

## GUERRILLA WAR

The term "guerrilla" is derived from the Spanish word for "little war." A form of asymmetric combat, guerrilla warfare is waged without fronts, heavy weapons, or lines of communication.

Instead, lightly armed guerrillas launch attacks to disrupt and intimidate. They use the terrain to hide from the enemy: rural guerrillas use the mountains, swamps, and forests, and urban guerrillas use densely populated cities, where the crowds themselves provide cover.

One early guerrilla campaign was the Hasmonean Revolt, which was fought against the Seleucid monarch, between 168 B.C. and 164 B.C. Another was the Bar Kokhba Revolt, which was fought against the Romans from A.D. 132 to A.D. 135.

In its modern form, guerrilla warfare first appeared in the framework of the Napoleonic wars in Spain, southern Italy, and Russia.

Historically, Latin America has been the ultimate guerrilla continent. Latin America has experienced only a handful of regular wars, but guerrilla wars have been common.

## GUERRILLA WAR, EFFECTIVENESS OF

Thomas Edward Lawrence, famous as "Lawrence of Arabia," believed that a successful guerrilla insurgency could be accomplished with the active support of only 2 percent of the population, provided 98 percent sympathized with or acquiesced to the struggle.

In the twentieth century, all great powers met frustration and humiliation at the hands of guerrillas: the British in Ireland, the Germans in the Balkans, the Japanese in China, the French in Algeria, the U.S.A. in Vietnam, and the U.S.S.R. in Afghanistan.

Thanks in part to guerrilla warfare, European colonial empires, which required centuries to construct, collapsed in the thirty years following World War II.

In the case of French Algeria, the colony had 10,000,000 people in an area the size of Western Europe, and that number included 1,000,000 European settlers. France sent in 450,000 troops at one point, or one soldier for every 23 inhabitants. (France also deployed 150,000 Muslim auxiliaries!) France became a nuclear power during the war, but she still lost in 1962.

Guerrilla insurgency has its best chance of success against an occupying power. There have been successes against indigenous regimes—such as against Batista's Cuba or against Somoza's Nicaragua—but these are rarer.

## GUERRILLA WAR, FIGHTING AGAINST

To regular armies, a guerrilla war is an endless war with invisible enemies and no ground gains, just a constant flow of troops in and out of the combat theater.

Obviously, it is difficult for regular armies to defeat guerrillas. In the American-Vietnamese War, for example, American troops conducted military sweeps over every inch of South Vietnam, often hundreds of times! Yet, the United States lost the war.

In the standard counter-guerrilla campaign, the army creates a barrier around the

guerrilla area, they remove or destroy anything that could provide logistical support to the guerrilla (including the inhabitants), they divide the area into small sections, and they use "flying columns" to clear each section one by one.

Thus, to defeat the Boer guerrillas in the Second Anglo-Boer War, the British Empire erected more than 8,000 blockhouses (manned by 66,000 troops) and 6,400 kilometers of barbed wire. To drive the enemy back on these defenses, the British deployed a massive mobile force (one armed man on a horse every ten meters over an eighty-kilometer front). To deprive the guerrillas of support and supply, the British created a wasteland by destroying farms and crops, seizing all the livestock, and forcing the civilian population into filthy and disease-ridden concentration camps. (Approximately 116,000 Boer civilians were confined inside forty camps, where 28,000 women, children and old people died. The British also forced 120,000 blacks into 66 camps, where 16,000 to 20,000 perished.)

Curiously, the mighty British Empire (which covered one-fourth of the globe and contained more than 400 million people) deployed an army of 460,000 men to fight a Boer population in the Orange Free State and Transvaal which numbered only 405,000 men, women, and children!

Russian counter-insurgency techniques, although more brutal, have been similar. The Russians, who are known for their "massive application of force," used the following tactics against guerrillas in Chechnya: 1) the Russians deployed a large number of troops, 2) they isolated the guerrilla area from the outside world, 3) they gained control over the central cities first, and then extended their domination outward from them, 4) they built forts or strongholds (to restrict the guerrillas' movements to smaller and smaller areas), 5) they destroyed settlements, livestock, crops, and orchards to deny supplies to the guerrillas, and 6) they conducted mass deportations of civilians, the assassination of insurgent leaders, and "exemplary massacres."

In fighting Chinese guerrillas during World War II, the Japanese imperial forces introduced the savage policy of the "Three-Alls" in 1941. Directed less against the guerrillas—and more against the population that supported them—the Japanese would surround a given area—and kill everything—people, animals, crops, and even the trees.

In contrast, the more adroit Portuguese Empire successfully waged three anti-guerrilla wars, 5,000 miles from home, for thirteen years, in 800,000 square miles of territory. The Portuguese used a subdued, low-tempo, affordable, long-term, low-technology, and limited-casualty approach. Highly successful, the Portuguese forces suffered only 4,027 combat deaths, of which 23 percent were African volunteers and the rest were Portuguese.

