

forthright in addressing various scholarly interlocutors, as in his discussion of how best to interpret peasant resistance to modernization initiatives (142–43). Refreshing as well is the candor with which he addresses the shortcomings of his data, for example, the lack of reliable information on the social background of the leaders of most revolts, or the degree to which the complexity of individual cases resists his categorization scheme. And yet, while these concerns do not challenge the validity of the author's central premise, they do point to an issue regarding sources. To categorize material in reform-era gazetteers and *Wenshi ziliao* compilations is ultimately to tabulate narratives about events, not events themselves, and while literary analysis is far beyond the scope of the author's goals or interest, more could be done to address the nature of these sources and their construction. (As it is, readers curious about sources are inconveniently directed to consult relevant sections of *Peasants without the Party*.) Readers interested in the relation of rural culture to resistance may also come away unsatisfied. Bianco's approach leaves little room for consideration of religion or popular culture in the formation of rural mentality, and while he blames the late Qing and GMD states for the coercive methods used to promote modernization policies in the countryside, he fully endorses the impulse behind them, since "the impact of ignorance, superstitions and peasant traditions still today acts as a brake on the modernization of the country" (158).

Overall, this is an indispensable volume encapsulating a lifetime of research and scholarship on rural conditions in early twentieth-century China. While readers of French will want to consult the original text, everyone else—specialists and students alike—should put *Wretched Rebels* on their short list of required reading on the Chinese Revolution.

—John Williams

BALANCING INCOMPATIBLES

David Kilcullen: *Counterinsurgency*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. vii, 251. \$15.95, paper.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670511003585

In this book, David Kilcullen—a much-heralded advisor to the US government on counterinsurgency—pulls together his writings and thoughts on the subject from various stages of his career. The result is a provocative and revealing compendium that is admittedly also lacking somewhat in coherence. The book includes a chapter from Kilcullen's doctoral work on counterinsurgency in Indonesia, a declassified monograph on the Australian-led

INTERFET campaign in East Timor, an abstract analysis (drawn from systems theory) on combating global terrorism, and essays on conducting and evaluating a counterinsurgency. Thus, the book is part dissertation, military manual, theoretical exercise, autobiography, and personal diary (it notes, for example, that the writing of one essay began at a Starbucks and ended, in the wee hours, with the help of a particular brand of single-malt Scotch). From his perspective, Kilcullen offers a “snapshot of wartime thinking,” written “in breaks between periods of intense operational or diplomatic effort” (ix). He updates some of the essays with running commentary in author's notes on numerous pages.

Kilcullen introduces his subject by defining it in broad terms: counterinsurgency is “an umbrella term that describes the complete range of measures that governments take to defeat insurgencies” (1). He goes on to observe that “there is no template, no single set of techniques, for countering insurgencies” and that counterinsurgency “is, simply, whatever governments do to defeat rebellions” (2). Despite his somewhat unsatisfying definition, Kilcullen has a strong sense of the principles that underlie a *successful* counterinsurgency effort. At the most general level, it involves figuring out “what drives the conflict in any given area or with any given population group” and acting “with respect for local people,” that is, putting their needs above killing the enemy (3–4). These ideas are familiar to those who have followed events in Iraq and Afghanistan. Still, Kilcullen goes beyond these general principles with operational guidelines of use to the military practitioner in the field. His insights are also helpful for academicians who seek to understand why some counterinsurgencies fail and others succeed.

Indeed, Kilcullen is at his best when he offers a “ground-level” perspective on the practice of counterinsurgency and its challenges. In the book's first two chapters, “Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency” and “Measuring Progress in Afghanistan,” Kilcullen writes with the sharpness and authority of one who has been there. In “Twenty-Eight Articles,” Kilcullen offers nine rules for preparing for counterinsurgency, eleven rules for actual deployment, seven rules for the “steady-state” stage of operations, and one general rule (“keep the initiative”) that stands above all others. Although many of these rules appear to be good common sense, they deserve to be articulated and discussed, for their opposites would likely seem just as obvious. This is true, for instance, when Kilcullen notes the importance of starting easy and seeking early victories and the importance to counterinsurgency of co-opting women but keeping children at a distance. The chapter on measuring progress is especially insightful. It exposes the liabilities of traditional military metrics that place the focus upon policy inputs rather than outputs and provide a distorted picture of wartime challenges and trends. The Vietnam-era “body count” stands as a notorious example, for it spoke little to actual progress on the ground and was “gamed” within the US military for bureaucratic rewards. Even the level of violence in various parts of a country is a deceptive

