

Tao of Strategy

Study Guide: *On Guerrilla Warfare*

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Topics

In the fourth part of the course we focus on three topics:

- Mao Zedong's *On Guerrilla Warfare*, which is perhaps the finest and most direct application of Sunzi's *Bingfa*;¹ study of *On Guerrilla Warfare* is a good way to drive home the concepts introduced in Part 3 of the course.
- *On Guerrilla Warfare* is also worthwhile studying as a treatise on guerrilla warfare, written by one of its finest practitioners; this is an especially timely topic since the United States is currently engaged in just such a war in Afghanistan.
- The work of John Boyd, which stands alone as a worthy successor to Sunzi's *Bingfa*.

Readings

- Samuel B. Griffith. *Mao Tse-tung: On guerrilla warfare*. University of Illinois Press, Champagne, IL, 1961/2000.
- David R. Cross. Aesthetics of command. Unpublished manuscript, Texas Christian University, 2009.
- Michael Daxner. Afghanistan: Graveyard of good intent. *World Policy Journal*, pages 13–23, Summer 2009.
- Grant T. Hammond. The essential Boyd. Center for Strategy and Technology, Air War College, 2001a.

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¹See Francis F. Fuller. Mao Tse-Tung: Military thinker. *Military Affairs*, 22(3):139–45, 1958

Outline

Introduction to On Guerrilla Warfare

1. The Nature of Revolutionary Guerrilla War
2. Profile of a Revolutionist
3. Strategy, Tactics, and Logistics in Revolutionary War
4. Some Conclusions

On Guerrilla Warfare

1. What Is Guerrilla Warfare?
2. The Relation of Guerrilla Hostilities to Regular Operations
3. Guerrilla Warfare in History
4. Can Victory Be Attained by Guerrilla Operations?
5. Organization for Guerrilla Warfare
 - How guerrilla units are originally formed
 - The method of organizing guerrilla regimes
 - Equipment of guerrillas
 - Elements of the guerrilla army
6. Political Problems of Guerrilla Warfare
7. The Strategy of Guerrilla Resistance Against Japan

Aesthetics of Command

- Introduction
- Hinge of the Dao
 - *Dao* and *Ziran*
 - *Wuwei* and *Shi*
- The Skillful Warrior
 - Leader Grasps Self (*jing*)
 - Leader Grasps Team (*he*)
 - Team Grasps Task (*shi*)
- Reflexivity and Reflectivity
 - Cybernetics of Reflexivity
 - Cybernetics of Reflectivity
- Conclusion

Afghanistan: Graveyard of Good Intentions

- Introduction
- Security Pretexts
- Mosaic of Inconsistencies
- Shortcomings
- A Desire for Respect
- Adapting Reality
- Who's in Charge?
- Some Humble Recommendations
 - Allow the Afghans to build their own institutions.
 - Support the Afghan military in its fight against the Taliban.
 - Use Provincial Reconstruction Teams.
 - Allow no compromise in the education of girls.
 - Stop arming local tribes.
 - Understand this all will be a difficult and long-term process.
 - Stop using international forces for counter-narcotics policy.
- The Culture of Intervention
- The Sociologist in Me

John Boyd: The Mind of War

- Introduction
- Boyd: The Man
 - “Aerial Attack Study” and “Forty Second Boyd”
 - “Fighter Mafia,” F-15 “Eagle” and F-16 “Fighting Falcon”
 - “Energy Maneuverability Theory” and the “OODA Loop”
 - Military Reform Movement
 - “Patterns of Conflict” and “A Discourse on Winning and Losing”
 - “Warfighting” and the First Gulf War
- Boyd: The Ideas
 - *Survival* is the Darwinian goal of all organisms; the key to survival is *freedom of action*.

- *Knowledge* of the strategic environment
- *Rapidity, variety, harmony, and initiative*
- *Mind-time-space* continuum
- *Matter, energy, and information*
- *Moral-mental-physical* continuum
- *People first, ideas second, things third*
- *Moral leverage*
- *Observe, Orient, Decide, Act*

- Boyd: The Strategy

- Rapidity, variety, harmony, and initiative form an organic and synergistic whole.
- The key to rapidity is *time*
- The key to variety is *adaptation*
- The key to harmony is *trust*
- The key to initiative is *ambiguity*

- Boyd: Adaptation and Warfighting

Ultimately, what Boyd is all about is a way of thinking and the creation of an organism or organization that is capable of rapidity, variety, harmony and initiative. In other words, *he seeks to create organizations and organisms that are adaptive*. Only in this way can they hope to survive and prosper in the face of complex change and uncertainty.

John Boyd is one of the those people who, like Mark Twain said of U. S. Grant, is “worth knowing.” Here are three books, each with its own perspective, all worth reading:

- Robert Coram. *Boyd: The fighter pilot who changed the art of war*. Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 2002. [A straightforward biography]
- Grant T. Hammond. *The mind of war: John Boyd and American security*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, 2001b. [Part biography, part strategic theory]
- Frans Osinga. *Science, strategy and war: The strategic theory of John Boyd*. Routledge, Oxford, 2007. [The science of strategy]

