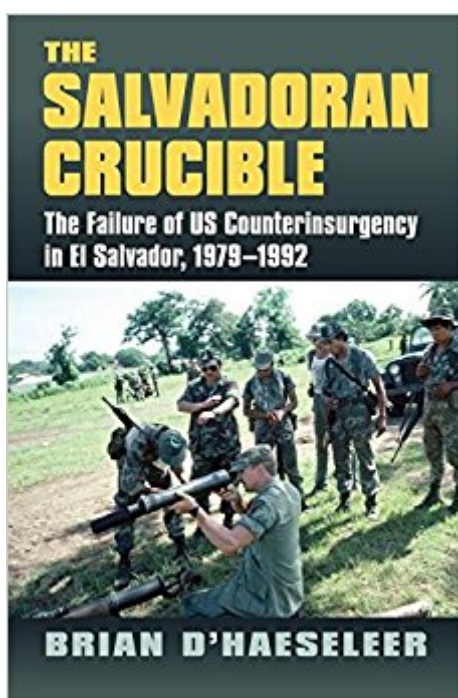


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# The Salvadoran Crucible: The Failure Of U.S. Counterinsurgency In El Salvador, 1979-1992 (Modern War Studies (Hardcover))



## Synopsis

In 1979, with El Salvador growing ever more unstable and ripe for revolution, the United States undertook a counterinsurgency intervention that over the following decade would become Washington's largest nation-building effort since Vietnam. In 2003, policymakers looked to this "successful" undertaking as a model for US intervention in Iraq. In fact, Brian D. Haeseleer argues in *The Salvadoran Crucible*, the US counterinsurgency in El Salvador produced no more than a stalemate, and in the process inflicted tremendous suffering on Salvadorans for a limited amount of foreign policy gains. Haeseleer's book is a deeply informed, dispassionate account of how the Salvadoran venture took shape, what it actually accomplished, and what lessons it holds. A historical analysis of the origins of US counterinsurgency policy provides context for understanding how precedents informed US intervention in El Salvador. What follows is a detailed, in-depth view of how the counterinsurgency unfolded—the nature, logic, and effectiveness of the policies, initiatives, and operations promoted by American strategists. Haeseleer's account disputes the "success" narrative by showing that El Salvador's achievements, mainly the spread of democracy, occurred as a result not of the American intervention but of the insurgents' war against the state. Most significantly, *The Salvadoran Crucible* contends that the reforms enacted during the war failed to address the underlying causes of the conflict, which today continue to reverberate in El Salvador. The book thus suggests a reassessment of the history of American counterinsurgency, and a course-correction for the future.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Observers scratch their heads in disbelief over the rise of ISIS, after 16 years of US-led counterinsurgency efforts in the Middle East. Scholars and students would do well to look to the case of El Salvador for a greater understanding of the broader history of US counterinsurgency warfare. US military and political leaders prematurely claimed victory in both places with little understanding of the past, present, or future conditions as they existed in reality.

Chris White teaches history at Marshall University and is the author of *The History of El Salvador*. Brian D. Haeseleer has produced the most fine-grained examination of not only the US-led counterinsurgency in El Salvador in the 1980s but also the insurgency itself and the politics that surrounded it. Readers will learn much about not only shifting military strategies but also agrarian reform, civic action, and democracy promotion. Placing El Salvador in its proper global context as the greatest US counterinsurgency effort between Vietnam and Iraq, Haeseleer demonstrates that the lessons learned from El Salvador should relate to neither because any successes—and, more often, failures—were due to local Salvadoran circumstances.

Alan McPherson, author of *The Invaded: How Latin Americans and their Allies Fought and Ended U.S. Occupations* "A remarkably well researched and written book that underscores the importance in understanding the impact of counterinsurgency theory and implementation in modern American warfare. It punches significant holes in the traditional narrative promoted by some regarding the U.S. role in El Salvador during the last days of the Cold War. Highly recommended for people interested in U.S.-Latin American relations and military history, particularly COIN operations." Kyle Longley, author of *In the Eagle's Shadow: The United States and Latin America* This is admirable scholarship—concise, rigorously analyzed, and based on impressive multi-archival and multinational research.

Brian D. Haeseleer has detailed how the US counterinsurgency program spread death and destruction throughout the tiny country of El Salvador. Scholars who believe that President Reagan moderated his policies in Central America need to consult this first-rate study.

Stephen G. Rabe, author of *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America, Second Edition* An important contribution to the study of US counterinsurgency, *The Salvadoran Crucible* meticulously unravels the story of counterinsurgency's success in El Salvador that was foretold after the Vietnam War and mythologized during the Iraq War. When future attempts to implement the Salvadoran strategy are made, this book should stand as the definitive warning.

Hannah R. Gurman, author of *Hearts and Minds: A People's*

## History of Counterinsurgency

Brian D'Áz Haeseleer is assistant professor of history at Lyon College in Batesville, Arkansas.

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