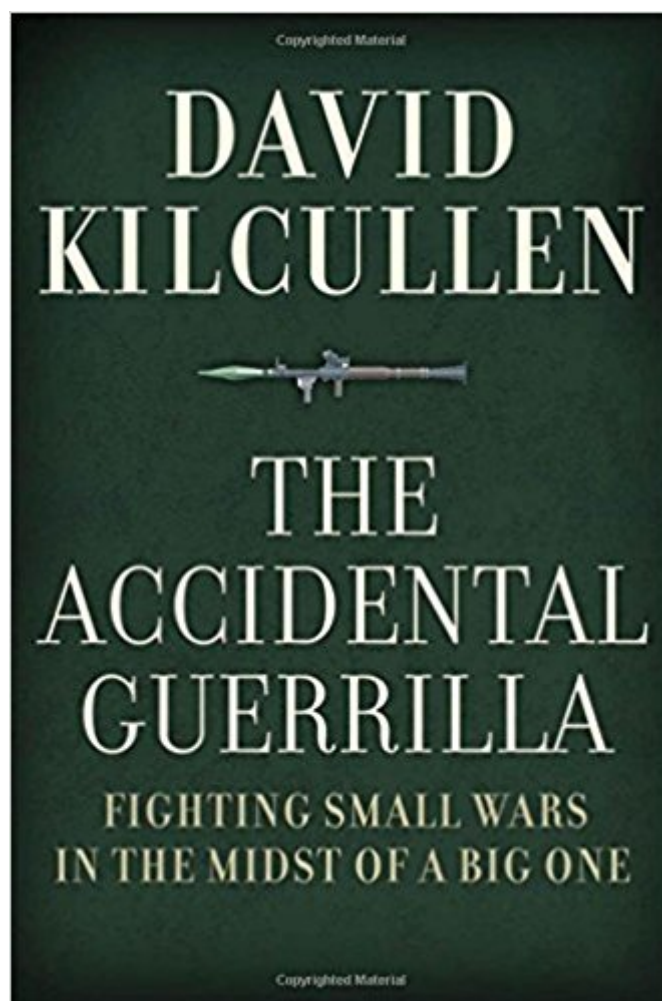


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# The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars In The Midst Of A Big One



## Synopsis

David Kilcullen is one of the world's most influential experts on counterinsurgency and modern warfare, a ground-breaking theorist whose ideas "are revolutionizing military thinking throughout the west" (Washington Post). Indeed, his vision of modern warfare powerfully influenced America's decision to rethink its military strategy in Iraq and implement "the Surge," now recognized as a dramatic success. In *The Accidental Guerrilla*, Kilcullen provides a remarkably fresh perspective on the War on Terror. Kilcullen takes us "on the ground" to uncover the face of modern warfare, illuminating both the big global war (the "War on Terrorism") and its relation to the associated "small wars" across the globe: Iraq, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Thailand, the Pakistani tribal zones, East Timor and the horn of Africa. Kilcullen sees today's conflicts as a complex interweaving of contrasting trends--local insurgencies seeking autonomy caught up in a broader pan-Islamic campaign--small wars in the midst of a big one. He warns that America's actions in the war on terrorism have tended to conflate these trends, blurring the distinction between local and global struggles and thus enormously complicating our challenges. Indeed, the US had done a poor job of applying different tactics to these very different situations, continually misidentifying insurgents with limited aims and legitimate grievances--whom he calls "accidental guerrillas"--as part of a coordinated worldwide terror network. We must learn how to disentangle these strands, develop strategies that deal with global threats, avoid local conflicts where possible, and win them where necessary. Colored with gripping battlefield experiences that range from the jungles and highlands of Southeast Asia to the mountains of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to the dusty towns of the Middle East, *The Accidental Guerrilla* will, quite simply, change the way we think about war. This book is a must read for everyone concerned about the war on terror.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Kilcullen, adviser on counterinsurgency to General Petraeus, defines accidental guerrillas as locals fighting primarily because outsiders (often Westerners) are intruding into their physical and cultural space, but they may also be galvanized by high-tech, internationally oriented ideologues. This interaction of two kinds of nonstate opponents renders both traditional counterterrorism and counterinsurgency inadequate. Kilcullen uses Afghanistan and Iraq as primary case studies for a new kind of war that relies on an ability to provoke Western powers into protracted, exhausting, expensive interventions. Kilcullen presents two possible responses. Strategic disruption keeps existing terrorists off balance. Military assistance attacks the conditions producing accidental guerrillas. That may mean full-spectrum assistance, involving an entire society. Moving beyond a simplistic war on terror depends on rebalancing military and nonmilitary elements of power. It calls for a long view, a measured approach and a need to distinguish among various enemies. It requires limiting the role of government agencies in favor of an indirect approach emphasizing local interests and local relationships. Not least, Kilcullen says, breaking the terrorist cycle requires establishing patterns of virtue, moral authority, and credibility in the larger society. Kilcullen's compelling argument merits wide attention. (Mar.) Copyright Ã   Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"For a wider perspective on the lessons drawn over the past seven years of the 'war on terror', the reader can do no better than turn to Mr. Kilcullen's excellent book. The Accidental Guerrilla has an anthropologist's sense of social dynamics and a reporter's eye for telling detail. If T.E. Lawrence evoked the means of waging irregular warfare in his 1926 classic, 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom', Mr. Kilcullen describes the practitioner's art of combating insurgents."--The Economist "This book should be required reading for every American soldier, as well as anyone involved in the war on terror. Kilcullen's central concept of the 'accidental guerrilla' is brilliant and the policy prescriptions that flow from it important. And that's not all; the book has many more insights drawn from various battlefields."--Fareed Zakaria, Newsweek "Kilcullen's influence on how the U.S. military thought about counterinsurgency campaigning cannot be overstated."--Thomas E. Ricks, author of The Gamble and Fiasco "There are some standard texts on [counterinsurgency]. The Accidental

