



Hearts and Minds: A People's History of Counterinsurgency (New Press People's History)

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The first book of its kind, *Hearts and Minds* is a scathing response to the grand narrative of U.S. counterinsurgency, in which warfare is defined not by military might alone but by winning the "hearts and minds" of civilians. Dormant as a tactic since the days of the Vietnam War, in 2006 the U.S. Army drafted a new field manual heralding the resurrection of counterinsurgency as a primary military engagement strategy; counterinsurgency campaigns followed in Iraq and Afghanistan, despite the fact that counterinsurgency had utterly failed to account for the actual lived experiences of the people whose hearts and minds America had sought to win.

Drawing on leading thinkers in the field and using key examples from Malaya, the Philippines, Vietnam, El Salvador, Iraq, and Afghanistan, *Hearts and Minds* brings a long-overdue focus on the many civilians caught up in these conflicts. Both urgent and timely, this important book challenges the idea of a neat divide between insurgents and the populations from which they emerge—and should be required reading for anyone engaged in the most important contemporary debates over U.S. military policy.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

N.Y.U. Professor Gurman compiles essays on counterinsurgency (COIN), defined as efforts to eliminate an uprising against a government and whose chief aim is to separate the insurgents from the population. COIN is traced from the Kennedy administration all the way back to Lawrence of Arabia. Contributing authors appraise COIN in countries from Malaya (Malaysia), the Philippines, and Vietnam, to El Salvador, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and discuss various intimidating and punitive COIN tactics, including psychological warfare, night raids, police sweeps, targeted assassinations, scorched-earth campaigns, and softer techniques like the use of state-of-the-art technologies and close cooperation between military and civilian intelligence agencies. Emphasis is placed on the fact that, historically, COIN operations often worsen the climate of misery in war-torn nations, yet their effects are sometimes downplayed to conceal the grisly reality on the ground. Less attention, notably, is given to COIN successes, leading one to wonder if there have been any. Overall, the book leaves readers with a distinct impression of the difficulties of quelling insurrection when rebels, in Mao's words, move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea. (Oct.)

From [Booklist](#)

In December 2006, amidst protracted conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. military released FM 3-24, a new field manual on counterinsurgency (or COIN, in military-speak). Coauthored by David Petraeus and built in part upon his dissertation on Vietnam, its stated purpose was to help prepare U.S. Army and Marine Corps leaders to conduct COIN operations anywhere in the world by collecting and codifying the accumulated lessons of several generations of U.S. counterinsurgency warfare around the world. FM 3-24 and other procounterinsurgency articles that emerged around the same time gave rise to what New York University scholar Gurman describes as a grand narrative of COIN that was used to indoctrinate military personnel, as well as the public, into the COIN paradigm. Collecting eight scholarly papers on the history, theory, and practice of counterinsurgency warfare, this selection aims to counter this grand narrative by identifying the limitations, contradictions, and outright failures of COIN warfare and emphasizing its consequences for the people living in places where COIN is used. Gurman herself writes on Vietnam; other commentators cover actions in Malaya, the Philippines, El Salvador, Iraq, and Afghanistan. One of several recent works criticizing COIN (see also Colonel Gian Gentile's *Wrong Turn*, 2013), readers looking for a multi-vocal survey of the issue will appreciate this selection. --Brendan Driscoll

Review

"Counterinsurgency is a tactical phoenix, dying only to rise again, ever-ready to win hearts and minds for the American empire. This essential volume makes it possible to understand the past and prepare for the next time the siren song of counterinsurgency is sung."

—Marilyn Young

"Hannah Gurman has assembled a groundbreaking volume filled with fresh perspectives and revealing insights. If you want to understand America's recent debacles in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Hearts and Minds* is essential reading."

—Nick Turse, author of *Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam*

"Essential reading for anyone who wants to see beyond the illusions about counterinsurgency warfare that the U.S. and British governments and media have sold their people. These histories show that, despite

decades of occupations and well-funded and well-lauded strategic thinking, the hearts and minds of the occupied have remained beyond their militaries' ken and control."

—Catherine Lutz, author of *The Bases of Empire* and a contributor to *The Counter-Counterinsurgency Manual*

"With America creeping toward military intervention in the Syrian civil war, Hannah Gurman's volume comes at an opportune time. While generals offer up moralistic bromides about protecting foreign populations at the barrel of an American gun, *Hearts and Minds* lays bare the brutal and destructive truth behind American military activism in the world."

—Colonel Gian Gentile

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Tonya Hooper:

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