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# A geographical analysis of guerrilla warfare

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## Abstract

Since 1945 guerrilla warfare has been the principal form of violent conflict. Its successful practitioners apply a highly developed sense of geography to exploit the advantages of terrain to discomfort the established order. To overcome such attacks, counter-insurgents need an equal or superior understanding of the landscape. The tactics employed by guerrillas and their opposition are suggestive of general sets of geographical conditions favouring one side or the other. It is postulated that the principal factors determining the relative advantage of the landscape for guerrilla or regular forces are population density and the cover afforded by the terrain. Empirical data from a selection of conflicts are presented. These suggest that guerrillas are at a comparative advantage in conditions of high population density and greater cover. The density and man-made broken terrain of city and suburb offer a ready explanation for the emergence of urban guerrillas in recent years. These advantages are enhanced by the deterrent the urban setting offers to quantitative military operations. In cities there is the maximum prospect of offending the civilian population in seeking to root out guerrillas.



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