

**Victorious Insurgencies: Four Rebellions That Shaped Our World**

By Anthony James Joes

The University Press of Kentucky, 2010

319 pp. \$40.00

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Reviewed by  
ERIC SHIBUYA

If failure is the best teacher, then the study of insurgent victories is obviously of benefit in enhancing counterinsurgent strategies. While each insurgency has different dimensions, they all share varying points of commonality. These are the gems to be mined. In this book, Anthony James Joes analyzes the Maoist revolution in China, Ho Chi Minh's victory in French Indochina, Fidel Castro in Cuba, and the Afghan victory over the Soviets. The Cuban case gets short shrift (somewhat ironic given that the book's cover depicts Cuban revolutionaries); it is less than half the length of the other chapters, and Joes notes in his conclusion that he offers it as a "control case" against which to compare the other insurgencies. Given the subtitle of the book, though, the lesser emphasis on Cuba is understandable. It is the insurgency whose "global" impact can be most debated.

Each case is described in significant detail, and Joes generally achieves a good balance between the level of specific detail and the larger lessons for theoretical analysis. However, the cases do at times get down to levels of specificity that historians will value but that may obfuscate the larger theoretical lessons. In describing the Maoist victory in China, Joes discusses both the Japanese and the Nationalists as the counterinsurgents, but the narrative at times blends the events. While the actual chronology overlaps at times, this section is a little unclear. The lyricism of the writing sometimes distracts from the insights. Joes repeatedly refers to the Soviet army as the "Army that defeated Hitler," when the actual facts detailed in the case show it was nothing

of the sort. Traditions and history matter, but training, equipment, and experience matter more.

On the theoretical side, Joes highlights major factors contributing to insurgent victory. These are the quality of the military leadership, the absence of a peaceful road to change, the inability to prevent external assistance, insufficient forces, and an inability of the counterinsurgents to give full attention to the conflict. The fact that many of these errors are unavoidable in the cases presented is perhaps the hardest lesson. Many counterinsurgents cannot find a peaceful road to change once the conflict has moved too far along for a compromise to be reached.

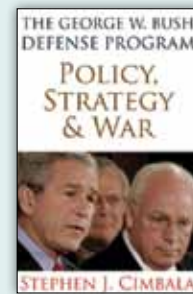
In terms of leadership, Joes rightfully highlights the mistakes made by the government/counterinsurgent forces in either their perception of the threat or the viability of their response. Insurgencies succeed because counterinsurgents fail. This theme recurs throughout the book, but the reasons for such misperception can be very different across the cases. While the case studies highlight specific manifestations of counterinsurgent weakness/inaptitude, the real lesson is understanding the role of these weaknesses and then trying to find how they may manifest themselves in different situations. Counterinsurgency (COIN) forces may underestimate the enemy (as the Nationalist forces did against Mao, or the Soviets in Afghanistan), or they may be unable to commit extra needed forces (France in Indochina). This ends up being the same phenomenon—the lack of sufficient personnel to handle needed COIN operations—but for very different reasons. Joes also notes the role that timing plays in insurgent success. The Japanese invasion meant Nationalist forces understandably had to reprioritize their efforts against the Japanese rather than crushing the communist movement. Timing obviously matters, but how to take advantage of this insight in each particular case is the perennial question.

In the conclusion, Joes offers examples of counterinsurgent victory, but only in passing. Beyond the "usual suspects" (the British in Malaya), he also points to examples such as El Salvador, which is a fascinating case of counterinsurgent success. This is obviously not the topic of this book, so perhaps that will be the focus of a companion volume. There are some minor editorial issues (*The Rape of Nanking* is listed twice, under Chang and "Chong," and Callwell's *Small Wars* is missing

from the bibliography), but overall the book is well edited. A last point that Joes cannot be blamed for, is that, given recent revelations of Stephen Ambrose's work on Eisenhower, conclusions drawn from that work may be questioned.

Joes writes with clarity, but those who have read Jeffrey Record's *Beating Goliath* and Joes's own *Resisting Rebellion* will find little new insight. Any new student of counterinsurgency, however, will find useful information here, as will historians looking for concise analysis on these specific cases. JFQ

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**The George W. Bush Defense Program: Policy, Strategy, and War**

Edited by Stephen J. Cimbala

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332 pp. \$48.00

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Reviewed by  
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Several years after leaving the White House, George W. Bush remains a polarizing figure for many Americans. While hyper-partisan popular critiques of the Bush administration line bookshelves throughout the country, the scholarly literature remains much more limited in comparison, particularly in the area of national security policy. Evaluating the national security policy of any Presidential administration is challenging due to the complexity of the subject matter; however, in the case of the Bush administration, the challenge is compounded by the relatively limited time that has elapsed since the end of the administration. Passions remain high, and many of the historical documents required to conduct comprehensive analyses will remain classified for the foreseeable future, though a number of key documents have already been declassified.

*The George W. Bush Defense Program* is an edited collection of articles examining U.S. defense strategy and policy during the Presidency of George W. Bush. The collection, edited by Pennsylvania State University professor Stephen J. Cimbala, consists of both theoretical and prescriptive essays organized thematically. Ten contributors explore a range of defense and military issues handled by the Bush national security team including defense transformation, the management style of former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his impact on civil-military relations, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S.-Russian relations and nuclear arms control, and foreign military sales.

