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***Pathological Counterinsurgency: How Flawed Thinking About Elections Leads to Counterinsurgency Failure.* Samuel R. Greene. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018. ISBN 978-1-498-53818-3. Sources cited. Index. Pp. ix, 211. \$78.99.**

During the Cold War, U.S. and Soviet governments used puppet states and guerilla forces to conduct proxy wars. Since that time, failing states and transnational actors continue emphasizing insurgency actions short of total war to gather popular support and replace existing governments. Counterinsurgency forces often tout government elections held within these states as a success metric. *Pathological Counterinsurgency* explores the perceived links between election legitimacy and governmental power as well as how successful governance strategies aid counterinsurgency campaigns. The research seeks to discover why happy, quiescent populations are less beneficial to insurgencies than villagers actively opposed to current governments. Dr. Greene reviews political and democratization theories to show how the U.S's foreign election manipulation during insurgency may appear as stabilization. Each of the four case studies compare only internal governance examples during counterinsurgency periods without relating operational details of hunting down various insurgent miscreants as occurs in some other counterinsurgency texts.

Greene's core theory suggests elections, are insufficient to overcome governmental flaws and create lasting improvements. Correlations between government actions, popular legitimacy, and non-rebellious countries forms the theory's bedrock with background from how several counterinsurgent theorists felt about elections. The literary review starts with Mao as employed by Van Thieu, Che Guevara, and Castro to emphasize how insurgencies meld with the populace. During counterinsurgency planning, melding highlights why first actions increase the contextual distance between population and insurgent through either military force or fixing governance gaps like corruption, high taxes, and poor economic conditions. Highlighted modern conflicts include transnational insurgents like Al Qaida and ISIS in their operations across national boundaries. Overall three democratization theories are offered as strategies to improve compromised governments; minimalist through solely military support, deepening existing strengths, or full institutional rebuilds. All examined elections are democratic and Greene sees a

reliance on elections as scoreboard for counterinsurgency success. Each case study researches how elections may degrade legitimacy, showcase problems, or suffer external manipulation to different outcomes rather than simply trumpet success.

The case studies begin with Vietnam as a classic counterinsurgency failure. Greene acknowledges the vast Vietnam War research available as a reason to limiting focus to the Ngo Dinh Diem 1955 and 1961 elections and the General Nguyen Van Thieu elections 1965 and 1971. Detrimental to the case for elections building legitimacy is Diem's 1963 assassination by a US supported coup and Thieu fleeing Vietnam before Saigon's 1975 fall. Diem's failure to gain legitimacy leads to the US backed coup as well as a growing counter-insurgency. Thieu's first election appears as a U.S. success despite his identification as a "bottom of the barrel" candidate (p. 76). Thieu's regime, like Diem's, appears marked by corruption even during subsequent elections, again a poor sign for enhanced legitimacy. In the end, the case concludes US inability to improve South Vietnam's government legitimacy or performance directly contributes to counterinsurgency failure.

Turning to El Salvador during the 1980s, the next study examines a potential counterinsurgency success. This twelve-year conflict (1980-1992) between the FMLN (*Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front*) and the Salvadoran government often is cited as successful while Greene suggests these success areas are actually multiple failures generating an illusory credibility derived from corrupt elections, human rights abuses, and the government's continued inability to deliver basic services. These three factors are the same ones as previously cited for leading to government failures. El Salvador's success from those elections is depicted as ignoring the oppressive, secret-police style techniques ensuring elections generated desired results and degrading overall legitimacy. While El Salvador appears better today, improvements in the text link more directly to elections a decade later as FMLN candidates integrate into the processes rather than any counter-insurgency gain.

The final focus examines how election processes influenced, and are influencing, U.S. actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Always interesting during comparisons is when Iraq receives mention ahead and in greater proportion to Afghanistan despite U.S. efforts to aid Afghanistan occurring

both first and longer than Iraqi operations. Studies show Iraq's troop deployment levels were significantly higher than Afghanistan for several years but that top position switched in 2010 and has not changed since. Greene considers both operations as failures with neither holding a successful election nor defeating the insurgency while remaining troubled by unsteady governments. However, both countries now face transnational insurgencies rather than those present during previous counterinsurgent campaigns and both installed governments have conducted multiple successful, and peaceful, power transfers each. The two governments do, without doubt, face continued challenges from internal corruption, a record of human rights abuses, and an occasional inability to support their own population but all stability starts somewhere. After all, comparing early U.S. history to Iraq, Washington's first two terms probably were relatively unstable from an English perspective.

*Pathological Counterinsurgency* was an enjoyable read about a difficult subject. Unfortunately, the analytic areas remaining unexplained are the direct correlations between how flawed election policies link to counterinsurgency failures, one of the book's main goals. Greene carefully shows why legitimacy matters and where improved legitimacy enhances popular satisfaction to counteract insurgent feelings. One can easily understand why a government more interested in bribes and engaging in text-only soldiers on pay rosters to supplement local leadership income probably has difficulty delivering infrastructure and basic services. Popular dissatisfaction then explains why those same individuals may shelter insurgents who promise more livable alternatives. However, the direct correlation between which policies led to failed elections in each case and then how those factors lead to failed counterinsurgencies, although promised early on, does not appear in the case studies. Each case study explains why failing internal policies prevent independent elections from curing any of a nation's ills including insurgency. If Dr. Greene had taken one more step to reach the titular expectations and draw either an anecdotal or metric analysis for how those failed elections also resulted in failed counterinsurgency efforts, the text's overall impact would have improved dramatically.

Overall, I enjoyed the case studies and the carefully built logic around governance and legitimization practices in the various failed states during

insurgency challenges. The comparison between past and recent conflicts identifies the challenging problem in linking military strategies to Whole of Government effects required for today's interdependent world. The modern tendency to jointly employ diplomatic, information, military, and economic actions is the much improved over historic practices but will require significant data to hone those desired tools. Green's book makes a useful read for either policy or insurgency experts dealing with building and sustaining election practices but the lack of any direct correlation between counterinsurgency efforts and election strategies prevents *Pathological Counterinsurgency* from offering any prescriptions for improved future performances.

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