H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Robert R. Mackey. *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004. xii + 288 pp. $34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8061-3624-0.

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Published on H-CivWar (January, 2005)

Guerrillas, Partisans, and Rangers

Nearly a decade ago, the Society of Civil War Historians sponsored a panel on William Tecumseh Sherman. One of the evening's panelists, Mark Grimsley of The Ohio State University, made a significant point that bears repeating. Scholars' interpretations of Sherman's March, he suggested, often are skewed by the lack of a broader understanding of world military history. In part, Civil War historians and enthusiasts know their war so well because it is the only conflict most of them study. Viewed through that tunnel vision, Sherman's March might look like the cutting edge of modern "total war," but when compared to, say, the Thirty Years' War, it takes on a more benign and familiar appearance. To fully understand the Civil War, in other words, one must know more about war in general.[1]

Like Grimsley, Robert R. Mackey maintains that Civil War scholars need to bring that wider perspective to the war and specifically to the topic usually referred to in the literature as "guerrilla warfare." While over the last two decades several welcome works on that subject have appeared, Mackey nonetheless finds that literature lacking in several respects. A U.S. Army officer and veteran of the current war in Iraq as well as the holder of a doctorate in history, he maintains that Civil War historians still do not know enough about irregular warfare in general to fully define and analyze its place in the Civil War.

The author identifies context as one central problem. Because historians' thinking was shaped by irregular wars of their own generations (notably the Vietnam experience, but also the Chinese revolution under Mao Zedong), Civil War historians usually make the wrong comparisons when they make them at all. Instead of looking to a Mao or Ho Chi Minh, Mackey maintains, scholars instead should re-examine the works of nineteenth-century military theorists such as Carl von Clausewitz and Baron Antoine Henri Jomini, who fully articulated theories of irregular warfare long before Ho or Mao. Those visions, varying in some degree, nonetheless similarly hinged on the notion of irregular fighting as an adjunct to conventional warfare, rather than an alternative to it. Following at least Jomini's dictums, the Confederacy conventionally and widely utilized irregular forces as a way to support regular field armies and their campaigns.

Mackey points to sloppy definition as a second historiographical problem. Scholars, he maintains, have evinced a tendency to lump together all irregular forces as "guerrillas," thus blurring and misconstruing the multifaceted reality of irregular fighting in the Civil War. In fact, the Confederates fielded different sorts of irregular forces to accomplish varied goals, with "irregular warfare" broadly defined as operations not involving the main field armies. Seeking to bring order from such chaos, Mackey employs nineteenth- as well as twentieth-century terminology. At one end of the spectrum were mere criminals who used the war to excuse illegal activities. Not far from them were the "bushwhackers," true "guerrillas" in the modern sense, who formed their own groups, wore no uniforms, and operated beyond the confines of military discipline in a civilian "people's war." Mackey identifies these groups as those most closely resembling twentieth-century insurgents, although he adds that Civil War guerrillas usually lacked the ideological motivations of groups such as the Viet Cong. "Partisans" in contrast, more resembled modern Rangers, small elite conventional forces engaged in unconventional operations, often behind enemy lines. Finally, there were the "raiders," conventional cavalry units operating away from the main armies.

Union forces likewise responded to the various irregulars they encountered in a variety of manners. Again using the modern terminology, Mackey identifies "antiguerrilla," "antipartisan," and "antiraiding" missions as direct military strikes against specific irregular units and the civilians that supported them. Here, the goal simply was to kill the enemy, without concern to the effect such fighting would have on others caught in the cross-

fire. "Counterguerrilla operations," in contrast, involved passive defense measures, such as fortifications. "Counterinsurgency operations" aimed more broadly at undermining support for irregulars by winning the hearts and minds of southerners.

Mackey employs three case studies to support his argument. He illustrates true "people's war" using the example of Arkansas. Familiar with Napoleonic history and desperate to delay Union occupation of the state after the defeat at Pea Ridge, Confederate Maj. Gen. Thomas C. Hindman, in June 1862, called upon pro-Confederate Arkansans to rise up in guerrilla bands. Hindman unleashed a genie he could not control. The guerrillas did succeed at first in slowing down Federal columns, but they also brought a storm of brutal Federal antiguerrilla retribution down on the heads of bushwhackers and civilians alike. A literal firestorm followed as Federal units turned to the torch and other retributive measures. Worse, most guerillas added to non-combatants misery by turning increasingly to plundering and banditry. Within a year, the guerrillas were attacking both Federals and Confederates, and had become little better than armed thugs. In the end, guerrilla violence and Confederate authorities' inability to stop it proved counterproductive, undermining morale and Confederate control of the state.