The Portuguese used wide ranging, deep-penetration patrols, which were Spartan and low-profile. Small groups of thirty men, brought into the bush by helicopters or vehicles, conducted their missions on foot or on horseback, carrying everything with them.

The Portuguese always traveled cross-country, avoiding roads because of mines. Their patrols were able to penetrate rugged terrain, and kill guerrillas, disrupt the insurgent's food supply, call in air strikes, and make contact with population.

Like the French in Algeria and the British in Kenya, the Portuguese recruited African troops to fight Africans in a "divide and conquer" tactic. But, unlike the French or the British, the Portuguese fully integrated their units and paid the Africans the same pay as the Europeans. (Portugal did not have a single

example of rebellion or mass desertion by "native troops," as happened in French Algeria.)

When the Portuguese captured guerrillas, the captives were not tortured. Information extracted with torture, the Portuguese believed, was suspect, and they knew that torture had undermined the French in Algeria. The Portuguese found it more useful to greet prisoners politely, offer coffee, and talk!

And—to win the "hearts and minds" of the civilians in the war zone—the Portuguese used social initiatives. They invested in infrastructure, and built schools, hospitals, and roads during the war.

#### GUERRILLA WAR, RURAL FORM OF

The classic form of guerrilla war is asymmetric warfare focused on the countryside.

Ernesto "Che" Guevara said that guerrilla war should have a rural foco or "focus." Fidel Castro agreed, and insisted that the city was the graveyard of revolutions. And, according to Mao Tse-tung, "wars are won by encircling the towns by the countryside."

Traditionally, from the Maccabees to the Mau Mau, guerrillas locate in sparsely populated, geographically "remote," and typographically "difficult" areas, such as mountains, forests, swamps, and wastelands.

The best terrain is that which hampers the movements of regular forces and enables guerrillas to hide. With such terrain, a few determined men can defeat an army, even one with atomic weapons and tanks.

In the American-Vietnamese War, guerrillas used the wild terrain effectively. Virtually unchallenged in most of the country, they were molested only by aircraft or helicopter-borne forces.

The American troops spent most of their time in the relative safety of urban areas. When they left the cities--in helicopters or on roads in armored cars or tanks--they were ambushed.

Indeed, the American army usually encountered the enemy only when guerrillas were ambushing them.

The American-Vietnamese War demonstrated how towns could become prisons--rather than bases of operation--for an invading army.

#### GUERRILLA WAR, TECHNIQUES OF

A technique of "harassment and attrition," guerrilla warfare is neither offensive nor defensive—it is "evasive." According to Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the guerrilla is the master of "secretiveness," "treachery," and "surprise."

Guerrillas operate in small groups so that one reverse cannot be decisive. For protection, they disguise themselves as civilians.

Unheroic by definition—scorning all "romantic and sporting conceptions of war"--guerrillas attack weakness only. They ambush small units or patrols, or soft targets, such as hospital trains. After every attack, the guerrillas rapidly disperse.

Guerrilla attacks, according to *The War of the Flea*, a standard text on the subject, have four functions: 1) to demonstrate the impotence of enemy, 2) to steal weapons, ammunition, and supplies, 3) to inflict casualties, and 4) to force the enemy to overextend his lines so that his communications can be disrupted and small units can be destroyed, one at a time, by "locally superior" forces.

Guerrillas, as Mao Tse-tung pointed out, are masters of maneuver warfare: "The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue."

Because mobility is crucial to their survival, guerrillas travel with few supplies and light weapons only. Friedrich Wilhelm Rustow, a Prussian military theorist, said that "irregulars" should carry no more than twenty-four pounds. When guerrillas carry too much, mobility and stealth are reduced. Also, fatigue affects alertness.

Guerrillas hold no territory, and they have no objectives that must be held. As a result, the army fighting guerrillas has nothing substantial to attack.

"To gain territory is no cause for joy," wrote Mao Tse-tung. "To lose territory is no cause for sorrow. The only crucial thing is to destroy the enemy. Always use surprise, always be secret."

When attacked by the French, the Viet Minh dispersed and withdrew. They reassembled at a predetermined point that was a twelve hours' march away. If the French attacked again, the guerrillas repeated the maneuver. As a result, the French as a rule conquered only empty spaces.

Eventually the French would be far from home and short on supplies, so they had to return to their bases. As they were returning, they were harassed by guerrillas.

The object of the guerrilla is not to win battles, but to avoid defeat. Against a great power, declares *The War of the Flea*, the "guerrilla's mere survival is a political victory."