measure of progress: violence is typically high in contested areas and low both in government-controlled and insurgent-controlled areas. Kilcullen proposes more useful population-related, host-government, security-force, and enemy indicators. These include the numbers of unsolicited tips, the cost of exotic vegetables (given the risks and costs of transportation), whether local officials sleep in their districts of responsibility, the ratio of enemy killed to wounded (a high ratio could suggest that units overrely on firepower), whether security forces engage in firefights from within rather than from outside a populated area (and are seen, then, as defending rather than attacking the population), the conduct by security forces of multiday operations (which suggest that security forces are dedicated, confident, and willing to reside outside their fortified bases), and the insurgents' villages of origin (inasmuch as local guerrillas are more integrated with their communities).

It must be said, however, that this is not a "how-to manual." Indeed, that approach would defy the spirit of the book, which challenges the idea that "one size fits all." In Kilcullen's view, successful counterinsurgency requires that security forces understand local conditions and establish local ownership. Thus, officers and soldiers on the ground are best positioned to identify and prioritize the important challenges, to decide how best to address them, and to determine who to appease, confront, and co-opt in the process. Still, given the tensions that are built into the strategy, Kilcullen's discussion raises at least as many questions as it answers. How exactly does one balance rival considerations when trade-off decisions are inevitably required? Such questions are provoked when Kilcullen suggests, for example, that security forces must protect the population but also kill the enemy (by relying on firepower); that solutions are required at the local level but that counterinsurgency will succeed or fail with the capacity, venality, and biases of the national government; that rank matters far less than talent but that a sound counterinsurgency strategy is frequently impaired by higher-ups within the military organization ("who just don't get it"); that successful counterinsurgency requires a large footprint but a strong foreign presence can provoke local disapproval; and that a successful counterinsurgency requires a high level of individual initiative and responsibility but must survive the inevitable end of an individual's tour.

The bigger question that remains is whether the United States can actually succeed at counterinsurgency. After all, the strategy comes with great risks and pitfalls, places enormous demands on US resources and personnel, and pays off only over the long haul and must contend, then, with changing administration preferences, changes in US leadership, and growing disapproval from an increasingly disinterested and disapproving US public. This question is given urgency by Kilcullen's final chapter which recommends approaching the "War on Terrorism" as a counterinsurgency effort though acknowledging that the task of countering a global Islamist insurgency is complicated enormously by the need to coordinate action across national

entities. Given the demands and challenges of managing the discrete efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is hard to be optimistic about the outcome.

—James H. Lebovic

THE COALITION CRACKS

Susan Dunn: *Roosevelt's Purge: How FDR Fought to Change the Democratic Party*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010. Pp. 361. \$27.95.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670511003597

Students of American politics are quite familiar with the New Deal coalition crafted by Franklin Roosevelt, consisting of Southern whites, Northern working-class ethnics, and eventually African Americans, both North and South. This would be the partisan engine driving fundamental changes in the role of government beginning in the 1930s and extending at least through the Johnson administration in the 1960s. However, this coalition was fragile and arguably contained irreconcilable elements—in particular Southern conservatives versus the rest of the party. In *Roosevelt's Purge*, Susan Dunn presents a rich and in-depth narrative of one of the first renderings of this conflict within the post-1932 Democratic Party between the South and the rest of the party as she describes Roosevelt's attempt to purge Southern conservatives who resisted the full measure of the New Deal.

Dunn explains that despite Roosevelt's landslide victory in 1936 in which he carried every state except two, the New Deal began to stall in 1937. The Supreme Court was at the center of the opposition as it struck down two cornerstones of FDR's recovery plan—the Agricultural Adjustment Act and the National Industrial Recovery Act. Roosevelt's response was the ill-fated “court-packing” plan which would be gutted in Congress as Southern Democrats joined Republicans (the “conservative coalition”) in opposition to the legislation.

FDR then turned his attention away from an obstructionist court to the obstructionists in Congress. He attempted to execute what came to be called the “purge” strategy, which involved orchestrating primary challenges to conservative, mostly Southern, Democrats by progressive New Dealers. The results for Roosevelt were a disaster as he challenged ten conservatives but defeated only one.

Dunn is clearly at her best in the approximately ninety percent of the book dedicated to sifting through the details of these ten 1938 congressional midterm elections. However, both her explanation of why FDR attempted this purge and her speculation about what he had in mind more generally are less satisfying.

Dunn argues that Roosevelt carried out the purge strategy as a result of a fit of pique. Repeatedly she tells us that Roosevelt's “Dutch was up.” While no