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# Guerrilla Conflict before the Cold War

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content and process. The close working relationship between Canadian academics and their naval establishment is demonstrated by the names and affiliations of the various authors. This relationship results in a healthy interchange of ideas between the two communities, whereas in the United States many active duty naval officers eschew discussions with academe. Canadian naval officers have demonstrated a willingness to work with their academic colleagues and can benefit from their research. It is a lesson that is often ignored south of the border.

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Joes, Anthony James. *Guerrilla Conflict before the Cold War*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996. 209pp. \$55

Three questions loom large in the study of guerrilla warfare. The first is whether history offers any lessons that transcend the peculiarities of time and place. The second is whether American policy makers can usefully draw on any guerrilla experience other than Vietnam. The third is whether this, the most modern of nations in a new world order, can find useful instruction in the ways of guerrilla conflict in any pre-Cold War, or even any Cold War, history.

Most scholars have weighed in with decisive no's to all three questions: no, the lessons of the past are too murky to be of use even if they could be agreed upon; no, the failure of U.S. counterinsurgency in Vietnam is the quintessential case of a First World hegemon pitted against

misunderstood and determined revolutionaries; no, Cold War conflicts are *sui generis*, and pre-Cold War conflicts are too remote to offer any instruction in this multipolar, post-Westphalian, new-world age of computers, precision weapons, porous borders, and powerful nongovernmental organizations. But notwithstanding these scholars, who busy themselves drawing sharp distinctions between past and present, others are busy drawing lessons based on the continuity of past, present, and future.

Anthony Joes, author of five books on guerrilla warfare (including one on the Vietnam War) answers "yes" to all three questions: yes, there are specific principles of guerrilla conflict to be culled from an examination of cases; yes, the Americans have a rich experience of both successful insurgency and successful counterinsurgency on which to draw; and yes, pre-Cold War histories can usefully instruct military planners and statesmen in the ways and waves of the future.

Joes arrives at these answers by delving into four case studies well selected for their range of variables and balance of outcomes. Two of the four cases are American affairs, two are European. Two cases are civil wars, two are wars of resistance. In two cases the insurgents win, in two they lose. All four conflicts took place between 1776 and 1866, and all in an international structure that was not bipolar. The variety and remoteness of these histories might lead one to conclude, as many have, that each episode of guerrilla conflict must be unique. The author demonstrates otherwise.

Joes concludes that guerrilla warriors do not so much win as regular armies

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simply give up, or worse, allow guerrillas to transform themselves into a regular army. "Serious guerrilla movements cannot be defeated on the cheap," and the country that attempts to do so will fail. Guerrillas, for their part, should act in combination with regular troops, or wait and protract the conflict until they can become regular troops. In this same vein, Joes emphasizes the importance of foreign assistance to guerrilla movements. The American revolutionaries had essential strategic help from the French navy, but counterrevolutionaries in the French Vendée were isolated and doomed. The Spanish resistance to Napoleon both aided and was aided by the British. The American Confederacy never succeeded in gaining foreign allies.

Joes concludes most powerfully, asserting that "rectitude is worth many battalions." Such a statement recalls that war is a matter of politics and diplomacy as much as of tactics. Abraham Lincoln's generous treatment of the defeated rebels is the best explanation of why a post-Appomattox guerrilla war never materialized. Conversely, the French Convention's policy of genocide for the Vendéens in 1793–1794 not only failed to defeat the insurgency but helped spawn the 1815 uprising against Napoleon's return from Elba—a rebellion that took thirty thousand troops to suppress at a time when the rethroned emperor had only seventy-two thousand men at Waterloo.

Bonaparte himself had once been offered the opportunity to command artillery in the Vendée but refused the assignment. Little wonder then that when his turn came to suppress Spanish

guerrillas fighting French hegemony, Bonaparte repeated the mistakes of the early Revolutionaries—his brutal policies guaranteed that the resistance would have no choice but to continue to death or victory.

It is also little wonder that the Central Intelligence Agency put Joes's book among its top ten must-reads for 1997. Even if one did not agree with Joes's conclusions, the book is a superb one for any history buff. Each chapter may be taken as a unique case, even if the author argues otherwise. And each reader can no doubt find his or her own worthwhile lessons in the four histories. The value of those lessons, and of Joes's conclusion, will depend upon whether the reader agrees with his central assertions: that guerrilla warfare is a "specter . . . haunting the Post Cold War world," and, quoting C.E. Callwell, that "guerrilla warfare is what regular armies have most to dread."

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Sheppard, Don. *Destroyer Skipper: A Memoir of Command at Sea*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1996. 270pp. \$24.95  
*Destroyer Skipper* is an engaging recounting of the author's experiences while serving first as the executive officer of one destroyer and later as commanding officer of another during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Sheppard started his career as an enlisted sailor in 1948 and served nearly thirty years, until 1977. He has previously described the earlier parts of his career in two other books, *Blue Water Sailor* and *Riverine*.