The guerrilla strives not to end the war, but to prolong it. According to Wojciech Chrzanowski, a nineteenth-century Polish rebel, time is always on the side of the guerrilla.

The goal of the guerrilla is not to conquer, but to "create an intolerable situation" for the occupying power or the tyrant.

In the EOKA struggle against the British in Cyprus, for example, EOKA never tried to win a military victory, but by harassing, confusing, and exasperating the British the EOKA made the occupation unacceptable to the British government.

Led by George Grivas, who took command in 1954, EOKA used a cellular structure to resist counter-intelligence. Although at the height of the struggle EOKA had no more than 350 rural guerrillas (in cells of 5-15 men) and 200 urban operatives (in cells of 4-5 people), the guerrillas tied up thousands of troops. The reason, of course, is that it requires many men to guard a bridge or a power plant—it requires only one man to destroy these things.

In a classic asymmetric campaign, the EOKA launched raids on armories for weapons, killed collaborators to "blind" the enemy, and used arson, sabotage, street murder, booby traps, and bombings. EOKA's attacks were so widespread that they even planted an explosive device under the British governor's bed.

EOKA also had a "passive wing" of supporters who used "non-violent" measures, such as demonstrations, riots, boycotts, and strikes. The passive wing also conducted an effective propaganda campaign, and they mobilized support for the struggle by highlighting British atrocities.

Whatever techniques the guerrilla uses, he must never establish a pattern. Always, he must do the unexpected. In the legendary words of Sun Tzu, "The enemy must not know where I intend to give battle. For if he does not know I intend to give battle, he must prepare in a great many places . . . . And when he prepares everywhere, he will be weak everywhere."

#### GUERRILLA WAR (URBAN)

Urban guerrilla warfare, a kind of "lightning war" against modern society, is asymmetric warfare focused on the cities. According to Carlos Marighella, the author of the Minimannual of the Urban Guerrilla, modern urban guerrilla warfare started in 1968 in Brazil.

Since modern technology can identify and target the rural guerrilla, urban environments are now becoming more attractive to insurgents, who can use the concentrated population in cities for concealment.

In the opinion of some, urban guerrilla warfare is indistinguishable from terrorism.

#### GUERRILLA WAR (URBAN), FIGHTING AGAINST

To fight urban guerrillas, the modern state suspends the rule of law and decency.

In 1972, the Uruguayan military ordered a state of internal war, which would last thirty days. Forty thousand troops systematically searched Montevideo, using state-of-siege powers to seize ten thousand people. The Uruguayan military dismantled and eliminated the Tupamaro organization—and destroyed the country's democracy in the process.

In another example of state terrorism against terrorism, the French conducted the so-called "Battle of Algiers" from January through September in 1957.

The French broke the rebels with constant patrolling, house-to-house searches, and checkpoints. The whole city was divided into sectors, sub-sectors, blocks, and buildings. Each designated area had an informant--or a collaborator--to report suspicious behavior.

Normal legal limitations on detention were set aside, and the French arrested 24,000 people in Algiers. At least three thousand of these would "disappear" in detention.

After an initial screening (aided by informants), suspects were interrogated. The French routinely used "special measures" (a euphemism for torture), which included electric shocks to nipples and genitals, the crushing of limbs and organs in vices, and the forced pumping of air or liquid into bodies.

The information extracted helped locate terror cells and hideouts, and targeted raids followed.

With their extra-legal terrorism, the French completely broke the rebels in Algiers, but the French would lose the war. On July 3, 1962, France recognized

Algerian independence.

#### GUERRILLA WAR (URBAN), TECHNIQUES OF

For the guerrilla, an urban center offers innumerable targets, anonymity, and an audience.

A city provides physical cover (three-dimensional urban terrain) and political cover (the rules of warfare are more stringent with civilians present). The infrastructure of a city means that logistical supplies--such as food and medicine--are not a problem.

Unlike the rural guerrilla, the urban guerrilla's successes are immediately visible. His victories cannot be hidden by censorship.

The tactics of the urban guerrilla are simple: he assassinates, he places pre-positioned bombs and booby traps, and he avoids all pitched battles. He has no fixed urban base to maintain or defend.

He should remain anonymous--living in the city and holding a job. Invisible, he strikes "targets of opportunity," and then blends back into the population.

The urban guerrilla does attempt to actually inflict military defeat on the regular army. That would be "foolish adventurism." The urban guerrilla simply tries to demoralize the enemy and raise the stakes of governing.

A classic (albeit unsuccessful) urban guerrilla campaign was mounted by the Tupamaros of Uruguay, who conducted operations largely in the city of Montevideo. The Tupamaros lived at home, and they met only to plan or to conduct operations. They did not live on donations or requisitions, but held jobs or subsisted--ironically--on state welfare payments.