Guerrilla is sure to become one."--The Wall Street Journal "This book is essential.... Kilcullen skillfully interprets the future of counterinsurgency, the proper use of military force and what we must learn from our losses and mistakes. After reading *The Accidental Guerrilla*, one is left to wonder why the Pentagon did not listen to his sage advice back in 2003."--New York Times Book Review "Kilcullen's compelling argument merits wide attention."--Publishers Weekly Starred Review "David Kilcullen, man of action and man of ideas, has produced a rare-and indispensable-guide to understanding and winning the so-called "war on terror" by combining ideas of military theory with those of culture and tradition among tribal peoples."--Professor Akbar Ahmed, Chair of Islamic Studies, American University, Washington DC

This is an ambitious work, with Kilcullen attempting to encompass everything from tactical to grand strategic responses to insurgency and terrorism in the one relatively short and accessible volume. Key to this work is Kilcullen's understanding of the fundamental difference between "Tier 1" guerrillas (or the 25% or so of most insurgent movements motivated by higher-order ideological grievances) and the "Tier 2" insurgents - or the "Accidental Guerrillas" of the title - who tend to be motivated by more local and parochial concerns. Kilcullen's theory of COIN and/or counterterrorism relies on the distinction he draws between the two, and the prospect of (ideally) preventing the rise of Tier 2 insurgents in the first place, or at the least co-opting them, while being reconciled to the military and political defeat of Tier 1. While only slightly more complex than schools of thought at either end of the spectrum that range from "Global Islamist Al-Qaeda conspiracy" or "root causes thanks to capitalism and US foreign policy" (or, everybody is Tier 1 or Tier 2 respectively), Kilcullen's perspective is a valuable corrective to either view. Kilcullen's policy prescriptions are in my view more clearly enunciated the closer he gets to the tactical level than the grand strategic. This is in part due to his reliance on case studies focused squarely on tactical and operational experience (considerable analysis/personal experience from Afghanistan and Iraq and somewhat more succinct studies of East Timor, Southern Thailand and Pakistan's Tribal Areas), which are mostly excellent. The discussion of Australian operations in East Timor is a little cringe-worthy - by not conceding there was no real, enduring Tier 1 threat against INTERFET that had any prospect of mobilising Tier 2 guerrillas, Kilcullen here sounds a bit too self-congratulatory and reminded me a bit of *Running the War in Iraq*: an Australian general, 300,000 troops, the bloodiest conflict of our time. His discussion of possible wider strategic responses to Islamic fundamentalist militancy is less prescriptive (if inclusive of a lot of good sense, in particular redressing the balance of military versus non-military means of state power) and not quite as compelling - I suspect partly due to the author's

own ambivalence as to how serious the threat is. If it is largely a law enforcement problem as he argues in part, what is the necessity of a ARCADIA-style conference to hammer out a grand strategy between major powers struggling for national survival (as in 1942)? I fear that an ARCADIA between states not facing a perceived existential threat (or hoping to buck-pass their way out of it) would end up being more like a Munich Conference - somebody would end up being the people of which we know little getting their liberty traded away - perhaps better in these circumstances for liberal democracies to consider the issue "one campaign or crisis at a time"? For those with an interest in counterinsurgency, this is a "must read", if for no other reason that everybody else with an interest will have read it and formed an opinion. Fortunately, it is accessible, sensible and with a few real insights thrown in, and is worth the investment in time. A tiny bit under the five stars will let me give it, and I will take it with me when I deploy again in the near future - that has to be some sort of recommendation.

This is one of the best books I have read on Counter-insurgency doctrine and the Global War on Terror. I have read Kilcullen's book Counter-Insurgency. It was also great, but this one has give me a different perspective on Counter-insurgency and the Global War on Terror. He makes some important points and also illuminates the problems with the U.S.'s strategy in the Global War on Terror. He differentiates domestic groups with grievance against their government and the global radical religious movement, which is seen as a global insurgency. The radical religious movements will exploit situations where local groups contest government rule. According to Kilcullen, the US has made a mistake in treating the local versus the global insurgents as the same movement. Kilcullen lays out the mistakes that have been made in the GWT and offers practical guidance to policymakers.

This book is one of the must read although I do not entirely with one of the principles. Mr. Kilcullen asserts his experience shows that the presence of counterinsurgency (COIN) forces may cause the creation of insurgency and migration of international terrorist organizations. Thus, by the introduction of a force, the local population will resist and welcome outsiders to combat the COIN forces, regardless if they are fellow countrymen or foreign forces invited by the host nation. Thus, the host nation 'accidentally' creates guerillas or the insurgency. It is sure that any new person or organization will have an effect on the local population but it is not certain that COIN will cause the insurgency to birth, grow, and attract foreign support. This dynamic is present but I do not think it is the dominant cause. I think it can be accelerant to the dynamic when lethal and security measures

are the only means used by the government to fight an insurgency, especially force not apply with precision, or in despotic nations with crushing, widespread, consistent, and inhumane violence

Outstanding case study of the Afgan - Iraqi and other political confrontations around the world. All personal assigned to that part of the world should be required to study what the author has to say as he most obviously has been immersed in the insurgent world for much of his life. His views are not met with agreement in all quarters but they deserve serious consideration especially given the results of the attempts of the West and particularly the US in preventing non state conflicts or successfully solving them when they occur. Our lack of understanding of the people we are engaged with has in many ways caused more harm than the original problem, if allowed to play out would have. Prior to the last several years our political and military people on average have had no real world background in the societies we are dealing with. The author has laid out several paths to bring these conflicts into perspective if not our control. Great book.....

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