



Treading on Hallowed Ground: Counterinsurgency Operations in Sacred Spaces

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After America's Iraq adventure devolved into a debacle, a chorus of commentators and analysts noted that the U.S. military had no plan to fight a counterinsurgency campaign. Given the failure of conventional tactics, America in the last two years has redoubled its efforts to develop a new strategy to fight the Iraqi insurgency, and has gone so far to place our leading counterinsurgency expert, General David Petraeus, in charge of the Iraq theater. In sum, there seems to be a growing consensus that for better or worse, counterinsurgency will be a core tactic in future American military campaigns. Iraq, of course, presents special problems to the U.S. because of the intensity of religious belief and sectarianism. How do we fight against an insurgency that so often strategically positions itself on 'hallowed ground'-mosques and shrines? Yet Iraq is not unique. As the contributors to Treading on Hallowed Ground show, counterinsurgency efforts on religiously contentious terrain is a widespread phenomenon in recent times, ranging from North Africa to Central and Southeast Asia. Here, C. Christine Fair and Sumit Ganguly have assembled an impressive group of experts to explore the most important counterinsurgency efforts in sacred spaces in our era: churches in Israel, mosques and shrines in Iraq, the Sikh Golden Temple in India, mosques and temples in Kashmir, the Krue Se Mosque in Thailand, and the Grand Mosque in Saudi Arabia. Taken together, the essays comprise the first comprehensive account of this increasingly pivotal component of contemporary war.

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