The book sets out to provide a dispassionate survey of defense strategy and policy during the administration. While it may achieve its intended goal for the lay reader, it offers few fresh insights for scholars, analysts, and policymakers who closely followed or studied the administration. First, the collection lacks important content—a comprehensive analysis of major acquisition decisions and defense spending during the Bush years, for example. Second, several articles fail to cite available declassified and primary sources to enhance their arguments. This is especially true with content detailing the Iraq War and preconflict decisionmaking.

Organizationally, the book would have benefited from a more deliberate grouping of the essays into major categories such as defense strategy and policy, budget and acquisition, and leadership. Conspicuously absent are articles on defense spending during the Bush Presidency, congressional relations with the Pentagon, the U.S.-Chinese military balance, North Korea's nuclearization, and Iran's burgeoning nuclear weapons program.

Colin Gray provides a thoughtful, scene-setting essay on the exigencies of defense planning and the prominence of uncertainty in thinking about military threats and future defense requirements. Analysts and policymakers would be wise to heed Gray's cautionary note that interstate conflict is not a thing of the past. While counterinsurgency warfare dominates thinking in defense circles, the requirements needed for state-based threats should not be neglected. As Gray reminds the reader, the one certainty of international politics is uncertainty.

In a pair of essays, Dale R. Herspring and John Allen Williams examine Rumsfeld's management style and his impact on civil-military relations during his time as Secretary

of Defense from 2001 to 2006. The reader is reminded that Rumsfeld's top priority as he returned to the helm at the Pentagon in 2001 (Rumsfeld first served as Secretary of Defense for President Gerald Ford from 1975 to 1977) was the transformation of the U.S. military from a bulky, Cold War-era force into a smaller, more modular and technologically capable organization.

But it was Rumsfeld's preoccupation with transformation, the authors argue, that led to his unwavering position that a force of 130,000 to 150,000 military personnel would be sufficient to defeat the Iraqi army and stabilize the country following major combat operations—despite much larger estimates from senior military officers including former Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki, who testified before Congress in February 2003 that “several hundred thousand soldiers” would be required. Shinseki's estimate was publicly dismissed by Rumsfeld and former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. Rumsfeld's failure to listen to General Shinseki's advice was an ominous portent for Operation *Iraqi Freedom* following the end of major combat operations. Perhaps even more damaging to the war effort than prewar planning failures were two decisions made on Rumsfeld's watch that together laid the foundation for the insurgency: implementing an excessive de-Ba'athification policy following major combat operations and disbanding the Iraqi army.

While Rumsfeld's leadership failures are well documented, the book does not address his laudable efforts to reform the requirements generation process through the implementation of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development Systems (JCIDS), which places a greater focus on capabilities than on specific systems or force elements. The aim of JCIDS was to identify warfighter needs from a joint warfighting perspective rather than a Service-specific perspective. Additionally, Rumsfeld sought to improve the overall management of Department of Defense (DOD) resources by employing portfolio management processes to group capabilities into functional portfolios.

It is difficult to offer a robust analysis of the Bush-era defense program without a dedicated analysis of weapons acquisition and defense spending. Anyone who has worked in the Pentagon or closely studied DOD bureaucracy will undoubtedly be aware of the critical role weapons acquisition and programming decisions play in affecting the behavior of civil servants and political appointees alike. At least

one chapter should have been dedicated to defense spending in the Bush administration, examining trends, interactions with the appropriations committees, and use of supplemental funding. A related absence is an analysis of key strategic guidance issued during the Bush administration, including the *National Defense Strategy*, *National Military Strategy*, *Guidance for the Development of the Force*, *Guidance for the Employment of the Force*, and Quadrennial Defense Review reports. This guidance links national strategy to defense policy, outlining operational objectives and funding priorities. Failing to analyze this guidance and related budget issues was a major shortfall in this book.

While the collection provides a largely even-handed analysis of the Bush administration, Dale Herspring and Lawrence Korb make unfortunate excursions into popular commentary by making unsubstantiated claims about Rumsfeld and Bush as well as the Iraq War, reciting the popular media narrative of deception on the part of the administration while failing to provide the type of documentation required by scholarly canon. Claims such as Herspring's charge that “it was Rumsfeld's subordinates who were directly involved in manipulating intelligence data” (p. 99) and Korb's contention that the “Bush administration misled the American people and world” (p. 65) require substantiation. While these claims were widely reported in the popular media, primary source documentation has yet to validate them. These essays provided no use of new declassified sources. In discussing prewar planning and Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, neither essay included any citations from Douglas J. Feith's well-documented account of the conflict, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism*, which contains declassified memoranda and briefings.

This collection reminds the reader of the remarkable continuity between the defense policies of Bush and his successor, Barack Obama, particularly with respect to Iraq and Afghanistan. The reader is also reminded that the majority of issues confronted by the Bush and Obama national security teams persist with little hope for resolution in sight. JFQ

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