the War for Independence as well as the units of John Mosby in Virginia and William Quantrill in the West during the Civil War. From the brilliant Marion to the bloody Quantrill, American guerrillas were expert at harassing, distracting and wearing down the armies arrayed against them.

The second type of involvement would be Americans in support of guerrilla insurgents. The example of this in Joes' work is American support for the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan following the 1979 Soviet invasion. Consisting of small monetary support at first, the Americans by the end of the conflict were arming the *mujahadeen* (and, in the process, the Pakistanis who were funneling the weapons across their border) with both American and Soviet weapons, including the useful Stinger missile.

The third type of involvement would be American support of governments besieged by guerrillas. This category includes the monetary, political and military support of the Greek, Philippine and Salvadoran governments.

The last type of American involvement would be directly combating guerrillas as in the Philippines, Nicaragua and Vietnam. Of course, Vietnam, alone, could possibly make a fifth category, containing the one unsuccessful anti-insurgent operation. In Vietnam, those who believed in the technological superiority and firepower of the superpower army ignored the lessons of the past, at great cost.

From his analysis of the case studies, Joes offers a number of conclusions. The most important of these goes beyond sound tactical decisions, such as numerical superiority, isolating the battlefield and holding territory. Joes urges those involved in these conflicts to always remember that it is a political struggle. The victor in guerrilla war will be the side who gathers the most legitimacy from the local population. Hearts and minds matter greatly. It is better to advise local forces than to appear to be a foreign invader. It is better to understand the local languages, social structures and culture than to be ignorant. It is better to be a reformer of poor land distribution, of corrupt political structures and of unprofessional militaries than to be a bulwark of a corrupt regime. The way to win a guerrilla war is to convince the local population, the nutrient rich waters in which Mao's proverbial fish swim, that one side is simply criminal and that the other is a legitimate, responsive and responsible force of change and hope. Whichever side defines this duality in their favor, wins.

America and Guerrilla Warfare is an informative read with just over three hundred pages. The nine case studies and their analysis make an excellent textbook as Joes describes the necessary ingredients for successful guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency, presents case studies of both, and examines the results. *America and Guerrilla Warfare* should be included in the library of anyone studying internal warfare and the political and tactical lessons of Americas past military engagements.

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