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Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military

by Derek Reveron

Reviewed by Professor John Patch, Associate Professor of Strategic Intelligence at the US Army War College and Adjunct Faculty at American Military University

In October 2007, the US Central Command staff breathed a sigh of relief as US Africa Command was created. The vast, complex Horn of Africa (HOA) region, rife with social, economic, political, and security ills, had required the dedication of significant CENTCOM resources and attention, all amidst the prosecution of two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. HOA still receives the lion's share of AFRICOM's focus, mainly due to the persistent terrorist threat—the existence of Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) HOA since 2002 is a testament to important US interests in the region. American military activity in the HOA region has consisted almost exclusively of engagement and security cooperation efforts, so it serves as a good case study to examine the efficacy of the Department of Defense's (DOD) noncombat missions. CJTF HOA serves as the focus of Derek Reveron's 2010 book, *Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the US Military*.

Reveron provides a timely addition to the debate on the wisdom of expanding DOD's "soft missions." While his assertion that the larger US strategy has "shifted from containment to engagement" is arguable, the work does serve to highlight how the military has transformed to manage noncombat missions typically reserved for civilian development organizations and the State Department. Reveron sees future engagement and security cooperation success tied to DOD acceptance of defense missions linked with diplomacy and development. The author is uniquely qualified to write on this issue, with significant expertise from years of research at the Naval War College, including several well-regarded books and articles. Further, he enjoys a degree of practical experience from an extended deployment in Kabul at the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan—one of the largest security assistance efforts in NATO's history. Reveron successfully puts security cooperation in a contemporary context that is useful to the national security professional.

Reveron argues that security and stability are fundamental prerequisites for socioeconomic development, which ultimately promotes US national security interests. By extension, America's engagement and security cooperation can bolster partners' military capabilities to secure the peace, ultimately preventing armed conflict. He provides a cogent argument for the strategic rationale behind engagement and security cooperation and illustrates the dramatic expansion of these missions for DOD since 9/11. The influence—vice

dominance—that America derives from the use of soft, or “smart,” power is facilitated by what Reveron calls “a reservoir from which to draw nonlethal solutions to US foreign policy problems.” Reveron further illustrates how military-to-military relations of all types contribute to the professionalization of militaries, including international military education and training, security force assistance via State Department-funded foreign military financing, and other security assistance programs implemented at American embassies. The author asserts that American efforts that support the development of foreign militaries as institutions promoting stability and human rights pay dividends in times of internal and regional tribulation. The Arab Spring provides a compelling example, when the US-trained Egyptian Army facilitated a peaceful transition of power and refused to fire on its own citizens. Egypt is of course one of the largest examples of America’s military engagement and security cooperation. What is less clear is whether smaller efforts elsewhere will be sufficient to lessen the long-term potential for conflict. This reviewer would argue that the soft power military engagement and security cooperation resources necessary to achieve US strategy goals are beyond what America can afford. As such, Washington should direct these efforts only in countries with the highest strategic relevance to vital and important US national security interests.

Any assessment of the value of engagement and security cooperation must necessarily address costs. *Exporting Security* could have devoted more attention to the potential disadvantages of military forces focusing on non-combat missions, though Reveron does explore traditional DOD resistance to security assistance missions in chapter three. While Reveron acknowledges that there are limits to what DOD can do, he does not address the more critical counterargument that these missions may not be achieving concrete results in all cases. Any argument stressing the efficacy of security cooperation and engagement must present specific evidence demonstrating the positive impact on US national security interests. Similarly, this book stops short of presenting a cost-benefit calculation in a way that reveals both real and opportunity costs in an era when budget and force reductions will require prioritization of missions. For instance, Reveron cites Somali piracy as a transnational security challenge ripe for engagement and security cooperation, yet three years of aggressive application of smart power via a multinational effort has yet to address the scourge. With the CJTF-HOA example, it seems a safe inference that the region is better off due to the security assistance that America has dedicated to partners such as Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti, but would the region have collapsed into chaos had CJTF HOA never been established? What has nine years of effort by CJTF HOA actually cost in real dollars and lost opportunity elsewhere? In fairness to Reveron, measures of effectiveness are hard to come by, with many intangibles lacking metrics. Still, with the staggering cost of Iraq reconstruction and ongoing stabilization efforts in Afghanistan amidst DOD downsizing, there will inevitably be Congressional and DOD scrutiny on expensive missions potentially perceived as noncritical. Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn III expressed concern in June 2011 that as the US government tightens its fiscal

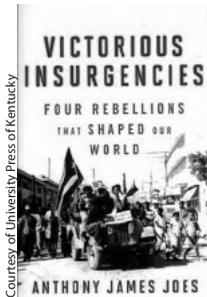
belt, programs critical to preventing conflict could fall victim: “Security assistance and economic development spending needed to support these initiatives funded through the State Department could suffer as government organizations reduce their spending levels.”

