

Abstract

This dissertation examines the authors and conflicts which inspired and influenced modern perceptions of 'insurgency' and 'counterinsurgency'. We trace this process through the lineage of Western counterinsurgency proposed by US Field Manual 3-24, examining three authors' experiences of insurgency which have been crucial in the formation of *FM 3-24's* doctrine of counterinsurgency: T.E. Lawrence's theory of insurgency drawn from the Arab Revolt (1917); David Galula's doctrine of counterinsurgency, from the French-Algerian War (1954-1962), and Robert Thompson's doctrine of counterinsurgency, from the British Malay Emergency (1948-1960). These three authors have had a substantial influence upon modern doctrine and are key examples of historical 'solutions' to insurgency. As such, each author presents, assumes, and promulgates a perspective of insurgency, which has proven influential to modern discourse. In tracing this history, we trace the imposition of Western structures of political, moral, and military power upon a marginalised ulterior, and the effort made by these structures to subdue and control this ulterior. Reliance upon these accounts by modern doctrine has encouraged the development of a dichotomy between insurgency and counterinsurgency, in which insurgency is integrally subversive, uncivilised, and illegitimate, and counterinsurgency is integrally legitimate. These assumptions underly our discussions of insurgency and produce a counterinsurgency that is not necessarily a meaningful reaction to a phenomenon, so much as a product of Western perspectives on the resistance of those designated 'other', predominantly the peoples and populations of the global south. The failures of modern counterinsurgency underline the attitudes upon which contemporary attitudes towards insurgency are based: entrenched in the subjugation of populations considered to be morally and politically inferior, tied to a legacy of failing empire, and producing a separate, transgressive and difficult form of conflict. As long as the West continues to understand insurgency only through its own dubious history of the subjugation of foreign populations, it will remain mired in this complex, distasteful, and, crucially, self-created, 'problem'