In contrast to the conflict Hindman instigated in Arkansas, Col. John S. Mosby's struggle against Union forces in northern Virginia was a true partisan war, according to the author. Mosby and his men, fighting under the auspices of the 1862 Partisan Ranger Act, were uniformed soldiers. Indeed, at least at first, his Virginians comprised an elite outfit socially as well as militarily. Convinced that Mosby was a "guerrilla" nonetheless, Union commanders responded clumsily with the same sort of antiguerrilla tactics used in Arkansas, culminating with Philip Sheridan's burning of the Shenandoah Valley in the autumn of 1864. In the end, Mosby survived because Federal officers had played into his hands by employing the wrong countermeasures.

Finally, the exploits of Brig. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest and Brig. Gen. John Hunt Morgan exemplify the third expression of Confederate irregular warfare: the raid. Commanding conventional cavalry, Forrest and Morgan, in 1862 and 1863, launched raids deep into Union-controlled territory in order to support Gen. Braxton Bragg's army. The raiders struck at supply lines, forced Federal commanders to divert troops, and raised Confederate morale. The Union army groped for a response. Ultimately, increased numbers, better blue-clad cavalry, and effective counterguerrilla measures, such as blockhouses and ironclads placed at crucial sites, undermined the raiders' war.

In the end, Mackey concludes, the Union Army defeated the Confederates in the unconventional war as well as in the more traditional conflict. Federal commanders had proved more adaptable and innovative than their foes. In contrast, Confederate leaders failed to adequately supply or control the irregular units they fielded. That Confederates did not turn to a "people's war" after Appomattox, Mackey adds, is not surprising, despite some scholars' assertions to the contrary. Southern nationalism and ideology were too weak to maintain such a war, he maintains. Moreover, Confederate military and political leaders had seen all the problems associated with guerrillas, and were unwilling, by 1865, to inaugurate greater chaos. Even if Jefferson Davis had succeeded in instigating a popular uprising, the Confederates would have been unable to properly support it. Finally, the Union army in 1865 had refined its anti-insurgent measures to a degree that such a war, while certainly destructive, would have failed anyway. "When Lee spoke against dispersing his army as guerrillas," Mackey concludes, "he understood that … irregular warfare had been tried and had been beaten as surely as his army had been" (p. 204).

Perhaps not surprisingly, given both the author's background and current position in the Pentagon, as well as events in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mackey pays somewhat more attention to how regular forces effectively respond to irregular warfare. Unlike Mosby or the elite soldiers who followed him, whom Mackey clearly admires, the author also tends to dismiss most bushwhackers with the same derision Federal soldiers employed during the war: "no more than terrorists and brigands" (p. 43). In contrast, scholars of Appalachia's Civil War, such as Martin Crawford, Noel Fisher, Ralph Mann, and this reviewer, have offered more layered portraits of guerrillas that take motivation and ideology into account.[2] Here perhaps was a missed opportunity. These minor caveats aside, Mackey has provided Civil War historians with a thoughtful, well researched, and ultimately necessary volume that confronts current debates with both a wider perspective and a sharper attention to detail. Indeed, one hopes that the author's framework and terminology will become standard, and that his insights will guide future studies of irregular warfare within the American Civil War.

Notes

[1]. Mark Grimsley, "Sherman's Place in the History

of Warfare," Society of Civil War Historians Meeting, Little Rock, Arkansas (October 31, 1996).

[2]. See for example Martin Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); Noel Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Ralph Mann, "Ezekiel Counts' Sand Lick Company: Civil War and Localism in the Mountain South," in *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays*, ed. Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), pp. 78-103; and Kenneth W. Noe, "Who Were the Bushwhackers? Age, Class, Kin and Western Virginia's Confederate Guerillas, 1861-1862," *Civil War History* 49 (March 2003): pp. 5-31.

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Citation: Kenneth Noe. Review of Mackey, Robert R., *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865*. H-CivWar, H-Net Reviews. January, 2005.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10156

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