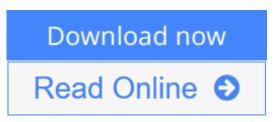


The Counterinsurgency Challenge: A Parable of Leadership and Decision Making in Modern Conflict

By Christopher D. Kolenda, Stanley A. General McChrystal



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In the not-too-distant future, an American military commander is preparing to take charge of counterinsurgency operations in the Narabad Province of remote and mountainous Khanastan, an impoverished region scarred by war and ruled by diverse religious and tribal communities. As part of his preparations, he enters a stunningly real conflict-mapping simulation that allows him to see the results of his on-the-ground decisions within hours.

What he learns shocks him.

His initial efforts to take control of the situation--by establishing a secure forward operating base, pressuring the local population to support his soldiers, providing armed escorts to government leaders, and taking the fight to the enemy--lead to chaos, increasing the danger to his troops and making the insurgents more numerous and deadly. He consults with his two mentors, a battlehardened war fighter and a provocative devil's advocate, then rewinds the scenario and tries again. And again. But whatever he does falls short of effective counterinsurgency, leading to more violence and to consequences he never expected. He grows frustrated, unsure if he and his soldiers can do anything at all to defeat the enemy and claim victory. It's only when he discards obsolete strategies and old measures of success and formulates a nontraditional--and more cold-blooded--approach that his efforts gain traction and the insurgency starts to weaken. He begins to see that effective counterinsurgency demands a new way of thinking. And a new way of fighting.

In the tradition of military classics such as *The Defence of Duffer's Drift*, this powerful parable illustrates the urgent need for military leaders to rethink how they fight contemporary conflicts. It reads like a thriller, with a cast of vivid characters, even as it puts forward a bold approach to effective counterinsurgency operations and makes a compelling case for change.

An innovative tool for developing in peacetime the mental agility and adaptability our leaders need to be successful in combat.

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Editorial ReviewReview

"Chris Kolenda is a tactical genius and strategic thinker . . . [with] an unparalleled understanding of counterinsurgency principles, he is one of our foremost COIN experts. (David H. Petraeus 2010-09-01)

"This hugely engaging book draws us into the perplexing and deadly world of the counterinsurgent . . . an essential parable for our times." (Theo Farrell *Department of War Studies, King's College* 2012-06-15)

"An innovative strategic thinker and operator, Kolenda uniquely combines the ability to develop insightful and practical approaches to the vexing strategic problems in Afghanistan." (Stanley A McChrystal, 2010-07-01)

"Col. Chris Kolenda won international renown for fighting this fight for real . . . [now] he passes on the lessons he learned in the crucible of combat to the next generation of counterinsurgents." (John A. Nagl *Department of History, U.S. Naval Academy* 2012-05-21)

"An extraordinarily useful account of the complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty of counterinsurgency operations. His combination of theory and anecdotes make *The Counterinsurgency Challenge* a powerful and convincing read." (Seth G. Jones, author of Hunting in the Shadows: The Pursuit of al Qa'ida Since 9/11 2012-06-26)

"No one understands counterinsurgency in places such as Afghanistan better than Kolenda." (Michael O'Hanlon *Brookings Institution* 2012-06-03) About the Author

Christopher D. Kolenda is a retired U.S. Army colonel who served three tours of duty in Afghanistan. As a task force commander in 2007-08, in Kunar and Nuristan provinces, his unit pioneered an innovative approach to counterinsurgency incorporating armed diplomacy, conflict resolution, and both violent and non-violent leverage that broke apart the insurgency, turned the population against the enemy, and dramatically improved the levels of security and governance in that volatile region. Since then he has shaped every critical strategic review for Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2009, led the team that drafted the McChrystal assessment and ISAF strategy, penned the 2009 ISAF counterinsurgency guidance, and influenced myriad other strategic and tactical initiatives that have set conditions for success in Afghanistan.

Kolenda is the editor and coauthor of Leadership: The Warrior's Art and has published numerous articles in professional journals. Users Review**From reader reviews:**

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