



The Art of Insurgency: American Military Policy and the Failure of Strategy in Southeast Asia

Donald W. Hamilton

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In his analysis of insurgency war, Donald Hamilton first attempts to provide insight into a strategic concept he believes is little understood today, and to explain its complicated relationship to American policy failures in Southeast Asia during the post-1945 era of containment. The study develops a working model of insurgency, explaining it as both a unique method and type of war-making. Significant findings include the inability of policymakers to perceive a potential insurgency in Vietnam as early as 1946, subsequent American involvement in not one, but three Asian insurgencies during the 1950s, and the ultimate failure of the U.S. military to meet the insurgency challenge in South Vietnam. This inability to eliminate the insurgency led not only to the complete breakdown of the South Vietnamese government, but was the primary reason why further U.S. military action after 1965 would prove ineffectual. This historical narrative also follows the involvement of several key players, including the personalities of Edward Lansdale, Sir Robert Thompson, Archimedes Patti, and Vo Nguyen Giap, who through their life experiences and writings, provide a keen profundity into why insurgencies occur, why they fail, and why they succeed.

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