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Research Guide Series

Counterinsurgency (COIN)

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Counter-Insurgency

In the Twentieth Century guerrilla warfare evolved from what had been previously regarded as a purely military form of conflict to one which was motivated by revolutionary ideologies. Movements and individuals increasingly began to use guerrilla tactics to achieve political ends and through the works of T. E. Lawrence, Mao Tse-Tung, Che Guevara and others a body of insurgency theory evolved.

Insurgency is not guaranteed to succeed, but the combination of guerrilla warfare, propaganda and political mobilization has been successful enough to make insurgency the most prevalent form of modern conflict. Since 1945 Britain alone has been involved in campaigns against insurgents in Aden, Afghanistan, Borneo, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Iraq, Kenya, Malaya, Northern Ireland, Palestine, Suez and Vietnam amongst others. Of 94 separate operational commitments undertaken by the British army between 1945 and 1982, only 14 were not in some form of 'low-intensity' conflict.

It is clear therefore that an effective counter-insurgency (COIN) doctrine is of fundamental importance to any modern military force. This has led to the development of counter-insurgency doctrines which recognize the need for government to have a clear political aim; for a co-ordinated political, military and socioeconomic response; the need to give priority to the elimination of political subversion; to secure base areas before conducting a campaign; to co-ordinate the civil-military response; to co-ordinate intelligence; to separate insurgents from their base of support; all combined with the appropriate use of military force against insurgents and finally the introduction of long term reforms addressing the grievances that had led to the insurgency.

Events within the last few years have placed an even greater emphasis on COIN. Post-war Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate the need for effective and robust counter-insurgency doctrines and practice. Such is the need that in December 2006 the US Army issued its first new COIN doctrinal manual for 20 years, and in 2009 the British Army published a new edition of AFM Volume 1, Part 10, *Countering Insurgency*.

This bibliography has been designed to provide a guide as to where to find information on COIN. Please note that the list of references below is a selection of the more relevant titles and information on the subject. The list is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive but is an introductory guide to some of the resources available.

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