



**Beatrice Heuser and Eitan Shamir eds: *Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies: National Styles and Strategic Cultures*.  
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This collected volume offers an empirically based, historically minded, theoretically informed and overall very well-written book about how national approaches - that is, collective cognitive templates or models - influence insurgencies

and counterinsurgencies. The excellent volume is based on a conference held at Israel's Bar-Ilan University in 2012 but is a model edited volume both for the sustained and consistent questions that undergird all of the chapters as for the excellent integrative pieces pulling it together. Moreover, in contrast to other earlier volumes on the subject, the book, edited by Beatrice Heuser of Reading University and Eitan Shamir of Bar-Ilan University, includes excellent sections not only on COIN (counter insurgency) but also on styles of insurgencies and the interactions between insurgents and the forces charged with countering them. Apart from the integrative chapters, it offers thirteen cases that show how diverse cases evolve out of interactions between local groups/conditions and international and transnational flows, and networks of ideas and practices. Very usefully, the different contributions also underscore how individual styles change over time and the volume includes cases like Russia and Greece that have not received as much attention as those of Britain, France, the United States or Israel.

Let me sketch out the volume's contents before dealing with some of its wider implications. Framed by an analytical introduction and conclusion, the volume is divided into three sections. The first focuses on national styles of COIN and opens with Egnell and Uckos' chapter on the British case between 1945 and 2003. In their careful analysis, they critique the widely held belief - often cultivated by British officers and "experts" - that that this country's approach is successful. Chapter Three by Fremeaux and Reis deals with French counterinsurgency in the Algerian Wars (1830-1962). It argues that the failure of the French in Algeria had to do not with the tactical level but with the political and strategic dimensions (colored by the perspective of Algeria as "French forever"). The next contribution by Stephen Blank on Russia is not only important for providing a case not usually included in the relevant scholarly literature but for its systematic analysis and for underscoring why this country's tradition of COIN failed. Chapter Five by Yitzhak Shichor on China again opens up a usually overlooked case to offer a nuanced analysis of both historical continuities and differences. David E. Johnson's piece is on the United States' traditions of 250 years of irregular warfare. His historical analysis explains why this superpower is unprepared for COIN given the underlying cultural assumptions at base of the way the military is trained and used. Henning Pieper's Chapter Seven deals with Germany during World War II and its brutal tactics owing to Nazi views, and the over-stretch of troops and resources across battlefronts. Inbar and Shamir analyze Israel's adaptability to

insurgencies, the methods it used and uses and its emphasis on military operations. Here again they place their analysis in a firm historical context.

The second part of the book moves on to insurgency strategies. It opens with Chapter Nine by Jacques Fremeaux on the Algerian's struggle for national liberation. He offers an analysis of ideology, military organization and strategies, and external influences (like nationalism and Islamism). Jim Storr, in a too short chapter, deals with the Irish Republican Insurgency between 1969-2007. He shows some particular aspects of the Irish case (Catholicism) but argues that this case is similar to other insurgencies. Carmit Valensi focuses on Palestinian Resistance to challenge the idea of a single national style. In addition, she shows how it evolved to include a variety of means of regular and irregular forces and political and diplomatic means. Chapter Twelve by Rob Johnson deals with the Taliban to show its internal heterogeneity, constant transformation and particular warrior ethos.

The third part of the volume deals with how interactions between counter and insurgencies have developed in diverse cases. In Chapter Thirteen, Spyridon Plakoudas offers an investigation of guerilla and counter-guerrilla in Greece. He shows that a long tradition of irregulars (often part-time bandits) was finally cast aside after the Second World War by the communists and the state forces that fought them. In his chapter, Eyal Zisser analyzes the recent insurrection and its suppression in Syria (2011-2016) and contends that the way to understand developments in this country is via a move from focusing on one insurgency to analyzing a plethora of diverse insurgencies. In Chapter Fifteen, Elie Tenenbaum offers a fascinating, and important, essay about a connected history of Cold War counterinsurgency. This chapter thus moves from a focus on national cases to an international strategic community enabled by the globalization of knowledge while not denying the continued importance of national cultural barriers.

The final chapter by the editors is a brilliant exposition of what they call a "universal toolbox" that seems to be common to COIN around the world. The aim of the chapter is thus to discover if there are unique or common patterns across cases. It concludes that many tools are common both to insurgencies and counterinsurgencies, and that styles can change. They end on a rather pessimistic, or realistic, conclusion that overall while the liberal democracies do have problems waging war, COIN has not become more humane.

The overall import of the volume can be divided into two clusters of issues. The first is that any case study should include an appreciation of comparative perspectives. This point implies placing many contemporary investigations of COIN in the so-called "New Wars" into a comparative frame across time and at one point of time. Scholars' frequent tendency toward presentism in their analyses and (at times) conclusion that the current state of affairs is the culmination, the concluding development of a set of phenomena should thus be tempered by such a view. This is all the more important in the case of the United States, the leader in many coalitions, where one often find a penchant for overemphasizing the "ultimate," sure-fire solution to COIN in technological means. Indeed, it is precisely because one can read the different cases appearing in this volume together and comparatively that one can learn what is particular to each and what is common across them.

Second, the volume makes a very strong case for putting at the center of analysis cultural models or traditions - not the hackneyed sense of learning local customs but that of the composite cognitive and practical amalgams that are tension-filled and that comprise a national style of insurgency or COIN. These cultural lenses are historical creations and deeply embedded in society, national symbols, and military institutions. Moreover, the editors and contributors convincingly show the importance of understanding culture as a system that changes historically but are careful to show that it is not an ultimate key to understanding armed struggles. Thus almost all of the chapters emphasize change and adaptability on both sides and thus the inclusion of chapters on interactions between warring sides is commendable. Thus the implication of the volume is that while broadly speaking there may be national styles here, they change and are often hard to put down.

To conclude I very highly recommend this volume both for the high level of scholarship it displays but for being a ideal model of how an edited collection should be put together. I will surely return to it in the future.

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