



Withdrawing Under Fire: Lessons Learned from Islamist Insurgencies

Joshua L. Gleis

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The post-9/11 world has witnessed a rebirth of irregular and asymmetrical warfare, which, in turn, has led to an increase in conflicts between conventional armies and non-state armed groups. In their haste to respond to the threat from insurgencies, nations often fail to plan effectively not only for combat operations but also for withdrawal, which is inevitable, win or lose. In order to answer the question of how to withdraw from engagement with an insurgency, Gleis examines how insurgencies are conducted and what, if anything, is unique about an Islamist insurgency. He then proposes ways to combat these groups successfully and to disentangle one's military forces from the war once strategic objectives have been met—or once it is clear that they cannot be.

Because this type of warfare is dynamic and ever-changing, this book is not meant to suggest a set of cookie-cutter solutions for how to withdraw from insurgencies. Rather, the author analyzes six counterinsurgency operations that have taken place in the past, with the intention of gleaning from them as many lessons as possible to better prepare for future withdrawals. The literature on how wars end has failed to explore irregular warfare. This much needed reexamination serves as an indispensable starting point.

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