

Bob, Clifford. *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism.*

Brandon Stewart

Volume 28, winter 2008

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs28br09>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Stewart, B. (2008). Compte rendu de [Bob, Clifford. *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism.*] *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 28, 0-0.

Bob, Clifford. *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

There is no doubt that the plight of some oppressed minorities incites public imagination more than others. One need only turn to the recent media coverage of the Chinese crackdown in Tibet to see that certain groups end up spending more time in the limelight than the unknown majority of domestic constituencies agitating for better conditions. *Prima facie* we might assume that the neediest groups are sought out by the media and brought to the forefront of public attention. Clifford Bob presents an alternative vision of the interaction between insurgency groups and NGOs, arguing that while there is still a fundamental charitable aspect to the interaction, the choice of a particular group to receive NGO attention is connected with the strategic choices of that group in marketing itself.

From the outset Bob is clear about his intentions to discuss the question of why certain insurgent groups receive support while others do not. He starts by making the argument that winning the attention of NGOs is a remarkably difficult process, one which he characterizes as a strategic interaction based on the relative power of both the NGO and the group receiving aid. While acknowledging the structural conditions that influence which groups are favored in the competition for NGO aid, Bob chooses to focus on the relatively unexplored question of how the groups market themselves. The choice yields a fascinating book on an underserved topic.

The first chapter neatly outlines the scope of the question as well as the arguments to be covered throughout the text. The second chapter addresses the theory and more clearly explains the marketing perspective that will be brought to the case studies contained in chapters three and four. The two case studies address groups (Nigeria's Ogoni Movement and Mexico's Zapatista Uprising) that received significant NGO and media attention while other organizations and minorities within the same country received almost none. Bob uses the natural question, "Why this particular group?" to examine the impact of the strategic interaction between the NGO and the groups.

Briefly put, in Bob's account the NGO is looking for a group that fits its particular issue profile and will reflect well on the organization. The insurgent group manipulates the issues that it brings to the table, mirrors the organizational culture of Western NGOs, and chooses charismatic leaders in order to entice highly valuable NGO assistance. In his final chapter Bob suggests that the strategic element of NGO selection of insurgent groups makes it very difficult to empirically determine the effects of NGO aid. There is an important selection effect as NGOs bandwagon with other NGOs to provide aid and deliberately try to assist groups that they expect will be successful.

Bob does a great service to the literature by completing extensive interviews with NGO personnel who were involved in the process of deciding which organizations received aid. While most of the interviewees accepted his offer of anonymity, the deep accounts of the two cases provide a useful resource for anyone interested in the strategic considerations of NGO deliberations. The work serves as a great mechanism to explore a side of aid distribution that had not been considered, but there is work left to be done, both theoretically and empirically.

Theoretically the causal mechanisms that Bob identifies are somewhat unclear. He is very clear up front in saying “it would be going too far to claim that the marketing perspective can foretell whether a particular challenger will gain major transnational support.” (p. 53) While too many factors affect NGOs to forecast their decisions, he does believe that marketing explains why one group in a particular country is picked over another. Indeed he seems comfortable with the notion that structural factors play a large part in the decision. Unfortunately the division between the two is not always clear. He identifies leadership as a structural factor (p. 44) and yet the two leaders at the forefront of the movements he studies are, by his own account, absolutely critical to their groups receiving aid. He attributes the slowing of support to the Ogoni to the loss of their leader Saro-Wiwa (p. 101) and speculates that, had the Zapatista leader Marcos been killed, support would have “undoubtedly suffered.” (p. 162) It is not clear to what extent charismatic leadership is separated from the strategy the group pursues. Analytically Bob is facing a dialectical problem whereby the leader affects the strategy and the strategic demands in turn call for the selection of a particular leader. Both causal explanations are pursued but neither is clearly favored.

Bob also addresses primarily the strategic considerations of the insurgent organizations in marketing themselves to the NGO, rather than attempting to fully treat the NGO’s strategic considerations. While this is a useful way of narrowing the scope of the project, it leaves considerable work to be explored in accounting for the strategic interaction between the two sets of organizations as well as the competitive interaction between several different insurgency groups. While these answers are not given in the book, Bob provides a useful foundation to pursue these types of theoretical questions.

Bob also leaves open the possibility for more rigorous empirical tests. While he provides excellent case studies, there are numerous propositions assumed by the work that could be tested in larger quantitative empirical studies, including the observation that local movements using nonviolent tactics increase their likelihood of support, that using nonviolence to goad the government into repressive tactics can bring media attention, and that there is an independent bandwagoning effect in aid giving. While these effects certainly appear in the case studies, there is more work to be done in confirming their appearance in the broader population of cases.

Clifford Bob's book provides an excellent starting place for a different way of looking at how NGOs allocate resources to insurgent movements. The contribution of the marketing perspective is a useful way to approach the material, and he provides a unique source of data in his extensive interviews. He also provides useful warnings about potential selection effects in further exploring the allocation of aid. While there is a great deal of work left to be done, Bob has provided an exciting question and an interesting approach.

Brandon Stewart is a graduate student at The College of William and Mary.

Joes, Anthony James. *Urban Guerrilla Warfare*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007.

Avec son troisième tome consécutif chez Kentucky, *Urban Guerrilla Warfare*, Anthony James Joes, professeur de science politique à l'université de Saint Joseph (SJU), ajoute à son œuvre un sixième volume sur la guérilla. Ses lecteurs fidèles seront au fait de la composition, voire du contenu, de cette addition. L'ouvrage s'étale sur sept chapitres, chacun décrivant un cas spécifique nommé d'après l'endroit géographique de l'action et placé dans l'ordre chronologique : Varsovie (1944) ; Budapest (1956) ; Alger (1957) ; Sao Paulo (1965-1971) et Montevideo (1963-1973) ; Saïgon (1968) ; l'Irlande du Nord (1970-1998) ; et Grozny (1994-1996). Les chapitres ont en commun une structure interne — l'auteur présente une situation et son arrière-plan lointain et proche, un moment de guérilla urbaine, et une analyse brève de l'action et de son issue. Le résultat est une collection compacte qui dépeint un panorama de guérilla urbaine sur quatre continents et sur des décennies. Avec des esquisses concises et claires dans les passages historiques, Joes montre qu'il mérite la réputation qui le précède d'avoir une prose agréable à lire. C'est sans doute pour sa perspective globale et son exposition détaillée que ce livre a été reconnu comme œuvre importante pour l'éducation par *Choice*, le journal de l'Association américaine de la bibliothèque.

Mais on peut pourtant s'inquiéter du message qu'en retireront les étudiants, car Joes se préoccupe très peu de l'analyse. Sa thèse, exprimée avec plus ou moins de précision et de nuance à plusieurs reprises dans le texte, est que toute guérilla urbaine est destinée à échouer car elle transgresse les lois justes et les procédés établies des grands penseurs et pratiquants de la guerre, ceux qui reconnaissent que le succès de la guérilla dépend des conditions rurales (bases inaccessibles, vaste terrain d'opération, choix d'engagement, etc.) (e.g., pp. 7, et 157). Vraisemblablement, Joes voit la contradiction entre cette thèse principale et sa position parallèle justifiant ce livre : la guérilla urbaine est en train de s'accroître et la contre-insurrection urbaine réclame de l'attention. Il semble égale-