



Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War

Douglas Porch

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Counterinsurgency has staked its claim in the new century as the new American way of war. Yet, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have revived a historical debate about the costs - monetary, political and moral - of operations designed to eliminate insurgents and build nations. Today's counterinsurgency proponents point to 'small wars' past to support their view that the enemy is 'biddable' if the correct tactical formulas are applied. Douglas Porch's sweeping history of counterinsurgency campaigns carried out by the three 'providential nations' of France, Britain and the United States, ranging from nineteenth-century colonial conquests to General Petraeus's 'Surge' in Iraq, challenges the contemporary mythologising of counterinsurgency as a humane way of war. The reality, he reveals, is that 'hearts and minds' has never been a recipe for lasting stability and that past counterinsurgency campaigns have succeeded not through state-building but by shattering and dividing societies while unsettling civil-military relations.

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