Reveron is right to assert that the result of this debate will have a significant effect on strategy, force structure, and doctrine for the DOD. Indeed, it already has—DOD is implementing the lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan that military success alone will not guarantee positive policy outcomes. DOD transformations to meet security assistance missions are well underway, with the recent doctrinal emphasis on stability operations—as a coequal with combat operations—full spectrum operations, and “wide area security,” which includes “protracted counterinsurgency, relief and reconstruction efforts and sustained engagement focused on developing partner capacity as part of combatant command security cooperation efforts.” Force structure evolution has been slower, but the development of Army “regionally-aligned brigades,” Naval Expeditionary Combat Command’s growth, and the Marine Corps establishment of “Security Cooperation MAGTFs” are all good examples that changes are afoot. Still, tensions surrounding the requirement for the high end of conventional military capabilities have kept the debate over hard or soft military power alive. Because many of the same military skill sets support both phase zero shaping and phase four stabilization, the stigma of expensive reconstruction in the wake of current CENTCOM campaigns may leave little appetite to fund them.

Reveron’s overview of security cooperation and the many programs that support these efforts alone make the book worthwhile. Understanding the complex array of statutes and regulations, interagency relationships, funding sources and implementation requirements for successful security cooperation is important for students of strategy and policy. Yet, Reveron’s discussion would have been more complete with an overview of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency’s role and mention of the security assistance “bible,” the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management’s *Green Book*.

For now, the debate continues, even as DOD transforms to address irregular threats. Fiscal pressures will likely trump the dark future forecasted by such estimates as the *Joint Operations Environment* and the National Intelligence Council’s “NIC 2025,” resulting in a smaller DOD security cooperation portfolio. Even before significant force reductions, higher priority requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan leave “economy of force” theaters like the HOA with a low priority for forces optimized for security assistance, sustaining only a marginal ability to shape the regional factors that promote conflict. America’s policymakers in future years will not have the luxury of addressing most contingencies with shaping operations. Finally, because it will remain difficult, if not impossible to predict which internal or regional concerns will threaten stability, Washington and the geographic combatant commands will inevitably miss opportunities to check emergent threats. Ultimately, questions surrounding engagement and security cooperation will likely not be focused on whether

this is an important mission for the US military, but how much America can afford to dedicate to it and where the priority efforts should be directed.



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Victorious Insurgencies: Four Rebellions That Shaped Our World

by Anthony James Joes

Reviewed by Louis J. Nigro Jr., US Ambassador (Retired) and author of *The New Diplomacy in Italy*

A recent New Yorker cartoon has one front-office type telling another across his desk, “Those who fail to learn from history are entitled to repeat it.” Professor Anthony Joes’s latest book on the subject of insurgency is a superb textbook for anyone—student, teacher, or specialist—who would learn from the historical record what makes some insurgencies successful and what factors rendered the ruling regimes unable to overcome them.

Professor Joes’s credentials could hardly be better: If there were a scholarly counterpart to Standard and Poor’s, it would give him a AAA+ rating in Asymmetrical Warfare Studies. In this book, drawing on a lifetime of study and analysis of insurgencies, Joes reflects on why these four succeeded where others failed: Mao Tse-tung in China; Ho Chi Minh against the French in Vietnam; Fidel Castro in Cuba; and the mujahedeen against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

In his brief remarks addressed to US policymakers regarding future counterinsurgency operations, Joes takes the realist position that countering most future insurgencies will be seen as limited wars by state actors like the United States, but will be seen as total wars by the insurgents themselves. “This imbalance can wear down the patience of even the strongest power,” according to Joes, who finds few cases outside the “immediate Western Hemisphere” in which insurgents threaten the “truly vital” interests of the United States. Joes counsels that in responding to most future insurgent threats, US policymakers craft strategies based on “limited support to indigenous counterinsurgent forces,” by delivering technical, intelligence, and financial assistance—and especially by interdicting outside assistance to the insurgency, which is as much a diplomatic as a military task.

Joes’s thesis is that the four regimes that failed to overcome insurgencies had three things in common: they had “surprisingly serious internal political weakness”; they committed “striking military errors”; and their best efforts were undermined by “the insurgency’s external environment, especially of outside assistance to the insurgents, both direct and indirect.”

More specifically, Joes holds that all four ruling regimes were poorly served by military leadership that underestimated the insurgent enemy; policymaker offer peaceful political roads to change as alternatives to armed insurgency; could not prevent “vital outside direct assistance” to the