

A Classic Reissued and Worth Rereading

reviewed by LCDR Joseph D. Haines, MC, USN

One sign of an expert is the ability to clearly and concisely analyze and explain his subject. LTC David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* achieves both goals admirably in just 99 pages. Praeger Security International recently reprinted this classic work, first published in 1964, in 2006. *Counterinsurgency Warfare* should be required reading for every military officer and noncommissioned officer, as well as today's political leaders. Armed with Galula's insightful wisdom, the American military can be armed against the mistakes of Vietnam and Iraq.

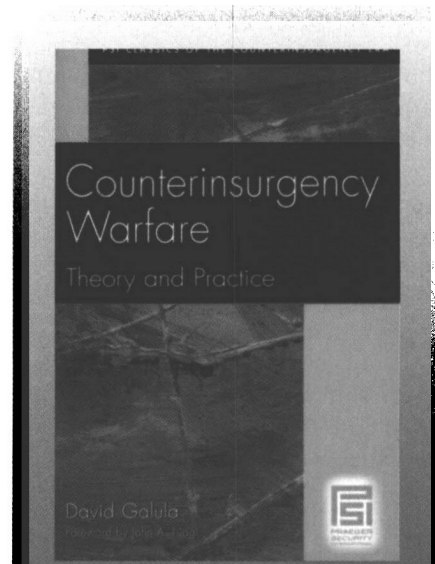
LTC Galula served with the French Army during World War II in North Africa, Italy, and France. But his most valuable lessons were learned in counterinsurgency warfare in China, Greece, Indochina, and Algeria. Galula's book was written during a fellowship at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard. He died a few years later, missing the opportunity to see the American military ignore most of his excellent recommendations concerning Vietnam. Had his advice been heeded, a different outcome to the war is certainly conceivable.

The theme of Galula's work can be summed up as how counterinsurgency forces can protect and gain the support of the populace, acquire information on the identity and location of insur-

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gents, and ultimately defeat the insurgents. He draws the crucial distinction between conventional and counterinsurgency warfare. While the primary goal of conventional warfare is to mass firepower at the appropriate time and place to destroy the enemy, counterinsurgency focuses rather on massing intelligence from the local population to destroy the enemy.

Galula states that the "counterinsurgent cannot achieve much if the population is not, and does not feel, protected against the insurgent." Today, Galula would likely state that the United States and the Iraqi Government cannot expect success until the security of the population can be first guaranteed. Only then can the populace be expected to step forward to provide valuable intelligence. He recommends first physically separating civilians from the insurgents via curfews, roadblocks, identity cards, and a census. Next the counterinsurgent must train local security forces to protect civilians. Lastly, the government should target the insurgents, armed with good intelligence provided from long and close association with the



COUNTERINSURGENCY WARFARE: Theory and Practice.
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population it interacts with on a daily basis.

In his forward to the new edition of this classic, Army LTC John A. Nagl notes that:

Conventional military forces are too prone to emphasize offensive actions such as capturing or killing terrorists rather than the predominantly political, economic, and security requirements upon which the ultimate defeat of the insurgent depends. . . . For every insurgent captured or killed another one (often several) will appear—so long as they are enabled by passive civilians and a moribund government presence. To win, the government must secure and control the population.

Galula's book not only anticipates but also predicts the failures in prosecuting the war in Iraq. However it also points the way to success, if those in power will only heed its wisdom. The overreaching problem in Iraq, however, is the ethnic, national, and religious

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differences between the Kurds, Sunnis, and Shi'ites. In this scenario, all that the United States and the Iraqi Government may hope to ever win is a respite in the violence. While a worthy goal, it is not a final solution, which in my opinion may only be achieved by resettling the Iraqi populace into three separate states.

Galula states that resettlement is a last resort measure "born out of the counterinsurgent's weakness." It should be undertaken only if the trend of the war definitely shows no prospect for the counterinsurgent forces to deploy safely to the required level. Resettlement will then require large numbers of occupation forces to live with the population to provide security and support.

In dealing with the populace Galula makes the telling observation about the necessary shift in orientation where:

... a mimeograph machine may turn out to be more useful than a machine gun, a soldier trained as a pediatrician more important than a mortar expert, cement more wanted than

barbed wire, clerks more in demand than riflemen.

Galula prescribes a lightly armored force equipped with a surplus of interpreters, intelligence analysts, civil affairs and medical specialists, and engineers. He emphasizes many times that information is the insurgent's primary weapon, and the civilian population is the prize for which he is fighting. The counterinsurgent must win the information war to defeat the insurgent.

The State Department's LTC David Kilcullen, Australian Army, has been quoted as saying that, "The globalized information environment makes counterinsurgency even more difficult now." Al-Qaeda employs a sophisticated information strategy. "If bin Laden didn't have access to global media, satellite communications, and the Internet, he'd just be a cranky guy in a cave," notes Kilcullen. ("Knowing the Enemy," *The New Yorker*, 18 December 2006.) A new paradigm, capable of addressing global insurgency, must

counter America's weak information strategy.

Kilcullen likens our current war in Iraq to a new Cold War. "But it's not monolithic. You've got to define the enemy as narrowly as you can get away with," he notes. A counterpropaganda campaign could employ three different methods:

We've got to create resistance to their message. We've got to co-opt or assist people who have a counter message. And we might need to consider creating or supporting the creation of rival organizations.

Since jihadists have posted approximately 5,000 websites, we are already far behind in the information war. But persistence paid off in the Cold War and can do so again. The information fight will be a long war. Heeding the wisdom of Galula and Kilcullen can point us in the right direction.

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