

Joes, Anthony James. *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

Christian Breil

Volume 25, numéro 2, winter 2005

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs25_2br06

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Breil, C. (2005). Compte rendu de [Joes, Anthony James. *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.] *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 25(2), 167–169.

the mavericks, who truly have courage, not just on the battlefield but in the halls of the Pentagon, who value education, who reach out to the other relevant players in the security environment (non-governmental organizations, UN, elements of the interagency, sister services, etc), and who clearly articulate the military's role in the myriad complex challenges that we face now and in the future.

Colonel Cindy R. Jebb is Professor and Deputy Head in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy.

Joes, Anthony James. *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

Anthony James Joes' most recent book on guerrilla warfare is written to teach the important elements of counterinsurgency to a primarily American audience. Joes feels counterinsurgency has been ignored by historians who write mainly of great battles and who romanticize the exploits of guerrilla leaders while ignoring the famous commanders of counterinsurgency. Joes also is concerned that although America's military is likely to be involved in future guerrilla style conflicts, possibly with increasing frequency, American strategists continue to concentrate on the blitzkrieg-style speed and violence that has come to be known as the American way of war. In order to remedy the situation, Joes has written a well-researched guide to counterinsurgency to show that with an intelligent strategy based on historical lessons America can fight and win asymmetrical conflicts.

As Joes admits, no two conflicts are exactly alike, and he pokes fun at those Americans who regularly protest "No More Vietnams." However, a serious look at history's many insurgencies, small wars, and asymmetrical conflicts does reveal certain truths about the nature of this type of conflict. The episodes in history covered by Joes begin with the American War of Independence and end with a brief epilogue on the current war in Iraq. Occasionally, Joes travels even farther into the past when he briefly mentions Roman operations in Spain, and "the brilliant exploits" of Judas Maccabeus against the Syrians. The most important truth revealed from history, the one most often forgotten by Americans dazzled by firepower and speed, is that insurgency and counterinsurgency are political phenomena, that victory comes through the restoration of peace, and peace comes from what can best be described as good government. In order to achieve peace one must, Joes says, reintegrate into society its disaffected elements through conservative military tactics, redressing grievances, making amnesty attractive, and erecting a legitimate government. "Its essence is maximum force with minimum

violence. Its goal is to destroy the will of the enemy, not their lives, and certainly not the lives of civilians.”

The political goal is to undercut the guerrilla leaders’ relationship to the ordinary guerilla fighter, and undercutting the guerrilla’s relationship to civil society in order to win civil society’s neutrality if not their loyalty. A guerrilla force isolated from the population will be easy to pursue and destroy and will starve from lack of support. According to his research, Joes says this can be done by branding the guerrilla leaders as criminals, offering amnesty to the guerrillas who had no part in their leaders’ criminality, establishing civilian security, and protecting their lives and property both from the criminal guerrillas and from the excesses of the counterinsurgents. Good government, being fair and just in the treatment of civilians, maintaining the rule of law, being responsive to legitimate civilian grievances, and what Joes repeatedly refers to as “rectitude,” are the things that will divide civil society from the insurgents. In a way, Joes is arguing that the counterinsurgents need to be democracy builders. Joes even mentions that Che Guevara stated in his writings that guerrillas cannot defeat a democracy nor even a government that pretends to be a democracy. Joes recognizes the complexity of such a task, and notes that the patience and restraint needed for such a mission is in many ways diametrically opposed to the American way of war which places the emphasis on “maximum violence and swift results,” and just as importantly the “notoriously impatient American public.”

This is not to say that firepower and speed have no place in counterinsurgency; they most certainly do. The direct actions against the insurgents Joes discusses includes committing to the fight “an abundance of well turned out troops” in an average of ten counterinsurgents to one guerrilla. He frequently references the US Marines Small Wars manual which calls for well armed, highly mobile “flying columns” to hunt down guerrillas in their sanctuaries and pursue them relentlessly. Joes also calls for isolating the battle space from outside support; developing timely, accurate, and actionable intelligence; draining the population of weapons; and the “rigorous punishment” of criminals found among the guerrillas ranks, guerrillas who fail to negotiate when they know their cause is lost, and civilians who live in government-secured areas but continue to aid the insurgents.

In addition to its overall theme as a guide to counterinsurgency, *Resisting Rebellion* offers a brief but thorough review of guerrilla strategy, and examines the causes and political environments that encourage insurgency. Joes dismisses several “myths” of guerrilla war. Guerrillas can be defeated. Mao did not win the People’s War, but rather the Kuomintang was destroyed by the Japanese. American forces in Vietnam had in fact defeated the insurgency when they withdrew and left the government in Saigon to be defeated by a conventional invasion from the North. Guerrillas have lost in Venezuela and Thailand because they never achieved the support of civil society. Joes shows that, unlike the false Cold War belief that insurgencies are primarily fought by Communists, throughout his-

tory more often than not insurgents have been fueled by religion, no doubt a reflection of the importance of respecting and understanding Islam in America's two ongoing counterinsurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Overall, Joes' *Resisting Rebellion* is a masterful review of insurgency and does a great job of arguing for a democratic and sensible strategy of counterinsurgency. The fact that *Resisting Rebellion* is grounded in historical fact, is well organized and easy to read, and is just under 250 pages makes it even more valuable. It would be just as good a text for students being first introduced to the subject, as it would be a valuable addition to the library of an academic who has long studied the subject, as it would be a good read for those to whom Joes has dedicated the work, the warfighters who face the guerrilla where it truly matters.

Christian Breil

Kaplan, Lawrence S. *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004.

Since Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and the profound transatlantic discord between the United States and most of Europe, it seems popular to predict NATO's demise. It has been written that NATO is now irrelevant; that the foreign policy differences between the United States, France, and Germany renders the alliance useless; or that the increasing military capabilities gap between the United States and Europe is a herald for NATO's collapse. Certainly, a case can be made for each of these assertions. At the same time, Lawrence S. Kaplan's new book provides a challenge to NATO's most recent skeptics, and encourages readers to have historical respect for NATO's longevity, given its record of transatlantic differences that consistently plagued the alliance during the Cold War.

As the author of two previous books on NATO and arguably its foremost historian, Kaplan chronicles the history of NATO's internal problems, beginning with the negotiations over Article 5, NATO's collective defense agreement, up to the present differences over Iraq. The majority of the book focuses, however, on Cold War debates. Kaplan is not attempting to unearth new historical data on NATO, but rather is attempting to highlight NATO's complicated history, while implicitly demonstrating its ability to survive.

Among the historical clashes that Kaplan addresses are the differences between the United States and Europe over the rearmament of Germany after the Second World War, the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956, the United States' decision to